**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, January 17, 2021**

*"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.”*

*Thomas Merton*

**CHECK-IN** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Suzie De Quattro and Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME (Lynn Bufka)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Before we begin today, we have one announcement. We really found using the Blue Books from the Saginaw diocese during Advent helped many of us in our spiritual journey. So we decided to get Little Black Books for all to read and utilize in their Lenten preparations. Suzie DeQuattro physically has them and we will work out a way for each who wants one to get them. Please watch your emails for more information.
* My father and I prepared today’s communal prayer and we thank Reggie Ott, Stu Sklamm and Linda Donaldson for making our music and Betty Thompson for keeping us technical.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: George Fulk, Bob Gallagher, Ann Jelen, Debbie Ballard, Kathy Linaberry, Peggy Thompson, Sr. Marie McCarthy, Jim DeQuattro, Maryann Dolan, Richard McGinness, and Joan Sklamm.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Lynn Bufka)**

We are not all in the same place, but we can still be together by sharing a common breath.  So let us begin by slowly taking one collective breath together -  in and out.   With each breath let the Spirit of God settle deeper into you as your exhale tensions from your body and distractions from your mind.  In and out.   Now let’s take 3 more breaths.  One to be here…one to be together…and one to make space for what God has incarnated in you.

Now Reggie Ott will lead us into our prayer together.

**OPENING SONG**  **(Reggie Ott)**

Lord, When You Came/ Pescador de Hombres

V1: Lord, when you came to the seashore

You weren’t seeking the wise or the wealthy

But only asking that I might follow.

Refrain:

O Lord, in my eyes you were gazing

Kindly smiling, my name you were saying

All I treasured, I have left on the sand there;

Close to you, I will find other seas.

V2: Lord, have you need of my labor,

Hands for service, a heart made for living

My arms for lifting the poor and broken? Refrain

V3: Lord, send me where you would have me,

To a village, or heart of the city

I will remember that you are with me. Refrain

**GREETING (George Fulk)**

Beloved Community, rejoice!

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

**CALL TO WORSHIP**  **(George Fulk)**

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 gather to celebrate the great fact that God is in love with us. 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. We are in a tumultuous time with hope and uncertainty ahead but we trust that if we listen, we will hear God’s call as we continue our journey.

And now Peggy Thompson will lead us in prayer

**GATHERING PRAYER** **(Peggy Thompson)**

God of prophets, God of grace, teach us how to be your community – help us to hear your call and respond. May we inquire, nudge, and challenge each other to recognize what is ours to do in the world.

Amen.

Sr. Marie McCarthy will now introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Sr. Marie McCarthy)**

Last week, we reflected upon the Baptism of Jesus. A voice said, “You are my beloved.” And so Jesus entered on his mission. This week, we read how God called Samuel. Jesus called the disciples. This call was the start of their vocations, a word which comes from the Latin word ‘to call.’ In today’s reading, when Samuel is called by God, he doesn’t realize the call is from God. Eli helps Samuel to recognize God’s call. In the Gospel, John the Baptist points his followers to Jesus and they follow him. Jesus asks them, “What are you looking for?” These readings invite us to reflect on God’s call in our lives. We, too, are beloved of God and are called to our mission. How are we called? What is our vocation, our calling? And how do we hear and respond to God’s call now? God may be calling us and pulling us to respond in new ways as events continue to unfold around us.

*(Slight pause)*

Now Bob Gallagher will read from the First book of Samuel, followed by questions and silence for reflection. Feel free to stay with whatever question calls you.

**READING 1**  **(Bob Gallagher)**

**(1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19)**

Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was.  
The LORD called to Samuel, who answered, “Here I am.”  
Samuel ran to Eli and said, “Here I am.  You called me.”  
“I did not call you,” Eli said.  “Go back to sleep.”  
So he went back to sleep.  
Again the LORD called Samuel, who rose and went to Eli.  
“Here I am,” he said.  “You called me.”  
But Eli answered, “I did not call you, my son.  Go back to sleep.”

At that time Samuel was not familiar with the LORD,  
because the LORD had not revealed anything to him as yet.  
The LORD called Samuel again, for the third time.  
Getting up and going to Eli, he said, “Here I am.  You called me.”  
Then Eli understood that the LORD was calling the youth.  
So he said to Samuel, “Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply,  
Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.”

When Samuel went to sleep in his place,  
the LORD came and revealed his presence,  
calling out as before, “Samuel, Samuel!”  
Samuel answered, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Samuel grew up, and the LORD was with him,  
not permitting any word of his to be without effect.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim DeQuattro)**

When has it been hard for you to recognize God’s call?

How is God calling you to make this a better world in your ordinary circumstances of family, work and play?

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Betty:** Slide, time 2:00, chime, stop slide**)**

**(Lynn will read this)**

Next, we will hear part of a beloved hymn, “Here I am, Lord” sung by a virtual choir from Grosse Pointe Memorial Church in Michigan. Then, Kathy Linaberry will read a reflection on this hymn, followed by questions and silence for reflection.

(**Betty**: play until 1:38 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mJqH4xgFqU> )

**READING 2 (Kathy Linaberry)**

Rector Louise Browner Blanchard of St Mary’s Episcopal Church in Goochland, VA reflects on the hymn, “Here I am, Lord.”

The words are essentially a dialogue between God and, well, us: between God, who has heard his people cry and wants to know who will bear his light; God, who has borne his people’s pain and wants to know who will speak his word to them; God who tends the sick and lame and wants to know who will give his life to them…and us. The refrain – presumably our answer – is ‘Here I am, Lord, is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.’ It’s very pretty and quite stirring, and you often hear it at faith-affirming occasions like confirmations and ordinations.

It scares me to death.

It just feels so momentous…first, in the reminder of the devastation, heartbreak, injustice, and pain in the world and that there’s just no getting around that. Then, in the realization that God cares about it and that God is present in all of it. And then, even more, in the realization that God is calling us, as Christians, to do something about it.”

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim DeQuattro)**

How do we find the courage and faith to say “Here I am, Lord”? Do we particularly need courage right now, in these politically divisive times to respond?

As a community, how do we hear God’s call?

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Betty:** Slide, time 2:00, chime, stop slide**)**

Now Ann Jelen will read a brief reflection from Sr. Mary McGlone on beginning to follow Jesus followed by questions and silence.

**READING 3 (Ann Jelen)**

Today’s Gospel reading is from John. In this reading, John the Baptist is standing with two of his disciples and sees Jesus walk by. John says “Behold, the Lamb of God” and the disciples heard this and followed Jesus. Sr. Mary McGlone reflects on the story.

“As John's disciples set off on the journey that would redefine their lives, Jesus turned to them and asked one of the most basic questions that every thinking person must answer: ‘What/who are you looking for?’ These are the first words Jesus speaks in this Gospel and the question this Gospel asks every reader….

Whether or not we think it through, whether or not we ever imagine Jesus asking us, everything we do responds to Jesus' question, ‘What do you seek?’”

*(Slight pause)*

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim DeQuattro)**

Just as Eli needed help recognizing the call was from the Lord, so too did the disciples. Who is helping you recognize God’s call?

How do you answer Jesus’ question ‘What do you seek?’

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Betty:** Slide, time 2:00, chime, stop slide**)**

**SHARING TIME (Lynn Bufka)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you have reflected upon our reading and music. We welcome everyone who wants to speak, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening,

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. [Long-ish pause]

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

[Sharing]

[If there is silence more than about 30 seconds before anyone speaks:] Take whatever quiet you need before you speak.

[If there is extended silence during the sharing:] Is there anyone else who would like to share?  [Pause.]

[Stop by about 11:20.]

Thank you.

Now Maryann Dolan will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY(Maryann Dolan)**

We have just listened to God’s word – in scripture, in everyone’s reflections, and in our hearts and minds. Let’s pause in silence so we can each answer this question: This morning, right now, what is God’s call? What has the word of God invited me to become or to do? [Pause….]

As we offer our prayers, our response will be: Holy One, hear our prayer.

God within us, each day this week, help us live the awareness you have given us this morning. Help us recognize your call to us. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

We pray for an increase in courage to answer your call in our lives every day. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

As we confront the realities of systemic racism and racial and ethnic health disparities, let us model our response on the response of Dr. Martin Luther King, whom we remember tomorrow. Dr. King urged action consistent with Jesus' 'extremist' love. May we too act for justice with 'extremist' love. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

Women religious show us what it means to answer your call, O God. Thank you for their model and bless them to continue to fully live their responses to your call. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

Strengthen all those who are messengers of God’s call. Let their call be heard and let us respond to them with grace and love. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

We pray for our country, the new administration to be led by President Biden and Vice President Harris and all those elected to serve the citizenry that each hears and responds to God’s call. May all respond with loving action and healing. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

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

(Shared prayers)

O Great Love, we place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your care, and we entrust the outcome to you. As we do, we use the words of Bishop Ken Untener: “This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities…. We are prophets of a future not our own.” Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Richard McGinness)**

Often, through our shared reflections, we discern a call to take some kind of action.

Let us now take time to name within ourselves something we will offer to others this week 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 (Debbie Ballard)**

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 and among 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 in our world. [Pause.]

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

May we nourish others with your presence.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Joan Sklamm)**

Now let us join our hearts as if we could join our hands to 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 do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil

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

**FINAL BLESSING (Stu Sklamm and Linda Donaldson)**

May the Lord bless and keep you!   
May he make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.   
And give you his peace.

May our God bless and keep you!   
May she make her face shine upon you and be gracious to you.   
And give you her peace.

**CLOSING (Lynn and Betty)**

**Lynn Bufka:** Join together as we sing Anthem as sung and played by Jeffrey Kwong and appreciate the visuals that accompany the song.

**Anthem (Betty to play the link)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HP2gwC5TGFs>

We are called, we are chosen. We are Christ for one another.

We are promised to tomorrow, while we are for him today.

We are sign, we are wonder. We are sower, we are seed.

We are harvest, we are hunger. We are question, we are creed.

V1 Then where can we stand justified? In what can we believe?

In no one else but Christ who suffered, nothing more than Christ who rose.

Who was justice for the poor. Who was rage against the night.

Who was hope for peaceful people. Who was light.

V3 Then shall we not stand empty at the altar of our dreams:

When Christ promised us ourselves. Who mark time against tomorrow.

Who are justice for the poor. Who are rage against the night.

Who are hope for peaceful people. Who are light.

**Resources**

* <http://www.stmarysgoochland.org/2015/07/here-i-am-lord/>
* <https://www.ncronline.org/sunday-resource/jan-17-2021-second-sunday-ordinary-time>
* Reflection slide background: Mark Rothko, part of Blue Orange Red 1961