**G Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, AUGUST 29, 2021 22ND sunday in ordinary time**



***“Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile.”***

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**HELLOs** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME (Suzie DeQuattro)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Richard McGinnis who prepared this communal prayer.
* Thanks to Reggie Ott for our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Mia Brown, Maryann Dolan, Tim Brown, Sr. Jennie Lechtenberg, Sr. Jo’Ann DeQuattro, Judy Sholes, Charlotte Cook, Kate Monagan, Mary Dolmage, Cecilia Estrada, Bob Gallagher, and Kathleen Cross.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Richard McGinnis)**

To be with God and each other, we need to first be with ourselves. Let your breath slow and deepen and carry ease into your body and your mind as we pray:

May I quiet my words and listen….

May I calm my thoughts and be….

May I soften my heart and open….

May I still my soul and receive….

(Pause)

**(Richard) Reggie will lead us in prayerful song to begin our celebration.**

**OPENING SONG: “Christ, Be Our Light” (Reggie Ott)**

Verse 1

Longing for light, we wait in darkness,

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

Make us your own, your holy people, Refrain

Light for the world to see. *Christ, be our light!*

*Shine in our hearts.*

*Shine in the darkness.*

*Christ be our light!*

*Shine in your church gathered today.*

Verse 3

Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others,

Shared until all are fed. Refrain

Verse 5

Many the gifts, many the people,

many the hearts that yearn to belong.

Let us be servants to one another,

Making your kingdom come. Refrain

**GREETING (Mia Brown)**

Beloved Community, let us rejoice in God’s welcome!Alleluia! Alleluia!

**All:** Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Mia Brown)**

Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness.

To live in the light, we are called to bring our hearts closer to God and to care for one another.

Loving God, we thank you for living and loving in us and through us.

Teach us to be a community of peace –

to put on your mind and your heart

so that we see each other and all that is--with your eyes of love. May the way of blessing become our way.

Amen.

**GATHERING PRAYER (Maryann Dolan)**

As we prepare to listen to the readings, let us open ourselves to the light of God’s grace and accept the following blessing. Let your heart be drawn steadily deeper into union with the loving heart of God.

Blessing for a Whole Heart by Jan Richardson

You think
if you could just
imagine it,
that would be a beginning;
that if you could envision
what it would look like,
that would be a step
toward a heart
made whole.

This blessing
is for when
you cannot imagine.
This is for when
it is difficult to dream
of what could lie beyond
the fracture, the rupture,
the cleaving through which
has come a life
you do not recognize
as your own.

When all that inhabits you
feels foreign,
your heart made strange
and beating a broken
and unfamiliar cadence,
let there come
a word of solace,
a voice that speaks
into the shattering,

reminding you
that who you are
is here,
every shard
somehow holding
the whole of you
that you cannot see
but is taking shape
even now,
piece joining to piece
in an ancient,
remembered rhythm

that bears you
not toward restoration,
not toward return—
as if you could somehow
become unchanged—
but steadily deeper
into the heart of the one
who has already dreamed you
complete.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Richard McGinnis)**

As the people of God, we have been blessed with the gift of the divine word. And today the word reminds us that we need a compassionate heart to be a true follower of God. We are called to care for each other and to resist the unhealthy influences of the world. In the Gospel reading. we are also warned of something that we might not expect – namely the danger that can come from idolizing pious practices instead of a compassionate heart.

In the Gospel reading from Mark, Jesus contrasts outer piety with defilement that comes from within--from hearts that are the wellspring of thoughts that are unholy and of harmful actions.

Sister Mary McGlone amplifies Jesus’ message by looking at how our religious practices that are designed to foster union with God and with each other--can actually segregate us into “us” and “them.”

Today--instead of justifying ourselves by saying “I am not a hypocrite, or murderer” let’s ask God to soften our hearts toward our own weaknesses and those of others. Jesus makes it clear in the divine word we hear today that true spiritual work goes beyond compliance with religious practices and is found in the transformation of our hearts.

*(Slight pause)*

**(Richard) Sr. Jennie Lechtenberg will read from the Book of Deuteronomy and the First Letter of James, and Tim Brown will offer questions for you to consider in silence. Feel free to stay with whatever question of portion of the readings calls to you.**

### Reading 1 (Sr. Jennie Lechtenberg)

### (Dt 4:1-2, 6)

Moses said to the people:
“Now, Israel, hear the statutes and decrees
which I am teaching you to observe,…
Observe them carefully,
for thus will you give evidence
of your wisdom and intelligence to the nations,
who will hear of all these statutes and say,
‘This great nation is truly a wise and intelligent people.’”

*(Slight pause)*

(Jas 1:17, 21b-22, 27)

Dearest brothers and sisters:
All good giving and every perfect gift is from above,
coming down from the Father of lights,...

Humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you
and is able to save your souls.

Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves.

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this:
to care for orphans and widows in their affliction
and to keep oneself unstained by the world. *(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 1 (Tim Brown)** *(Pause after each question.)*

How do you nourish and express the “word” that has been planted in you?

What characteristics do you hope that others will see in us as the “people of God”?

When have you seen love change someone?

 **COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(Betty:** Share slide w/questions, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**(Richard) Sr. Jo’Ann De Quattro will read from the Gospel of Mark.**

### Reading 2 (Sr. Jo’An DeQuattro)

### (Mk 7:1-2, 5-8, 14-15, 21-23)

When the Pharisees, with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem,
gathered around Jesus,
they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals
with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands.
So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him,
“Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders
but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?”
He responded,
“Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written:
    This people honor me with their lips,        but their hearts are far from me;    in vain do they worship me,        teaching as doctrines human precepts.
You disregard God’s commandment but cling to human tradition.”

He summoned the crowd again and said to them,
“Hear me, all of you, and understand.
Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person;
but the things that come out from within are what defile.

“From within people, from their hearts,
come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder,
adultery, greed, malice, deceit,
licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly.
All these evils come from within and they defile.”

*(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 2 (Tim Brown)** *(Pause after each question.)*

When have you hated to be rebuked, even though you were at fault? What was the inner source of your resistance?

How have you maintained a “soft heart” when you found it necessary to reprove another?

 When have you had an encounter with a self-righteous person that you managed to handle in a constructive manner?

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

**(Richard) Judy Sholes will read an excerpt adapted from a reflection by Mary McGlone, a Sister of St. Joseph, on the Scriptures for today.**

**READING 3 (July Sholes)**

According to Jewish tradition, God gave Moses the law as a guide to help humans fulfill their vocation as collaborators in the work of ongoing creation.

As we hear in today’s first reading, the law pointed out the path to life and outlined the plan for establishing a holy nation.

But that plan fell under the influence of competitive, scrupulous, self-righteous, legalistic human beings. In other words, it got interpreted by the likes of you and me.

With the best intentions in the world, wise people developed customs and practices designed to safeguard the law by interpreting how it should be put into practice in everyday situations.

Two examples. From the command to keep holy the Lord’s Day, there grew precise instructions about just which activities were and were not permissible on the day of rest, right down to the detail of when a candle could be lit. From the teaching that priests should perform ablutions, or ritual cleansings, came practices of ritual purity that not everyone could fulfill.

What happened is that the law which was designed to be a path of holiness for all people became distorted. People who wielded the power of interpretation developed precepts that effectively segregated the community.

Jesus understood the law as a divine plan to bring humanity into union with God and with one another. Few situations moved him to anger like the hypocrisy of people who distorted the law’s intent. Obviously, the problem was not unique to first-century Pharisees. Every human society and every religious tradition is prone to promote self-serving elitism and exclusion of those labeled as “the others.”

This leads us to consider our own pious practices.

Do we honestly admit our willful wrongdoing and avoidance of doing good? What if we took our penitential act as seriously as people in recovery take 12-Step meetings? At the beginning of each meeting, the participants introduce themselves as addicts. They go on to talk to one another about their failures and their attempts to avoid remaining trapped in destructive behavior. How would our faith communities change if we looked one another in the eye while saying, “I am a sinner. I need your support and your prayers!”?

Jesus critiqued his critics for keeping their hearts far from God. They lacked the integrity to admit their weakness, thereby blocking God’s saving grace from touching their hearts. We cannot mend our hearts solely by our own efforts.

Do we have faith that makes us willing to accept our need for help?

**QUESTIONS 3 (Tim Brown)** *(Pause after each question.)*

What has made you reluctant to admit to a weakness?

When you have been able to express sorrow to a person hurt by your behavior; how did it feel?

How is your faith life shaped by dependence on the mercy of God?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE**  **(Betty:** Share slide w/questions, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**(Richard). Charlotte Cook will now lead our sharing.**

**SHARING (Charlotte Cook)**

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 breath of silence between speakers. A bridge of silence allows us to take in what was just said 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?

(Sharing)

Thank you.

**(Richard) Kate Monagan will lead us in prayer.**

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Kate Monagan)**

We know that God alone is enough for us. At the same time, we have heard Paul say that “if there is anything you need, pray for it.” So now we bring what is in our hearts to God. Our response will be: “Lord, hear our prayer.”

Lord, help us to be witnesses of your love through our care for one another in the many ways that your people are in need. For this we pray. Lord, hear out prayer.

Lord, preserve us from self-righteousness and help us to look within at the weaknesses of our own hearts with honest eyes, confident of your overwhelming mercy. For this we pray. Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord, we ask for your blessing upon the work of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and their member congregations who act in so many ways to bring relief to the hungry, the sick, the abused, and the oppressed; who seek justice for racial minorities and immigrants; and who foster reverence for all of God’s creation. For this we pray. Lord, 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.

(People speak.) Lord, hear our prayer.

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 (Mary Dolmage)**

We celebrate the amazing fact that the Spirit of God lives in us now and at every moment. What does it mean to offer yourself to God in gratitude? Is there an old or new call that you will commit to this week? *[Pause.]*

Let us pray. Generous God, Creative Spirit, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Cecilia Estrada)**

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.]

Let us invite God into ourselves so that we become God’s living presence in our world. [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 (Bob Gallagher)**

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**  **(Kathleen Cross)**

Let us extend our hands over each other and bless each other:

(Words from Col: 3:12-17)

Put on, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved,
heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,
bearing with one another and forgiving one another.
And over all these put on love,
that is, the bond of perfection.
And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,
the peace into which you were also called in one body.
And be thankful.
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

(Words inspired by Dolly Parton’s America” podcast, “She’s Alive”.)

Love yourself as God loves you.

Be at peace.

Go and be doers of good.

Amen.

**CLOSING SONG: “I’ve Got Peace like a River” (Reggie Ott)**

I’ve got peace like river;

I’ve got peace like a river;

I’ve got peace like a river, in my soul.

I’ve got river, in my soul.

I’ve got joy like a fountain;

I’ve got joy like a fountain;

I’ve got joy like a fountain, in my soul.

I’ve got fountain in my soul.

I’ve got love like an ocean;

I’ve got love like an ocean;

I’ve got love like an ocean, in my soul.

I’ve got ocean in my soul.

**RESOURCES**

Scripture. Excerpted from https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/082921.cfm

### Reflection. Excerpted and adapted from Mary M. McGlone, CSJ, for the Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time, September 2, 2018, from National Catholic Reporter. https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/scripture-life/twenty-second-sunday-ordinary-time-1.

### Settling In. Prayer by Mary Davis

### Gathering Prayer. “Blessings for a Whole Heart” from The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief, “Blessings for a Whole Heart” by Jan Richardson. http://paintedprayerbook.com/2015/01/25/epiphany-4-blessing-for-a-whole-heart/

Art. Posted on [August 31, 2018](https://benedicamusdominoblog.com/2018/08/31/twenty-second-sunday-in-ordinary-time-b/) by [Benedicamus Domino](https://benedicamusdominoblog.com/author/lightisgood/). https://benedicamusdominoblog.com/2018/08/31/twenty-second-sunday-in-ordinary-time-b/

Music: Selections from Glory to God, The Presbyterian Hymnal, Westminster John Knox Press (First Ed. 2013):

#314, “Christ, Be Our Light”.

#623 “I’ve Got Peace like a River”.

Final Blessing, inspired in part by: Dolly Parton’s America podcast, “She’s Alive,” December 31, 2019. https://www.npr.org/podcasts/765024913/dolly-parton-s-america