**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, Aug. 22, 2021**

*“He has told you, O mortal, what is good.*

*And what does the Lord require of you?*

*To act justly and to love mercy and walk humbly with your God.”  Micah 6:8*

**HELLOs** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Betty or Suzie)**

**WELCOME  (Betty or Suzie)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Alicia Urban who prepared this communal prayer.
* Thanks to Linda Donaldson for our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: George Urban, Donna Ellerman, Mia Brown, Patricia Gabig, Kathy Cavanaugh, Bill Cavanaugh, Dan McCarthy, Karen McCarthy, Anne Regan, Maryann Dolan, Tim Brown
* If you are willing to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN   (George Urban)**

As we begin our liturgy, let the love of Jesus flood into your being slowly with each inward breath pray Come and Exhale pray Jesus: “Come, ….Jesus, ….come, ….Jesus, ….come, ….Jesus” and feel being filled with His Love! (pause)

Now let’s all take three deep breaths: one to be here in prayer, one to be with one another, and one for the struggles for justice and adequate food and shelter for people in our country and the rest of the world.

om, Jesus, come, Jesus, come, Jesus." and be filled with his love

PAUSE

**George**: Now join in the singing of: “Micah 6:8.“

“We are called to act justly; we are called to love mercy and walk humbly with your God.”

**Betty:   YouTube: Micah 6:8 - Maranatha Music (Lyric Video)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5Tb4-riE7o>

(Fade after first verse.)

**OPENING  GREETING:  OPENING GREETING (Donna Ellerman)**

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

**All:** Thanks be to God!  Alleluia!  Alleluia!  (pause)

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Donna Ellerman)**

Loving God, you desire so much for us to know your son, Jesus.

Help us keep our eyes fixed on him as we serve others reverently.

Guide us in seeking justice and mercy out of love for you.              (pause)

**GATHERING PRAYER  (Mia Brown )**

When day comes we ask ourselves,

where can we find light in this never-ending shade?

The loss we carry,

a sea we must wade.

We've braved the belly of the beast.

We've learned that quiet isn't always peace,

And the norms and notions

of what “just” is

aren’t always just-ice.

And yet the dawn is ours

before we knew it.

Somehow we do it.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME  (Alicia Urban)**

In different ways, both of today ‘s readings challenge us to “open our ears to hear.”

In the first reading, it’s hard for many of us 21st century people to even listen to the Ephesians reading about “Wives be subordinate to their husbands/ For the husband is head of his wife.”  Times have changed since the 1st century.  This quote can feel like an attack on relationships of equality and mutual respect.  The quote is the second sentence of the epistle and it can eclipse the first verse. Note that the 1st verse is:  “Brothers and sisters: Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

I learned from professors that, in studying the scriptures, we need remember to:

Consider the time in which it was written--the when

To whom it was addressed--the audience, the who

And what is the message to us in the NOW!  This is important for our praying with any scripture passage.

So today, instead of getting tripped up on that verse, see if you can listen to the message of the whole passage.  Two thousand years ago, loving partnership was not a standard definition of marriage.  Yet we hear:  “Be subordinate to one another.”  “Husbands, love your wives.”  Another message, repeated in several ways, is:  “I speak of Christ and the Church.”

And a quick aside:  If you feel a grudge against Paul because of this passage, consider that there is debate among scripture scholars over who actually wrote this epistle. With scrutiny of the original Greek, they think it may have been written later, in the name of Paul – this was very acceptable then.  So it’s not clear who wrote it, when it was written, or what was going on in the community at the time.  We can add all this into our reaction and our reflection as we pray with this scripture and ponder what God is saying to us.

Now, let us listen to Patricia Gabig reading from Eph 5:21-32.

**READING 1 (Patricia Gabig)**

Brothers and sisters:
Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.
Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord.
For the husband is head of his wife
just as Christ is head of the church,
he himself the savior of the body.
As the church is subordinate to Christ,
so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything.
Husbands, love your wives,
even as Christ loved the church
and handed himself over for her to sanctify her,
cleansing her by the bath of water with the word,
that he might present to himself the church in splendor,
without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
that she might be holy and without blemish.
So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.
He who loves his wife loves himself.
For no one hates his own flesh
but rather nourishes and cherishes it,
even as Christ does the church,
because we are members of his body.
This is a great mystery,
but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS (Kathy Cavanaugh)**

What emotions have come to you while listening to this letter?

Reflect on the expressions of love you just heard. Can you stay with this emotion?

What memories of your own life experience come forth as you listened to this reading?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE**   **(Betty:** Share slide 1; time 2:00; stop slide after chime.)

**INPUT FOR THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (Alicia)**

Let’s continue with some context about the gospel of John.  Scholars believe it was the last gospel to be written, maybe during the final decade of the first century.  It is addressed to what is called “the Johannine Community” – a particular group of early Christians who cultivated an intense devotion to Jesus as the definitive revelation of God under the guidance of the Spirit.  It may have been composed by a group of leaders and named for the important historical figure “John.”  Catholics are taught to be contextual readers, not literalists.  So it is not heresy for Catholic biblical scholars to tell us that all of the gospels may be named for important early followers of Jesus, rather than written by them.

In recent weeks we’ve been reading the 6th chapter of this gospel, including the Multiplication of the loaves and fishes, and the part called “The Bread of Life Discourse.”  Today we hear the end of the chapter.  It tells of doubters and those who give up being disciples of Jesus.  The 12 remain and Jesus takes them away to a separate place to hear more “good news.” It reminds me of going on a retreat.  Can you be there with them?

So we know the when and we know the audience.  Now let’s listen to the message for us NOW.

Now listen as **Bill Cavanagh** proclaims the Gospel of John 6:60-69.

**READING 2 (Bill Cavanaugh)**

**Last week Jesus said, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven.  Whoever eats this bread will live forever.”  Today we pick up from that statement.  (Pause.)**

Many of Jesus’ disciples who were listening said,
“This saying is hard; who can accept it?”
Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this,
he said to them, “Does this shock you?
What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending
to where he was before?
It is the spirit that gives life,
while the flesh is of no avail.
The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life.
But there are some of you who do not believe.”
Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe
and the one who would betray him.
And he said,
“For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me
unless it is granted him by my Father.”

As a result of this,
many of his disciples returned to their former way of life
and no longer accompanied him.
Jesus then said to the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?”
Simon Peter answered him, “Master, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.
We have come to believe
and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS (Kathy Cavanaugh)**

*(Pause between questions.)*

Imagine yourself in the group who have been following Jesus. Do you find ~~all~~ his teachings hard to accept as many did, or are you there near Jesus willing to go with him no matter how hard and risky it might be?

What is your reaction to Jesus’ saying: “The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life.  But there are some of you who do not believe.”

**COMMUNAL SILENCE**   **(Betty:** Share slide 2; time 2:00; stop after chime.)

**READING 3 (Suzie)**

With today’s readings, we have worked to “open our ears” – to recognize the whole message for the people to whom it was written, as well as to us today.

In a broader way, we do the same thing together here each week:  Together we try to grasp the wholeness of the message of Jesus, and to live it.  Jesus’ message of love for God and each other echoes through our opening song from Micah:

*“He has told you, O mortal, what is good.*

*And what does the Lord require of you?*

*To act justly and to love mercy and walk humbly with your God.”*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS (Kathy Cavanaugh)**

*(Pause between questions.)*

When have you tried to listen from a cultural context other than your own?  How did you react and how did you feel as a result?

What do you feel about:  what the Lord requires of you?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE**   **(Betty:** Share slide 2; time 2:00; stop after chime.)

Alicia:  George Urban will now lead our sharing.

**SHARING  (George Urban)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on these readings and how they help 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.  If possible, let those of us who shared first last week wait several minutes, so others might feel invited to speak.

As you share your feelings, please try to use "I” or “me".  Also, let us leave a deep breath of silence between each speaker.   A bridge of silence allows us to take in what was just shared and let it influence what we may want to share.

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

Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute again afterwards.

Who would like to begin our sharing?

Thank you.

Now Dan McCarthy will lead us in communal prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Dan McCarthy)**

We know that God alone is enough for us.  At the same time, we have heard Paul say that we should be subordinate to one another as we are called to recognize this means that Christ is the real head, and to whom we all can be connected.

So now we bring what is in our hearts to God.

Our response is:  Jesus, the Christ, hear our prayer.

God among us, animate the Leadership Conference of Women Religious as they ask not simply what they are to do for your kingdom, but how to continue to work for justice in our country and the world.  Let us pray: Jesus, the Christ, hear our prayer.

As the world suffers from heat, fire, drought, floods, air and noise pollution, may we reach out to our national leaders to continue the fight to improve our environment. Let us pray: Jesus, the Christ, hear our prayer.

May people all over the world work for justice and mercy for those who suffer every day.

Let us pray: Jesus, the Christ, hear our prayer.

May our God hear the pleas of so many who suffer from hatred and violence – war and destruction. Let us pray: Jesus, the Christ, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who are suffering from illness, especially from the Covid 19 Virus and the Delta Variant and for those who work to help them survive.  May those who refuse the vaccine hear our plea.  Let us pray: Jesus, the Christ, 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 remember to unmute and mute yourself after you speak.

(People speak.)

Thank you.

O God, we give you all our prayers, spoken and unspoken.  We will do all that we can to put our prayers into action – while entrusting the outcome to you.  Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Tim Brown)**

Loving God, you desire so much for us to know your loving Son, Jesus.

Help us to keep our eyes fixed on him,

And to serve others reverently,

Seek justice and mercy

Out of love for You.   Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION  (Karen McCarthy )**

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

and said, “… as I have done for you, you should also do.”

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.]

Holy One, make us your bread of abundance. Make us your wine of joy.

Let even our fragments be plenty to share.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER                                                    (Anne Regan)**

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 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 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 (Maryann Dolan)**

Lord, we have been nourished by our spiritual communion and by Your presence with us.

Give us the strength to build a unity of love among ourselves and friends and others.

Help us grow in Your ways, which are the ways of peace and justice.

We offer this prayer through Jesus, the Christ, who is our way, our truth, and our life!

Amen.

Now Linda Donaldson will lead us in our closing.

**CLOSING MUSIC–   (Linda Donaldson)**

**“We are many parts” by Marty Haugen**

**Refrain:**

We are many parts,

We are all one body.

And the gifts we have,

We were given to share.

May the spirit of love, make us one indeed;

One, the Love that we share;

One, our hope in despair;

One, the cross that we bear.

God of all, we look to you,

We would be your servants true,

Let us be your love for all the world. Refrain

So my pain is your pain too.

In your joy, is my joy too,

All is brought together in the Lord. Refrain

All you seekers great and small,

Seek the greatest gift of all,

If you love, then you will know the Lord. Refrain

**RESOURCES**

* USCCB Sunday readings - <https://bible.usccb.org/readings/calendar>
* “100 Graces” selected by Marcia and Jack Kelly
* Professors of the Scriptures: Fr. David Reed, Pauline letters, and Fr. Larry Boadt, The Hebrew Scriptures, Fr. Cassian Clay, The Gospel of John, and The Book of Revelation.
* Amanda Gorman, “The Hill We Climb”
* YouTube: Micah 6:8 - Maranatha Music (Lyric Video)
* “We are many parts” by Marty Haugen
* First slide – “Sarah and Abraham” from *Israel My Glory* - <https://israelmyglory.org/article/sarah-and-abraham/>
* Second slide – “Men and Women Come to the Sermon on the Mount” - <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media/image/jesus-christ-teaching-sermon-mount-6fae801?lang=eng>
* Third slide – from colorfulltimes.com