**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, November 8, 2020**

**32ND Sunday in Ordinary Time**

“Once I had asked God for one or two extra inches in height, but instead God made me as tall as the sky, so high that I could not measure myself.”  Malala Yousafzai

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.
* Camera, Gallery/Speaker view. Second screen? Mute/unmute, even during singing.
* **I will now mute everybody.** Unmute to speak.

Now let’s put technical things aside.

WELCOME (Betty Thompson)

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Anne Regan & Bill Fanelli for preparing today’s communal prayer and to Stu Sklamm and Reggie Ott for making our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Judy Sholes, Maryann Dolan, Sister Grace Hartzog, Suzie & Jim DeQuattro, Marilyn Voigt, Lynn Bufka, Betty Thompson, Richard McGinnis, and Donna and Bill Ellerman.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

SETTLING IN (Anne Regan)

Settle into a comfortable position. Feel any tightness in your body and let your muscles loosen. Notice your thoughts and try to put aside those that distract you. Notice your breath as it goes in and out. As you exhale, let tensions leave you. As you inhale, feel God’s love flowing into you. And now let’s take 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together….and one to create space for how God will lead us today.

Now Stu Sklamm will lead us into our celebration.

OPENING – Eye has not seen (Stu Sklamm)

*Chorus:*

Eye has not seen,  
ear has not heard  
what God has ready  
for those who love him;  
Spirit of love, come,  
give us the mind of Jesus,  
teach us the wisdom of God.

*Verse:*

When pain and sorrow weigh us down,  
be near to us, O Lord,  
forgive the weakness of our faith,  
and bear us up within your peaceful word.

*Repeat Chorus*

Words and Music: Marty Haugen

GREETING (Bill Fanelli)

Beloved Community, rejoice! The Spirit of God is alive among us!

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

CALL TO WORSHIP (Bill Fanelli)

We come together today because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as the people of God and the body of Christ.  We are confident that in this next hour God will act in us and through us. We believe that God will give us light for our next step.

And now Judy Sholes and Maryann Dolan will gather us in prayer.

GATHERING PRAYER (Judy Sholes and Maryann Dolan)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **(Judy)** |  | **(Maryann)** |
| *1* | We come together     broken, shaken     shattered, barely standing,  As a church and as a people     we are holding tight        to a reality that we are            struggling to understand. | *2* | We come together     as the People  of God,  Simply together        without rank or hierarchy,           Seeking a glimpse of the                Divine that is love. |
| *3* | We come together to pray.     Words cannot utter our heart,      Images constrain our mind.  God knows what is deepest in our hearts,      We sit open to this understanding.          God, show each of us              what is needed. | *4* | We gather as the People of God,        angry, distraught            called to action. |
| *5* | We gather      seeking a unifying love           that only can come from the                 presence of the Divine One. | *6* | Love's greatest design             is for wholeness and healing.   We gather as the People of God,     called to incarnate this          great design to all              whom we encounter. |

Amen

INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Bill Fanelli)

Like the early Christians, we find ourselves aware of the darkness, fearing chaos, and searching for guideposts we can trust. At times, it is difficult to imagine how we are to participate in the coming about of transcendent love. Today’s readings invite us to consider that we are held closely by Wisdom and well-advised in how to be prepared for an uncertain future.

In our first reading, we are introduced to Sophia, also known as Wisdom. Wisdom is joyous, playful, darting, and seeking. The universe and the entire cosmos are Sophia/Wisdom’s dwelling place. She undergirds all things and permeates them, bringing order from chaos, while she plays with God from before the beginning of time.

The second reading from Matthew is a parable admonishing us to stay constantly ready for the unexpected to arrive. It is our sacred responsibility to be prepared. We must have oil in our lamps. Oil was a symbol for good works, especially the good works of justice and mercy. Understanding the oil as symbolic of good works makes it easier to see why the wedding attendants could not share their oil.

The tension of the already, as in the Beatitudes, and the not yet, as in today’s gospel, pervades the life of the Christian. Sophia tells us that Wisdom is about the common good of all, not the self.

*(Slight pause)*

Sister Grace Hartzog will now read from the book of Wisdom.

FIRST READING (Sister Grace Hartzog, SC ) WIS 6:12-16

Resplendent and unfading is wisdom,

and she is readily perceived by those who love her,

and found by those who seek her.

She hastens to make herself known in anticipation of their desire;

Whoever watches for her at dawn shall not be disappointed,

for he shall find her sitting by his gate.

For taking thought of wisdom is the perfection of prudence,

and whoever for her sake keeps vigil

shall quickly be free from care;

because she makes her own rounds, seeking those worthy of her,

and graciously appears to them in the ways,

and meets them with all solicitude.

*(Slight pause)*

We now offer the following questions for your reflection, after which we will pause for two minutes of silence.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS 1 (Jim DeQuattro)

How do I experience Wisdom seeking me and graciously making herself known to me?

In difficult times, what practices or companions open me to the playful, imaginative joy of Wisdom?

*SILENCE*  (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) **(Anne/Bill)**

Marilyn Voigt will now read from Matthew’s Gospel.

GOSPEL (Marilyn Voigt) MT 25:1-13

Jesus told his disciples this parable:

"The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins  
who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.   
Five of them were foolish and five were wise.   
The foolish ones, when taking their lamps,  
brought no oil with them,  
but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps.   
Since the bridegroom was long delayed,  
they all became drowsy and fell asleep.  
At midnight, there was a cry,  
‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’  
Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps.   
The foolish ones said to the wise,  
‘Give us some of your oil,  
for our lamps are going out.’  
But the wise ones replied,  
'No, for there may not be enough for us and you.  
Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.’  
While they went off to buy it,  
the bridegroom came  
and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him.   
Then the door was locked.  
Afterwards the other virgins came and said,  
‘Lord, Lord, open the door for us!’  
But he said in reply,  
‘Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.’  
Therefore, stay awake,  
for you know neither the day nor the hour."

*( Slight pause)*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS 2 (Jim DeQuattro)

Where are you getting your oil? How is your oil supply at the moment?

How do you feel about sharing your oil with others who are less prepared?

*SILENCE*  (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) **(Anne/Bill)**

REFLECTION (Anne Regan)

The tension of the already, and the not yet pervades the life of the Christian. Sophia tells us that Wisdom is about the common good, not the self.

We are called to trust that wisdom is available, and to commit to being goodness in the world.

In her 1976 keynote address at the Democratic National Convention, Representative Barbara Jordan explains the importance of committing to the common good.

“And now -- now we must look to the future. Let us heed the voice of the people and recognize their common sense. If we do not, we not only blaspheme our political heritage, we ignore the common ties that bind all Americans. Many fear the future. Many are distrustful of their leaders, and believe that their voices are never heard. Many seek only to satisfy their private work -- wants; to satisfy their private interests. But this is the great danger America faces -- that we will cease to be one nation and become instead a collection of interest groups: city against suburb, region against region, individual against individual; each seeking to satisfy private wants. If that happens, who then will speak for America? Who then will speak for the common good?”

Sister Simone Campbell, of Catholic Network, names this as the dark night of our nation. Theologican Matthew Fox refers to this as “lucky darkness” where there is little or nothing to steer by but the fire deep in our hearts. Meister Eckhart calls this the “spark of God: urging us on to follow and learn. In the midst of these dark nights, chaos reigns and there are no guideposts to be trusted. The moment calls for spiritual courage to face the struggle and trust that the Divine spark is alive in our midst, loving us into courageous action, wise words and generous hearts. In this experience of liberating darkness, let us commit ourselves to sacred action. Then in whatever follows, let us commit ourselves to be missionaries for the common good. Let us bring the truth of the Gospel and the strength of the Spirit with us into action.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim DeQuattro)

At a practical level, how might we step out in faith, look fear in the face and meet the challenges of today and the weeks ahead?

What does uncommon courage look like today?

*SILENCE* (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) **(Anne Regan/Bill Fanelli)**

Lynn Bufka will now lead our sharing.

SHARING (Lynn Bufka)

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in your heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on these readings. That helps us to 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.

As you share your feelings, please use "I” or “me". And let's leave a bit of silence between speakers. A bridge of silence allows us to take in what was just said and gives others the chance to gather their feelings to share.

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. (Pause for 30 seconds.)

Now who would like to start our sharing? Remember to unmute yourself to speak and mute yourself again afterwards.

(Sharing)

Is there anyone else who would like to share? [Pause.]

Thank you. Now Betty Thompson will lead us in community prayer.

COMMUNITY PRAYERS (Betty Thompson)

Through our prayers, we express what it means to be the communion of saints, living the beatitudes. And so we pray. Our response will be: Spirit of Love, hear our prayer

God among us, stir our hearts and minds that we might fight for a vision that is worthy of you and your call to honor the dignity of all creation. For this we pray. Spirit of Love, hear our prayer.

God within us, in the prophetic words of Sister Joan Chittister, move each of us to make an unflinching commitment to act with integrity – out of the fullness of our being, let us pray. Spirit of Love, hear our prayer

God beyond us, liberate us from our lack of love and thinking only of ourselves let us pray. Spirit of Love, hear our prayer

God of abundance, unite us with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in taking the next steps in our collective journey through the desert. Knowing that the circumstances feel bleak and we can’t see the destination, help us to accept that we are called to trust that the journey will be fruitful. Let us pray. Spirit of Love, hear our prayer

For what else shall we pray? Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute yourself afterwards.

(Shared prayers)

Loving God, we place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care. We will do all that we can to put our prayers into action – while entrusting the outcome to you. Amen.

OFFERTORY (Richard McGinnis)

As Pope Francis has said, “The proving ground for prayer is concrete love for one's neighbor.”

Let us now take time to silently name something we commit to offering others this week [Pause.]

In thanksgiving for the presence of God’s great love, and in unity with the Holy Spirit, let us pray. God of abundance, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures with our neighbors so we may ourselves be a light and a witness to the transforming love so freely offered us. Amen.

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Suzie DeQuattro)

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 presence.

Amen.

OUR FATHER (Donna and Bill Ellerman)

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

***All (muted):*** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy 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.

FINAL BLESSING (Anne Regan)

While we keep ourselves muted, let’s reach out and bless each other:

May Light always surround you;

Hope kindle and rebound you.

May your Hurts turn to Healing;

Your Heart embrace Feeling.

May Wounds become Wisdom;

Every Kindness a Prism.

May Laughter infect you;

Your Passion resurrect you.

May Goodness inspire

your Deepest Desires.

Through all that you Reach For,

May your arms Never Tire.

― D. Simone

And now, Reggie Ott will lead us in our closing song.

CLOSING SONG (Reggie Ott)

**All You Works of God**

*Verse 1:*

Sun and moon: Bless your Maker!

Stars of heaven: Chant your praise!

Showers and dew: Raise up your joyful song!

*Chorus:*

All you works of God,

Every mountain, star and tree,

Bless the One who shapes your beauty,

Who has caused you all to be

One great song of love and grace,

Ever ancient, ever new

Raise your voices, all you works of God.

*Verse 2*

Winds of God: Bless your Maker!

Cold and winter: Chant your praise!

Snow storms and ice: Raise up your joyful song!

*Verse 3:*

Night and day: Bless your Maker!

Light and darkness: Chant your praise!

Lightnings and clouds: Raise up your joyful song!

**RESOURCES:**

Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM: Solidarity: A Public Virtue  
<https://cac.org/solidarity-a-public-virtue-2020-11-01/>

Barbara Jordan 1976 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address:  
<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barbarajordan1976dnc.html>

Courage and the Common Good – LCWR  
<https://lcwr.org/sites/default/files/resolutions/attachments/10.13.20_commongood.pdf>

D. Simone prayer  
<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/694939-may-light-always-surround-you-hope-kindle-and-rebound-you>

Simone Campbell (Fall, 2020). Seeking the Divine in the Darkness: Braving this tie with courage and wisdom. Connections.  
<https://networklobby.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Connection2020.04.pdf>