

SOLIDARITY WITH SISTERS' SUNDAY COMMUNAL PRAYER – MAY 3, 2020

TECHNICAL CHECK-IN (Betty Thompson) –

I'm Betty Thompson and I welcome you here on behalf of Solidarity with Sisters.

We sent the files of readings, responses, and lyrics.

Zoom: turn on cameras - Gallery view option.

Mute: know how? On phone? On Zoom? Needed even during singing.

Now let's put technical things aside.

WELCOME (Betty)

Welcome, everyone! On behalf of Solidarity with Sisters, it's wonderful to be with you!

Introductions – people who haven't been here before?

We owe big thanks to Mary Ott, who chose our readings and created our service for today. And thanks also to Stu Sklamm and Reggie Ott, who will lead us in music, and to the readers today, who are also connected with Solidarity with Sisters – Richard McGinnis, Anne Regan, Bill Fanelli, Sister Marie McCarthy, and Lynn Bufka. If you'd like to read in future Sundays, please get in touch.

SETTLING IN (Mary Ott)

Let's get settled as we prepare to begin. Settle into a comfortable position. (Pause.)

Notice your breath as it goes in and out. (Pause.) Become aware of divine presence in you and around you.

We begin with 3 deep breaths. One to be here... one to be together... and one to create space for God alive among us!

SONG --“The King of Glory” (Stu Sklamm)

GREETING (Mary)

Let us rejoice, for Jesus Christ is alive among us! Alleluia! Alleluia!

All: And all God's people reply: Alleluia! Alleluia!

CALL TO WORSHIP (Suzie De Quattro)

We come together today because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as people of God and body of Christ. We gather to remember that God is in love with us.

GATHERING PRAYER (Suzie)

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
during this Easter season
that pulls us into resurrection together.

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 in us.

INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Mary)

The theme today, the Fourth Sunday of Easter, is that Jesus protects his flock and rescues those who are astray.

The image of the shepherd is very important in Jewish history. Abraham and Jacob were shepherds, as were Moses and the prophet Amos.

Quoting the Dictionary of the Bible, "... the son of David, the king who had been a shepherd, was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, in a cave sheepfold, and the news of His birth was first manifested to shepherds. There is no doubt a contrast between shepherds, the poor and ignorant, and the leaders of Judaism."

So when Jesus introduces himself as the Good Shepherd, he is aligning himself with the poor.

The theme of the shepherd is introduced in our first reading from Psalm 23.

Show photo (Betty)



Richard McGinnis:

Yahweh is my shepherd,
I lack nothing.

In meadows of green grass he lets me lie,
To the waters of repose he leads me;
there he revives my soul.

He guides me by paths of virtue
for the sake of his name.

Though I pass through a gloomy valley,
I fear no harm;
beside me your rod and your staff
are there, to hearten me.

Show photo (Betty)



REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro)

What gloomy valleys are we passing through?

What are our rods and our staffs?

How are we heartened by Jesus' presence?

SILENCE -- Sound chime after 2 minutes. (Betty)

READING Gospel of John, 10: 1-10. (Mary Ott and Ann Regan and Bill Fanelli)

Mary Ott -- In today's reading from the Gospel of John, Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees. They don't understand his parable, so he tells it another way. Listen to the gospel as it changes from describing Jesus as the shepherd, and then to describing Him as the gate to the sheepfold.

Anne or Bill:

'I tell you most solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him: they do not recognize the voice of strangers.'

Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he meant by telling it to them.

Bill or Anne:

So Jesus spoke to them again:

'I tell you most solemnly,
I am the gate of the sheepfold.
All others who have come
are thieves and brigands;
but the sheep took no notice of them.
I am the gate.
Anyone who enters through me will be safe:
He will go freely in and out

And be sure of finding pasture.
The thief comes
Only to steal and kill and destroy.
I have come
so that they may have life
and have it to the full.

Show photo (Betty)



REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim)

Jesus describes himself as both the shepherd and the gate. How does either image appeal to you?

SILENCE -- Sound chime after 2 minutes. (Betty)

FIRST LETTER OF PETER (Mary)

In John's Gospel, Jesus continued:

I am the good shepherd:

The good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep.

The Jews knew that God, the shepherd of his people, was to choose a shepherd for them in the messianic age, so Jesus's assertion that he is the good shepherd is a claim to messiahship. As we read last Sunday, Jesus' followers hoped he was the messiah and were greatly discouraged when he was killed on Good Friday.

In the first letter of Peter, we read:

He was *bearing our faults* in his own body on the cross, so that we might die to our faults and live for holiness; *through his wounds you have been healed*. You *were like stray sheep* but now you have come back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Show slide (Betty)



REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim)

How are we like stray sheep?

Who is leading us back to the sheepfold?

SILENCE -- Sound chime after 2 minutes. (Betty)

REFLECTION (Marie McCarthy)

Mary: Now Marie McCarthy will read part of a homily by Susan Nagele at Catholic Women Preach:

Marie:

John's Gospel quotes Jesus as saying, "Whoever enters through me will be saved, will come in and go out and find pasture." And Peter's epistle invites us to consider what it's like to be a stray, to be uncared for.

Let's be practical. Jesus left this earth many years ago and it takes more than words to keep people and the animals alive. We, ourselves, must be the body of Christ. I think Jesus is telling us that there is nothing we shall want and we will have abundant life if we take care of one another the way a good shepherd takes care of the sheep.

It's also easy to feel overwhelmed by so much need in the world. That's when it helps me to reflect on the gatekeeper in the Gospel who opens the gate to the sheepfold. The gatekeeper can protect the sheep and make sure all are safely in the sheepfold at the end of the day. The gatekeeper can make sure that all the sheep have access to the good shepherd. Because the gatekeeper is the conduit between the shepherd and the sheep.

We are called to be good gate-keepers, attentive to the person in front of us, assisting this shepherd called Jesus.

Show photo (Betty)



REFLECTION QUESTION (Jim)

How are we to be gatekeepers, opening the gate to welcome others?

SILENCE -- Sound chime after 2 minutes. (Betty)

SHARING (Betty)

I invite you to share your reflections. Together we honor the infinite variety of God among us.

If you would like to speak, you will need to unmute yourself on your phone or in Zoom. After you speak, please mute yourself again. If more than one person speaks at once, one will go first and the other will speak after that.

Who would like to begin our sharing?

(SHARING)

Thank you. (If Betty readily thinks of two or three words on the spot to express the essence of sharings, she will mention that.)

Now Lynn Bufka will lead us in prayer.

INTENTION -- Lynn Bufka

From Peter's First Letter we hear that we have gone astray like sheep. And so we pray.

Our response will be: *Good Shepherd, hear our prayer:*

Let us pray that we are brought back to the shepherd and guardian of our souls. For this we pray. *Good Shepherd, hear our prayer.*

Let us pray that we are brought safely through the gloomy valley and need not fear any harm. For this we pray. *Good Shepherd, hear our prayer.*

Right now the leaders of Catholic sisters are striving to support their congregations while continuing their work in this unprecedented time. For all of them, and especially for the staff of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, we pray.

Good Shepherd, hear our prayer.

Let us 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.” We will respond with: *Good Shepherd, hear our prayer.*

(People offer prayers.)

(When there’s a notable pause in the prayers offered:)

Lynn continues if it seems appropriate: Are there other prayers you’d like to offer?

...

Lynn: Thank you.

We place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care, and we entrust the outcome to you. As we do, we use the words of Sister Sharlet Wagner. We thank you, God, that “It is not ours to see the future. Our task is not to create a plan for the new to emerge. It is to create a space for the new to emerge. For the young. For the growing diversities. A space where the Holy Spirit is free to work. If we can do this, the future will emerge. And it will be good.” Amen.

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Mary Ott)

Let's remember the future that was emerging 2000 years ago in the early Christian community.

Let's keep ourselves open to the future emerging among us today, and, like the early church, praise God and break bread together.

And so let us remember the night before Jesus died.
The first thing Jesus did was to give thanks.
So let us know that God is among us
and give thanks. (Pause.)

And then Jesus, who was having dinner with his friends,
looked at what was in front of him, the bread and the cup,
and he blessed them.
So let us, too, invite God right now
into what is front and center in our lives
and know that God will indeed enter what we offer – and bless it. (Pause.)

Alive in God's presence,
let us risk being transformed into bread for the world.

OUR FATHER (Suzie)

Now let's pray in harmony with all Christians throughout the world in the words that Jesus taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy 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.

PSALM 23, VERSES 1, 5 AND 6 (Mary and Richard)

Having been led through the gloomy valley, we return now to Psalm 23.

Show Photo -- (Betty)



Richard:

Yahweh is my shepherd,
I lack nothing.

You prepare a table before me
under the eyes of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil,
my cup brims over.

Ah, how goodness and kindness pursue me,
every day of my life;
my home, the house of Yahweh,
as long as I live!

CLOSING PRAYER (Mary)

Let us now go forth in peace:
in communion with each other
and offering communion to a hungry world. Amen.

CLOSING SONG (Reggie)

Refrain: We are God's people, the flock of the Lord.

1. Cry out with joy to the Lord,
All you lands, all you lands.
Serve the Lord now with gladness.
Come before God singing for joy.

2. Know that the Lord is God!
Know that the Lord is God!
Who made us; to God we belong,
God's people, the sheep of the flock.