**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**August 28, 2022 – 21st Sunday of Ordinary Time**

When you hold a banquet, invite the poor, for you will be repaid

at the Resurrection (or sooner!).

**HELLOs** and then Betty mutes everyone.

**WELCOME (Terri Butel)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* I prepared today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in music and prayer today: Laura Alexander, Kathy and Bill Cavanaugh, Peg Duchesne, Jennie Lechtenberg and Jo’Ann De Quattro who are Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, and Debra Street.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

Now Debra Street will lead us into our prayer together.

**OPENING SONG - “Gather Us In”**  **(****Debra Street)**

Here in this place new light is streaming,

Now is the darkness vanished away.

See in this space our fears and our dreamings

Brought here to you in the light of this day.

Gather us in, the lost and forsaken,

Gather us in, the blind and the lame,

Call to us now and we shall awaken,

We shall arise at the sound of our name.

We are the young, our lives are a mystery,

We are the old who yearn for your face.

We have been sung throughout all of history,

Called to be light to the whole human race.

Gather us in, the rich and the haughty,

Gather us in, the proud and the strong,

Give us a heart so meek and so lowly,

Give us the courage to enter the song.

Not in the dark of buildings confining,

Not in some heaven light years away,

But here in this place the new light is shining,

Now is the kingdom, now is the day.

Gather us in and hold us forever,

Gather us in and make us your own,

Gather us in, all peoples together,

Fire of love in our flesh and our bones.

**CALL TO WORSHIP/ GATHERING PRAYER**  **(Peg Duchesne)**

An excerpt from “Christianity Discovered” by missionary priest Vincent Donovan:

“Grass was a sacred sign among the Masai, …since their cattle and they, themselves lived off grass, it was a vital and holy sign to them, a sign of peace and happiness and well-being. During angry arguments that might arise, a tuft of grass, offered by one Masai and accepted by the second, was an assurance that no violence would erupt because of the arguments. No Masai would violate that sacred sign of peace offered, because it was not only a sign of peace, it ***was*** peace. So, as the Mass began, I picked up a tuft of grass and passed it on to the first elder who met me, and greeted him with ‘The peace of Christ.’ He accepted it and passed it on to his family, and they passed it on to the neighboring elders and families. It had to pass all through the village…”

Before we begin, let’s pause for a moment to gather into our hearts anyone to whom we may need to humbly offer a tuft of grass …. *[Pause.]*

Let us breathe into this sacred communal space together, silently welcoming all gathered and those with us in spirit as we share a moment of quiet in the peace of Christ…

 *[Pause.]*

Laura Alexander will introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Laura Alexander)**

On the surface, the Gospel is about humility:

One: Don’t embarrass yourself by trying to finagle a better seat at a dinner than the host thinks you deserve.

Two: Don’t “ka-ching” like a cash register when you plan the guest list for your next party, imagining all the favors you’ll enjoy when the guests repay you; instead invite people you don’t know and the least invited.

In her reflection on this Gospel, Sr. Mary McGlone takes us under the surface to a humility that is about recognizing our “solidarity in imperfection” with all the people of the world, especially those not as good at concealing their flaws. She and Pope Francis encourage us to enlarge our table and receive the precious and life-altering opportunity of encounter.

*[Slight pause]*

Now Kathy Cavanaugh will read from the Gospel of Luke. Bill Cavanaugh will offer questions that will lead us into silence.

**READING 1** – Luke 14: 1, 7-14 **(Kathy Cavanaugh)**

One Sabbath, when Jesus came to eat a meal in the house of one of the leading Pharisees, the guests watched him closely. Jesus went on to address a parable to the guests, noticing how they were trying to get a place of honor at the table.

"When you are invited to a wedding party, don’t sit in the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished has been invited. Otherwise, the hosts might come to you and say to you, 'Make room for this person,’ and you would have to proceed shamefacedly to the lowest place. What you should do is go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your hosts approach you, they’ll say, 'My friend, come up higher.' This will win you the esteem of the other guests. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Then Jesus said to the host, "Whenever you give a lunch or a dinner,
don’t invite your friends or colleagues or relatives or wealthy neighbors.
They might invite you in return and thus repay you. No, when you have a reception, invite those who are poor or have physical infirmities or are blind. You should be pleased that they can’t repay you, for you’ll be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

**QUESTIONS 1** *(Pause after each question.)* **(****Bill Cavanaugh)**

When have you been asked to move to a higher or lower place – whether at a banquet or some other life circumstance? What was that like for you?

Recall and cherish a God-encounter when you were uncomfortably seated with strangers.

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

Betty: Sr. Jennie Lechtenberg will read from a reflection by Sr. Mary McGlone.

**READING 2:**  **(****Jennie Lechtenberg)**

Jesus loved banquets. Once there, he would transform the table into a space for evangelizing repartee. In today’s scene, we can imagine him wryly observing as people vied to position themselves for the best seat in the house. If he wasn’t

actually chuckling into his beard, his eyes were surely laughing as each guest

preened in the attempt to appear more distinguished than the rest.

Aware of the learning capacity of his audience and their concern about appearances, Jesus first offered advice about how to avoid humiliation: “Choose the lowliest place and nobody else can put you down.”

But Jesus didn’t stop with that wee bit of commentary. Although people had

gathered for an ordinary Sabbath meal, Jesus then wove a tale about a wedding

banquet, … a favorite symbol for the reign of God. A wedding celebrates something new and full of potential ... that sacramentalizes the bonds of love and new relationships that can transform an entire community.

In that context, Jesus addressed his fellow guests as the probable hosts of

dinners to come: “When it’s your turn, break free of this old mold. What about a new guest list instead of new clothes and fancy foods?” (Pause)

What if everybody at that table decided to take him up on the suggestion? Instead of inviting one another, each could seek out an eclectic group of well-known and far less prestigious people … the butcher and his apprentice, the milkmaid…the town beggar (offering a bath as well as a foot-washing before reclining at table), …the paraplegic lying near the town square [and] …the widow next door. Each of those guests could be invited to bring a “plus-one” to round out the company. Imagine the unexpected table conversation! It’s not hard to imagine Jesus saying about such groups: “This is what it is like in the reign of God…”

**QUESTIONS 2** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Bill Cavanaugh)**

As host - Who would you invite to this feast? As guest – Who is your “plus one?”

What could happen at such a dinner? Have you ever experienced anything like it?

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

Betty: Jo’Ann DeQuattro will read an excerpt from Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Fratelli tutti.*

**READING 3**  **(Jo’Ann DeQuattro)**

“Life, for all its confrontations, is the art of encounter”. I have frequently called for the growth of a culture of encounter capable of transcending our differences and divisions…

The word “culture” points to something deeply embedded within a people, its most cherished convictions and its way of life. To speak of a “culture of encounter” means that we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone. This becomes an aspiration and a style of life.

The subject of this culture is ***the people***. Each of us can learn something from others. We must find ways to include those on the peripheries of life. For they have another way of looking at things; they see aspects of reality that are often invisible to us and certainly to the centres of power where weighty decisions are made.

Social peace demands hard work. It would be easier to keep freedoms and differences in check with cleverness and a few resources. But when we can create processes of encounter that build a people that can accept differences, we will find a genuine and lasting peace.”

**QUESTIONS 3** *(Pause after each question.)* **(Bill Cavanaugh)**

How does your life illustrate a “culture of encounter”?

When has another person’s reality come into conflict with your own, and how did you respond?

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

Betty: Terri Butel will lead our sharing of personal reflections.

**SHARING (Terri Butel)**

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 Jennie Lechtenberg and Jo’Ann DeQuattro will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Jennie Lechtenberg, Jo’Ann DeQuattro)**

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

For “tuft of grass” peace that stirs us to be in right relationship with others before gathering to give thanks, we pray…

**Transforming Presence, hear us.**

In gratitude for all the ways Humility shows up in our lives, reminding us of our proper place in the human family – to deepen our joyful recognition and welcome of all members of God’s family, we pray…

 **Transforming Presence, hear us.**

In thanksgiving for LCWR’s vision of the wide, wide table of God, for their courageous beckoning to encounter, ***encuentro*** with and securing God’s justice for all people, we pray…

 **Transforming Presence, hear us.**

Today is Social Justice Sunday in Australia; the Australian Catholic Bishops annual statement is about confronting the violence of domestic and family abuse which opposes “the relationships to which God calls us”. For all harmed and imprisoned by domestic abuse, that they may have help and the courage to begin flourishing new lives, we pray,

**Transforming Presence, hear us.**

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

*[Shared prayers]* We pray,**Transforming Presence, hear us.**

O You who know us better than we know ourselves, thank you for welcoming us to fellowship here and in so many places. May we recognize you in the unlikeliest of encounters and receive all the wisdom that awaits us there. We entrust all to you. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Peg Duchesne)**

As bread that was scattered on the hillside was gathered together and made one, so too, we, your grateful people, scattered throughout the world, are gathered together here and become one.

As grapes grown in the fields are gathered and pressed into wine, so too are we drawn together and pressed by our times, disappointments and heartbreak ***yet*** transformed into your life-blood for all.

Make us nourishment for others, inviting the stranger to our tables, welcoming people who cannot repay our invitation, and eliminating artificial divisions that separate us. Surely these encounters will transform us into the Body of Christ.

May it be so!

[*Pause*.]

To extend our communion, Bill Cavanaugh will lead us in the prayer of Jesus.

**OUR FATHER, OUR MOTHER (****Bill Cavanaugh)**

Now let us join our hearts to pray with all who seek peace and justice throughout the world, in the words of the Polynesian and Maori people and the New Zealand Anglican community:

Eternal Spirit,

Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,

Source of all that is and that shall be,

Mother and Father of us all,

Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe;

The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world;

Your heavenly will be done by all created beings;

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom

sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.

In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.

From trial too great to endure, spare us.

From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,

now and forever. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Laura Alexander)**

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.]*

**CLOSING Song:** **Plenty to Share (Debra Street)**

**Refrain:** Plenty of bread at the feast of life, plenty of bread to share!

Plenty of bread at the feast of life, there is plenty of bread to share!

Bread for those who sorrow - You have plenty to share.

The bread of life and laughter – You have plenty to share.

The bread of strength and justice – You have plenty to share.

You have plenty of bread to share. Refrain

Fish of hope and kindness – You have plenty to share.

The fish of your compassion – You have plenty to share.

Fish of love and welcome – You have plenty to share,

You have plenty of fish to share. Refrain

Room for those forgotten – You have plenty to share.

Room for those rejected – You have plenty to share.

And room for all the outcast – you have plenty to share.

You have plenty of room to share. Refrain

**RESOURCES** –

* Opening song: Open My Eyes, Jesse Manibusan,
* Gathering prayer: inspired by the Masai tradition as described in “Christianity Discovered” by Vincent J. Donovan, p. 94.
* Inclusive Bible, Luke 14: 1, 7-14
* Sr. Mary McGlone, <https://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=&edid=ae5f2646-2e80-4f87-b788-0d1ae4cdc4b4>
* Fratelli tutti, Pope Francis’ encyclical letter, On Fraternity And Social Friendship, 10/3/2020, excerpts from ¶ 215-217, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html>
* Australian bishops Social Justice Sunday statement, 2022: <https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/2022/08/02/sjs2022-23/>
* Celebration of Communion adapted from More Than Words: Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities, Bread-Breaking Prayers, p. 51.
* Final blessing derived from Luke 11:10-13, Revelation 3:21.
* Closing song: “Bread to Share” by Marty Haugen

**Other Sources on this theme**:

For a story about inviting folks to Monday night Red Beans & Rice, see “It’s not a dinner party, it’s just supper:” Monday nights with Pableaux Johnson: <https://www.splendidtable.org/story/2017/04/21/it-s-not-a-dinner-party-it-s-just-supper-monday-nights-with-pableaux-johnson>

Red Beans & Rice recipe, <https://www.splendidtable.org/story/2017/04/14/monday-night-red-beans-rice>