

## **SOLIDARITY WITH SISTERS' SUNDAY SERVICE – (DATE), 2020**

**“When we rise, we rise together.” – Sr. Helen Prejean’s Easter Sunday [reflection](#)**

### **TECHNICAL CHECK-IN (Betty)**

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!

- Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
- Thanks to Stu Sklamm and Reggie Ott, who will lead us in music.
- Thanks to readers today – Marilyn Voigt, Jim De Quattro, Joan Sklamm, Mary Ott, Richard McGinnis, Bill Fanelli, and Anne Regan. If you’d like to read in future Sundays, please get in touch.

### **SETTLING IN (Betty)**

Let’s get settled as we prepare to begin. Settle into a comfortable position. Notice your breath as it goes in and out. Become aware of divine presence in you as inhale, and tensions leaving as you exhale. And now let’s take 3 deep breaths. One to be here... one to be together... and one to create space for God alive among us!

Now Stu Sklamm will lead us into our celebration.

### **OPENING – THE KING OF GLORY (Stu)**

### **GREETING (Betty)**

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

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

### **CALL TO WORSHIP (Betty)**

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. Jesus told us that wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he is right here in the midst of us. We pray that in this strange and often difficult time, our time together this morning will be radiant with the light of Christ.

### **GATHERING PRAYER (Betty)**

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.  
Amen.

### **INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Suzie)**

Last week we reflected on Jesus as the good shepherd and the gatekeeper. Today we're asked to leave the sheepfold and follow where Jesus leads. We focus today on what it means to choose Jesus as our Way, our Truth, and our Life. Like the early disciples our situation has changed: we are living in a time we didn't foresee or choose. And in the midst of this we have Jesus' promise that "whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself. Indeed, they will perform even greater works." These challenging words give us energy and hope.

The early Christian community struggled with the question of who belonged and who was rejected and how each was called to serve the community. The elders did not shy away from grappling with these conflicts and recognized that the existing leaders could

not meet all the community's needs. Jesus was no longer able to instruct them directly, but they had each other and their shared memory of Jesus' words. What kind of community did Jesus ask them to create? What was their call to perform works of radical love as Jesus had?

The early church came to a clear decision that there were more leaders among them than those they had inherited from the past; that service is an essential part of leadership. And they followed Jesus' practice that no one in the community was to be rejected or ignored.

We'll hear this play itself out in different ways through the readings – how the church is built of the rejected stones – how we are called to continue the work of Jesus. The readings tell us this is hard work, the answers aren't obvious – but we can do this. If we figure it out, we can do even greater works than Jesus. We don't do this on our own. This happens because of God's action in us, not because it's all up to us. We have Jesus's promise that wherever we are, he will also be, and wherever he is, we will also be.

Rejected stones are important. The stone the builder rejected has become the cornerstone. What are our roles as building blocks of a church built on the Gospel?

[Pause.]

After each reading, we will offer questions before we pause for silent reflection. Don't feel you have to answer all questions. To stay with only one of them might lead you into a deeper place.

Marilyn Voigt will now read from the Acts of the Apostles.

### **READING 1 -- FROM THE 6<sup>ND</sup> CHAPTER OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (Marilyn)**

About this time, when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenists made a complaint against the Hebrews: that in the daily distribution, their own widows were being overlooked. So the Twelve called a full meeting of the disciples and addressed them, "You must select from among yourselves seven people of good reputation, filled with the Spirit and with wisdom, to whom we can hand over this duty."

The whole assembly approved of this proposal and elected Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, together with six others: Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these six to the apostles, and after prayer they laid their hands on them.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim)**

What current needs and disparities in our communities are we tempted to overlook?

How do we recognize leaders among us who are filled with wisdom and able to serve?

**SILENCE** (Sound a chime after 1:45 minutes.) **(Suzie)**

**READING 2 – FROM CHAPTER 2 OF THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER (Joan)**

A reading from the First Letter of Peter:

Beloved:

Come to Jesus, a living stone, rejected by human beings  
but chosen and precious in the sight of God,  
and, like living stones,  
let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood,  
a holy nation, a people of God,  
so that you may announce the praises of God  
who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim)**

What is it like to be rejected – and then to become a cornerstone?

How does a community move from spiritual darkness into God's wonderful light?

**SILENCE** (Sound a chime after 1:45.) **(Suzie)**

### **READING 3 -- FROM THE 14<sup>TH</sup> CHAPTER OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (Mary)**

A reading from the Gospel of John:

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me.

'There are many rooms in my Father's house; if there were not, I would have told you. I am going now to prepare a place for you. And after I have gone and prepared a place for you, I shall return to take you with me; so that where I am you may be too. You know the way to the place where I am going.'

Thomas said, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?'

Jesus said: 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. And in all truth I tell you, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself. Indeed, they will perform even greater works.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim)**

In which of God's many rooms would you like to reside?

Jesus said that we believers will perform even greater works than he did. What does that mean to you?

**SILENCE** (Sound a chime after 1:45 minutes.) **(Suzie)**

### **READING 4 – REFLECTION BY SR. DONNA CIANGIO (Richard)**

A reading from today's homily by Sister Donna Ciangio on the website Catholic Women Preach:

On this Fifth Sunday of Easter, in the Eastern Church, the feast of St. Photine is celebrated. St. Photine is the name given to the Samaritan Woman whom Jesus spoke with at the well. The name means "*luminous one*" because she heard the words of Christ and recognized him as the savior. It is through her words and witness that a whole village comes to believe in the Christ of the living water.

Think of what you do each day to witness Christ to others. Think of the things you say and do to advance the mission of Jesus. (Pause.)

We know that the women of Scripture have played pivotal roles as prophets, preachers, evangelizers, deacons, and leaders of prayer and Christian communities.

Today we continue to have opportunities and obligations to step up and lead in those same roles. As hard as it is, we need to seek those roles and see ourselves as prophets manifesting the Word of God to all. And we must help others to do the same.

We do this because of the words of Jesus in this Gospel:

*“Where I am you also may be.”*

and *“Whoever believes in me will do the work I do, and even more.”*

Each of these phrases is essential to us. We bring Christ wherever we are. We are given the work to carry on the mission of Christ in our time and in various ways.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim)**

Have you ever felt your voice silenced or your gifts discounted? What would help you to speak up and exercise your gifts in community?

Do you feel a personal call to do the work of Jesus in a particular way?

**SILENCE** (Sound a chime after 1:45 minutes.) **(Suzie)**

### **SHARING (Suzie)**

I invite you to share your reflections. Everyone’s individual reflections help us to glimpse the many ways God is 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 the leader of this part can come up with two or three words on the spot to express the essence you, mention that. No pressure to do that.)

Now Bill and Anne will lead us in prayer.

**INTENTION (Bill and Anne)**

God who makes all things new, we come to you carrying many different longings, both old and new. We long for a swift and safe end to this pandemic. We long for things we have been used to that are not possible at this time. We long for the ease of not having to adjust to constantly shifting situations. At the same time, we long for changes that we can't quite imagine in ourselves, in our church, and in society. We long for you to swoop in and fix everything even as we know that we are your hands in our world. We pray that you will help us sort out our longings, hold onto what is of you, and then "let go and let come."

Our response will be: Holy One, hear our prayer.

God in all things, help us to recognize you during this pandemic in the endless ways you are present – in suffering, in goodness, in creativity, in truth, in ourselves, and in Earth. Hold close to your heart those who have died and those who are suffering. Pour out your love on everyone working so hard for health and safety and truth. Help us and our leaders to act with wisdom. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

The leaders of Catholic sisters are striving to support their congregations while continuing their works of love in this unprecedented time. For all of them, and especially for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

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.

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 (Betty)**

Just as in the early Christian community,  
your future is eager to be born in us.  
You nourish us for this work as we break bread together.

And so we 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.]

We thank you, O God, for your blessings,  
and for the life you give us in each other.  
Amen.

### **OUR FATHER (Betty)**

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 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.

## **BLESSING FOR MOTHERS' DAY (Suzie)**

For the mothers among us – don't stand up, but do feel your spine stretch tall as we take a minute to offer our communal blessing for mothers. Feel your kinship with Mary, who walked with her son through endless twists and turns, sorrows and joys. Feel your kinship with each other, and with mothers all over the globe who make themselves vulnerable, who make themselves strong, who make themselves grow, so that children can survive and, we hope, so that all children will thrive.

As we honor mothers – here is a question for each person here. Who would you want to name as mother? Hold them for a moment in silence.

In a minute, we will unmute ourselves and say the names aloud, all together. The names will be our chorus of prayer. Each of these people has given unique goodness to our lives.

As we hear all the names spoken, may their unique presence resonate in us as a community.

May our gratitude for each of them echo our gratitude for the gifts we have received as mothers.

May the strength of each of them inspire us in knowing how to give our own unique gifts to our beloved children.

Now let's unmute ourselves. And think of the names who are part of this blessing for you. Let's all say them now:

...

We thank God for mothers!

Amen.

## **FINAL BLESSING (Suzie)**

Now, as we end, let's bless each other. Please mute yourself but speak aloud. And we know that our care for each other and our prayers for each other are not mute at all.

All: May the Lord bless us and keep us.  
May the Lord shine his light upon us.  
May the Lord be gracious to us  
and give us peace.  
Amen.

## **CLOSING SONG: City of God (Reggie)**

[Verse 1]

Awake from your slumber! Arise from your sleep!  
A new day is dawning for all those who weep.  
The people in darkness have seen a great light.  
The Lord of our longing has conquered the night. [Chorus]

Chorus:

Let us build the city of God!  
May our tears be turned into dancing!  
For the Lord, our light and our love,  
Has turned the night into day!

We are sons of the morning; we are daughters of day.  
The One who has loved us has brightened our way. [Chorus]