**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**August 21, 2022 – 21st Sunday of Ordinary Time**

*“Somebody’s knocking at your door.”*

**HELLOs** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Suzie De Quattro & Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME (Suzie)**

Welcome, everyone!

* First of all: a huge thank you from Betty and me for our two weeks of very wonderful vacations. We treasured those days – and we missed you a lot!
* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* We prepared today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in music and prayer today: Lynn Bufka, Reggie Ott, Pat Gabig, Tim and Mia Brown, Ann Masters, Anne Regan, Bill Fanelli, Richard McGinnis, Sr. Grace Hartzog, Judy Sholes, Norb Bufka, Jim De Quattro, and Linda Donaldson.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Lynn Bufka)**

Settle into in a position where you feel supported and comfortable. Let your breath slow and deepen and find its natural pace… in and out…. *[Pause.]* Become aware of divine peace surrounding you…. *[Pause.]*  Let that peace flow into three collective breaths: one to be here…. One to be together….. And one to welcome the Holy Spirit. *[Pause.]*

Now Reggie Ott will lead us into our prayer together.

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

**“Somebody’s Knockin’ at Your Door” – African-American Spiritual**

Somebody's knockin' at your door;
Somebody's knockin' at your door;
O sinner, why don't you answer?
Somebody's knockin' at your door.

Knocks like Jesus. Somebody's knockin' at your door.
Knocks like Jesus. Somebody's knockin' at your door.
O sinner, why don't you answer?
Somebody's knockin' at your door.

Can't you hear him? Somebody's knockin' at your door.
Can't you hear him? Somebody's knockin' at your door.
O sinner, why don't you answer?
Somebody's knockin' at your door.

**CALL TO WORSHIP/ GATHERING PRAYER**  **(Pat Gabig)**

We are here to celebrate that God knocks at our doors all the time, always with the same message: “I am faithful and love you more than you can imagine.”

So we gather in gratitude. We gather as imperfect people who call and encourage one another to open our doors to God, to savor God’s love, and to share it by cooperating in God’s work of creation. And so we pray:

May the witness to Christ be strong among us, and fill us with the gifts of the Spirit as we work for and wait for the fullness of God’s reign. May God keep us steady as we inquire, nudge, and challenge each other. May it be so. *[Pause.]*

Suzie De Quattro will introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Suzie De Quattro)**

What’s it like for you when there’s an unexpected knock at your door?  (pause)   Was there ever an important knock that you didn’t hear? (pause) Or an important knock that you weren’t ready for?  (pause)

Today we will explore how we **ready ourselve**s for the unexpected knock - to hear it and to respond.

Our first reading asks whether we are ready to hear God’s knock no matter whose hand is acting in God’s place. It combines words from Isaiah and Jesus. They both remind us that God calls people who don’t expect to be chosen, and whom others will see as breaking the rules. God finds spiritual leaders in “fugitives,” and in people who don’t meet the scriptural requirement of who priests should be. Then Jesus tells us that the gate is narrow and we will find many we don’t expect entering in. This morning let’s focus on the core message: How do our assumptions about who is called restrict our readiness to hear God’s knock at our door?

Once we hear the knock, we need ready hearts. What gets us ready to enter the narrow gate? In the second reading, Paul speaks of how God trains us or disciplines us. When we are disciplined or corrected, we may bristle or resist. We may hear spiritual correction from within ourselves, from people we respect, and from people whose input we don’t want. Are we ready to learn from it?

In the third reading, we will hear from a group of people whose disciplines prepared them to be disciples when it really counted. What disciplines do we rely on for our own discipleship?

*[Slight pause]*

Now Mia and Tim Brown will read from Isaiah 66 and from Luke 13. Jim De Quattro will offer questions that will lead us into silence.

**READING 1** – From Isaiah 66 and Luke 13 **(Tim and Mia Brown)**

Thus says our God:
I know their works and their thoughts,
and I come to gather nations of every language;
they shall come and see my glory.
I will set a sign among them;
from them I will send fugitives to the nations:

to the distant coastlands that have never heard of my fame, or seen my glory;
and they shall proclaim my glory among the nations.

*(pause)*

Jesus passed through towns and villages,
teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem.
Someone asked him,
"Rabbi, will only a few people be saved?"

Jesus replied “Try to come in through the narrow door …

Many will try to enter and not all will succeed….

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How often have I longed to gather your children together,

as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, yet you refuse me!"

Then Jesus said: “People will come from the east and the west
and from the north and the south
and will take their places at table in the Reign of God.”

**QUESTIONS 1** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Jim De Quattro)**

When have you been surprised by a spiritual leader whom you had previously rejected or excluded?

What is it like when you hear an unexpected knock or call? Maybe one you aren’t ready for or don’t want to answer?

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

Betty: Ann Masters will read from the 12th chapter of Hebrews.

**READING 2:** Hebrews 12 **(Ann Masters)**

You have forgotten the encouraging words addressed to you as sons and daughters. Have you forgotten that you are children of God?

My children, when our God corrects you, don’t treat it lightly, and don’t get discouraged when you are reprimanded. For God disciplines **every** beloved child.

Perseverance is part of your training as children of God. Have there ever been any children whose parents did not train them? If you were **not** getting this training, as all of you are, then you would be not God’s heirs but bastards.

We have all had our human parents who disciplined us and corrected us. They were training us according to what they thought was best. God trains and disciplines us so that we may share divine holiness.

At the time it is administered, any discipline seems a cause for grief, not joy. But later it bears fruit in peace and justice for those formed by it.

So steady your drooping hands and weak knees. Make straight the path you tread, that your halting limbs will not be maimed, but healed.

**QUESTIONS 2** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Jim De Quattro)**

What stands in the way of your accepting correction? Whose correction do you listen to? Whose correction do you reject?

What spiritual and practical disciplines help you to steady your drooping hands and weak knees?

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

Betty: Bill Fanelli and Anne Regan will read excerpts from the book *However Long the Night* by the Leadership Conference of Women, or LCWR.

**READING 3**  **(Bill Fanelli and Anne Regan)**

*(Excerpts from “However Long the Night,” edited by Sr. Annmarie Sanders, IHM – from chapters by Sisters Janet Mock, Marlene Weisenbeck, Mary Hughes, Pat Farrell, Carol Zinn, and Annmarie Sanders)*

(Bill) Our second reading and many other writers offer beautiful ideas about how spiritual discipline is supposed to make us better disciples. Let’s listen now to several women tell us about spiritual disciplines they actually used to grow in discipleship during a terrible time.

In April 2012, LCWR leadership traveled to Rome for their annual meeting with the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. While there, they were stunned by the announcement that three bishops had been appointed to oversee a reform of LCWR. In their words: “[Our] identity, autonomy, and survival were in question.”

In the book *However Long the Night*, a dozen leaders of women religious wrote about the spiritual disciplines that they relied on to navigate those difficult years. Here are some excerpts from their book.

* (Anne) “A necessary predisposition is an **open mind, open heart, and open will**, laying aside judgment, cynicism, and fear. Staying with ambiguity leaves us open to the unexpected movement of Spirit. It requires trust.”
* (Bill) “An active **conscience** guides us through such a spiritual journey with careful, upright, and dedicated reflection about **what is true and just**.” “A commitment to truth is essential. It implies honest self-awareness. It demands simply being with what is, rather than what we might prefer.”
* (Anne) “Mindful that it was easy for any one of us to take a deep dive into arrogance, righteousness, or myopic perspective, **we gave one another** **permission to monitor the movement of graces received and graces refused** among us.” “Ultimately, we were able to see together with the eyes of our common heart more than any one of us could have seen alone.”
* (Bill) “The **freedom to choose** comes in paying attention to what brings peace, to what causes agitation and unsettledness, and moving in the direction of peace.”
* (Anne) “We tried to articulate the **spiritual dimension** that God was asking us to embrace in this moment in time.” “We needed to surrender our hearts and minds to God. That place of prayer was a familiar home to each of us, the grounding of our personal and communal living of religious life. It was the greatest resource we brought to a critical moment.”
* (Bill) “We were only given to see **the step immediately before us**.”

(Anne) In February 2015 Pope Benedict resigned. That April, the Vatican congregation ended the mandate because its goal “has been accomplished.” The sisters involved said that “after a rocky start, the discussions settled into a constructive dialogue that cleared up many misunderstandings that Vatican officials had about the sisters.” The three bishops expressed their “gratitude for such a fruitful dialogue.”

(Bill) “Our greatest desire now is that the positive outcome of these years of intense work at building relationships, establishing trust, inviting questions, and creating spaces for honest conversations -- even on topics that can be divisive -- will serve as a source of hope to others within the church and the world.”

**QUESTIONS 3 (Jim De Quattro)**

Which of these disciplines do you feel drawn toward? Which do you resist?

What persons or practices do you rely on to see how God is nudging you to move, and to give you courage to act?

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

Betty: Richard McGinnis will lead our sharing of personal reflections.

**SHARING (Richard McGinnis)**

We know the wisdom of our community includes both words shared and silent listening. Now, if you’d like, we invite you to share the essence of what is emerging within you from our readings and silence. Let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. [Long-ish pause]

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

[Sharing]

[Long silences are common and they can be fruitful. If there is extended silence after 15 minutes:] Is there anyone else who would like to share?  [Long pause]

[Stop by about 11:20.]

Thank you.  We can continue after the final song, as we often do.

Now Sr. Grace Hartzog will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Sr. Grace Hartzog)**

Let’s pause to notice the prayers that arise in us now. *[Pause]* Our response will be:

Holy One, hear our knocking.

O You Who loves us, keep us listening to hear your knock and ready to open the door wide. Keep us attentive in the disciplines that will make us good disciples. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our knocking.

O You Who nourishes us, thank you for all you have been giving us to savor this summer. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our knocking.

O You Who made us part of the community of Earth, thank you. Deepen our understanding of our role in your creation. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our knocking.

O You Who beckon us forward, bless us and the leaders of Catholic women religious to BE a still point, a presence of Love in the world. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our knocking.

O You Who lives in time and beyond time, thank you for the gifts of growing older. Thank you for the new gifts of those who come after us. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our knocking.

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

*[Shared prayers]* Holy One, hear our knocking.

O You who know us better than we know ourselves, thank you for welcoming us to knock at your door. You promised us that the door that opens will always be the gift of your Spirit. With gratitude, we welcome the Spirit you give. We entrust all to you. Amen.

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**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Judy Sholes)**

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 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 wine,

gifts of Earth and the 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, we entrust ourselves to you and to one another.

Make us your bread of abundance.  Make us your wine of joy.

Let even our fragments be plenty to share.

Amen.

To extend our communion, Norb Bufka will lead us in the prayer of Jesus.

**THE PRAYER OF JESUS (Norb Bufka)**

Now let us join our hearts as if we could join our hands in harmony with our family throughout the world:

***All (muted):*** Our Father, Our Mother, who unite heaven and earth, holy is your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our living 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 (Betty Thompson)**

The Book of Revelation proclaims, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and we will dine together.” And so we pray:

There is a blessing knocking at your door.

This blessing will smile as you look to find out Who’s there,

and will grin in pleasure as you open wide the door.

This blessing not only comes to dine with you

but even brings the feast for you and anyone you invite.

This blessing knocks gently,

so listen closely,

and do not be put off by someone who looks unfamiliar.

This blessing comes to your door

every morning, every afternoon, every evening,

and will gladly move in to stay with you

so that you can always dine with God,

savoring and sharing the feast of love.

Amen.

*[Pause.]*

Feeling the joy of that blessing, let’s join Linda Donaldson in singing the African-American spiritual, “Over My Head, I Hear Music in the Air.”

**CLOSING: Over My Head, I Hear Music in the Air (Linda Donaldson)**

Refrain:

Over my head I hear music in the air.
Over my head I hear music in the air.
Over my head I hear music in the air;
There must be a God somewhere!

1. Oh, when the world is silent,
I hear music in the air;
oh, when the world is silent,
I hear music in the air;
oh, when the world is silent,
I hear music in the air;
there must be a God somewhere. [Refrain]

2. And when I'm feeling lonely,
I hear music in the air;
and when I'm feeling lonely,
I hear music in the air;
and when I'm feeling lonely,
I hear music in the air;
there must be a God somewhere. [Refrain]

3. Now when I think on Jesus,
I hear music in the air;
now when I think on Jesus,
I hear music in the air;
now when I think on Jesus,
I hear music in the air;
there must be a God somewhere. [Refrain]

**RESOURCES** –

Additional question you might consider:

* When have you heard a call that pulled you into an unfamiliar culture or tradition, or into a place where you were unwelcome?

Sources:

* Gathering prayer: inspired by 1 Corinthians 1:4-9
* New Jerusalem Bible translation: *Bíblia Católica Online* [https://www.bibliacatolica.com.br/en/new-jerusalem-bible/hebrews/12/](https://www.bibliacatolica.com.br/en/new-jerusalem-bible/hebrews/12/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=cp)
* Reading 3: The quote in the introduction to the reading comes from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/breaking-silence-us-nuns-say-vatican-probe-cleared-up-confusion-reinforced-their-mission/2015/05/15/a8772e18-fb30-11e4-a47c-e56f4db884ed_story.html>
* Excerpts in Reading 3: *However Long the Night: Making Meaning in a Time of Crisis,* ed. Sr. Annmarie Sanders, by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (2018)
* Closing prayer for Sharing derived from Luke 11:10-13: “So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door opened to them. What parent among you would hand their child a stone when a daughter asked for bread? Or hand a son a snake instead of a fish? Or hand her a scorpion if she asked for an egg? If you then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Abba give the Holy Spirit to those who ask!”
* Final Blessing: The quote is from Revelation 3:21.
* Background for slides: “Black Lives Matter” series paintings by DC artist Maria-Lana Queen <https://artbymlq.com/index.php/recent-work/> If you happen to be traveling to Martha’s Vineyard before Sept. 11, she has a solo exhibit “Oh Say Can You See Me” at the Knowhere Art Gallery <https://knowhereart.com/show/knowhere-art-llc-oh-say-can-you-see-me>
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