**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, August 23, 2020**

*Broken, we gather. Nourished, we reach out.*

**TECHNICAL CHECK-IN (Betty)**

I’m (name) and I welcome you here on behalf of Solidarity with Sisters.

* We sent the files of readings, responses, and lyrics.
* Camera: turn on if you want. Gallery view option. Arrow if multiple screens.
* Mute/Unmute: know how? Needed even during singing.
* **I will now mute everybody.** Unmute to speak.

Now let’s put technical things aside.

**WELCOME (Betty)**

* Welcome, everyone! Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Judy Sholes and Maryann Dolan for preparing today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to Stu Sklamm and Reggie Ott for leading us in music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading today – Bob Gallagher, Ann Jelen, Richard McGinnis, Peggy Thompson, Betty Thompson, Suzie and Jim De Quattro. If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.
* When we reflect and pray together, some of us will want to speak and to share. Others of us are quiet and will want to listen. Please know that all voices are welcome, even if you’ve never joined in before, and even if all you want to offer is a phrase that was meaningful to you. All that we offer is valuable. We invite you to be open to sharing and to be open to fully listening, however you are moved to be with this community.

**SETTLING IN (Suzie)**

We are here to let God transform us. So, let’s open ourselves to God. Feel the comfort of your chair and relax into it… and relax into God’s love for you. Feel your chest and stomach rise and fall as you breathe… and know the Spirit is moving in you gently and easily. Now let’s take 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together….and one to be open to God’s action.

Now Stu Sklamm) will lead us into our celebration with The Servant Song.

**OPENING – “Servant Song” by Richard Gillard (Stu Slamm)**

Will you let me be your servant,

Let me be as Christ to you?

Pray that I may have the grace

To let you be my servant, too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,

We are trav’lers on the road;

We are here to help each other

Walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you

In the night time of your fear;

I will hold my hand out to you,

Speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;

When you laugh, I’ll laugh with you.

I will share your joy and sorrow

 ‘Til we’ve seen this journey through.

**GREETING (Maryann)**

Beloved Community, rejoice!The Spirit of Christ is among us! Alleluia!

**All:** And all God’s people reply: Amen! Alleluia!

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Maryann)**

We come together today because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as the people of God and the body of Christ. As Monsignor Lyon used to tell us, “We gather to celebrate the great fact that God is in love with us.”

We come expecting something to happen this morning. We believe that whenever two or three gather in the name of Jesus, then Jesus is right here. So we are confident that in this next hour God will act in us and give us insight about how to go forth and make the Gospel visible in more ways and in more places. We say yes to this call and we seek light for our next step. And now let us pray.

**GATHERING PRAYER (Judy)**

O God who creates and who gives breath,

be with us now as we come to you

with the great longings of our world

and of our selves.

We come together

trusting that the Spirit will be at work in us.

Help us to let go and to let come.

Help us to live the questions

and to move with you, in you, and toward you,

ever open to what is waiting to be born.

Amen.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEM (Maryann)**

God’s chosen people were certain Yahweh never hesitated to get involved in their lives,

whether it be religiously or politically. We see that reflected in the readings for today. Yahweh has always protected them even in suffering and sorrow and then sent Jesus as the fulfillment of that relationship. In the first reading, the psalmist sings praise and gratitude for the constant love and faithfulness of their God. The psalmist also expresses concern that leaders were not fulfilling their sacred trust as stewards of the welfare of the people.

In the second reading today, Paul, the earliest Christian author, is in awe of the uniqueness of the itinerant preacher, Jesus, his words, and his ways. As Paul has indicated in earlier verses, both Jew and Gentile have received the gift of faith. Paul finds it is hard to comprehend God’s methods. Recognizing that he doesn’t understand it, Paul can only give glory.

In the third reading, Matthew is also convinced that divine involvement carries over through the Risen Jesus. In this gospel Simon responds to Jesus’ question, “Who do you say I am? Because of Peter's faith, Jesus confers leadership on him. The symbolism of *rock* as stability and transformation and the *keys* as interpretation of the law represent a new community in which there is shared ministry. It is no longer the ways of the old Mosaic law, but the ways of Jesus, the Son of the living God.

After each reading today, Jim DeQuattro will offer questions for our reflection.

**READING 1: Psalm 138 (Maryann)**

I am exceedingly grateful, O Lord.

For You have heard my cries and complaints,

and You responded with mercy and strength.

Now my life is overflowing with thanksgiving,

and my mouth is filled with Your praises.

If only the leaders of our disjointed world

would listen to Your words

and direct their people in accord with Your will,

they would then know the meaning of peace,

and they would rejoice in the ways of God.

You have not shielded me

from the pains of trouble

or the ravages of conflict.

But You have kept me

even amid sorrow and suffering.

You take my side against the enemies of my soul,

and You will not allow them to destroy me.

Thus, I know You will fulfill Your purpose for my life,

Your love and mercy are everlasting;

You will not let me go.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro)**

Are there times when you have cried out, “God, where are you in this?”

 How do you maintain a grateful heart and a peaceful spirit in this disjointed world?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) (Judy)**

Now Bob Gallagher will read from the 11th chapter of Romans. (Judy)

 **Reading 2:**  **Romans 11:33-36 (Bob)**

How rich and deep are the wisdom and the knowledge of God! We cannot reach to the root of God’s decisions or God’s ways. Who has ever known the mind of the Lord? Who has ever been God’s adviser?

Who has given anything to God, so that his presents come only as a debt returned?

Everything there is comes from God and is caused by God and exists for God. To God be glory for ever! Amen.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro)**

Are there people, places or experiences that Are there people, places or experiences that ~~you~~ cause you to consider that God is stepping into your life? If so, what sparks awe and wonder in you?

How do you feel when people claim that something is God’s will…or that God is on their side? Do you ever assume that you know what God wants to happen in a particular situation?

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**SILENCE (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) (Judy)**

Now Ann Jelen will read from the 16th chapter of Matthew. (Judy)

**Reading 3: Matthew 16: 13-20 (Ann)**

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

“But you,” he said, “who do you say I am?”

Then Simon Peter spoke up and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus replied, “Simon son of Jonah, you are a blessed man! Because it was no human agency that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my community. And the gates of the underworld can never overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'

Then he gave the disciples strict orders not to say to anyone that he was the Christ.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro)**

When you are in leadership or a member of a community in difficult or chaotic times, in what ways must you change?

Who are today’s servant leaders? In what way are you called to be uprooted from your comfort zone to make “good trouble” as a servant leader?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) (Judy)**

Now Richard McGinnis will lead us in sharing. (Judy)

**SHARING (Richard McGinnis)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on these readings. When we speak of our own **personal** feelings, we glimpse the many ways God is among us. We welcome new voices, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening.

If you would like to speak, please unmute yourself, and mute yourself again afterwards. If two people speak at once, we can take turns.

Who would like to begin our sharing?

(Sharing)

Thank you.

Now Peggy Thompson will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Peggy)**

In today’s scripture readings we hear that God is with us always and that Jesus bestowed leadership on Peter to build a community based on the ways of Jesus, Son of the living God. In Fr. Richard Rohr’s words, “Loving God, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other’s burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts’ longings for the healing of our world.”

Now, as we offer our prayers, our response will be: Loving God, hear our prayer.

 God among us, open our eyes, ears, and heart. “Then we’ll speak in new ways and see your face in places we’ve never seen before.” We pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.

God in all things, thank you for the wondrous ways you have been present, are present, and will be present in all creation forever and ever. We pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious made a five-year commitment to work on dismantling racism. May the LCWR leadership continue to model how to live the gospel through this commitment and its many ministries. We pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Faithful God, in the midst of the howling winds of bad news that drown out your voice, give us attentive ears and hearts to hear you say, “Come follow me.” We pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Spirit of God, anchor us in faith and hope and stir us to come alive, to serve one another with love and compassion, and to seek justice and peace. We pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.

For our political and religious leaders, may they open their eyes to see and their hearts to feel the many ways people are hurting in today’s world. We pray: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Now let’s remember the feelings and prayers that arose in us as we shared reflections, and also the prayers we carry with us. [Pause.]

Now, for what else shall we pray? Please unmute yourself as you speak. Please end your petition with “for this we pray.”

(People speak.)

Thank you.

Loving God, knowing that you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these intentions that have been expressed and those that remain silent within our hearts. Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Maryann)**

In response to the grace and goodness of our God, we are mindful of the great blessings we enjoy. We desire to see these as abundance to be shared with a broken world. Let us take time to name within ourselves something we will offer to others in recognition of all that we have received from God. [Pause.]

In thanksgiving for the presence and power of Jesus Christ, and in unity with the Holy Spirit, let us pray. God of abundance, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so we that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Judy)**

O Great Love, we are humbled and emboldened

to know that you trust us to be your body in this world.

We are part of that body as we let go of all that separates us from you,

and as we embrace one another and your entire creation with merciful love.

We give you thanks for your presence in us. [Pause.]

We remember the night before Jesus died.

At dinner with friends, Jesus knew all that would soon be asked of them,

and, loving them to the end, Jesus showed them how to care for each other

as they went out into the world.

First Jesus washed their feet.

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the cup,

gifts of the earth and work of human hands, and blessed them.

So let us, too, invite God right now into what is front and center in our lives

knowing that God will indeed enter what we offer – and bless it. [Pause.]

Let us invite God into ourselves so that we become God’s living presence. [Pause.]

Holy One, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your love.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Judy)**

Now let us pray in harmony with all Christians throughout the world in the words that Jesus gave us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

**CLOSING THOUGHT: Move our Feet (Judy)**

In our gathering last week, we heard Bishop Ken Untener’s reminder that prayer is a real conversation with God. Often, through these conversations, we discern a call to take some kind of action. The late John Lewis often quoted a West African proverb that says, “When you pray, move your feet.” Prayer is not just nice thoughts. It is not just words. Prayer is action. Real Action. Action that produces results. Action for God. Action for the world. So, as we engage in our conversations with God, let us be open to finding ways to move our feet.

**FINAL BLESSING ( Judy)**

Broken, we have gathered;

nourished, we reach out.

Now let us now go forth in peace:

in communion with each other and

to offer communion to a hungry world. Amen.

Now Reggie Ott will lead us in **“How Can I Keep from Singing?”**

**CLOSING How Can I Keep From Singing (Reggie)**

My life goes on in endless song
above earth's lamentations,
I hear the real, though far-off hymn
that hails a new creation.

Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear it's music ringing,
It sounds an echo in my soul.
How can I keep from singing?

While though the tempest loudly roars,
I hear the truth, it liveth.
And though the darkness 'round me close,
songs in the night it giveth.

No storm can shake my inmost calm,
while to that rock I'm clinging.
Since love is lord of heaven and earth
how can I keep from singing?