**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer for Advent**

 **November 27, 2022 – First Sunday**

***Prepare Ye the Way***

**Remember to bring bread and something to drink.**

**HELLOs and then the Zoom host mutes everyone. (Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME (Cecilia Estrada)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Mary Dolmage and I are so blessed to be able to share today’s communal prayer with you today.
* Thanks to Debra Street and Marilyn Voigt for leading our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Sister Jo’Ann De Quattro, Sister Jennie Lechtenberg, Nancy Sushinsky, Paula Lake, Peggy Thompson, Richard McGinnis, and Sister Vera Ruotolo.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Cecilia Estrada)**

Together, here, now, let us settle into the presence of God. Breathe gently as you hear these words:

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am.

Be still and know.

Be still.

Be.

Now let us welcome the light.

**OPENING AND LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH**

Singer 1: (Debra) Holy God, swords to ploughs shall be!

Singer 2: (Marilyn) Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

Singer 1: (Debra) Holy God, greed to grace shall be!

Singer 2: (Marilyn) Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

Singer 1: (Debra) Holy God, strife to peace shall be!

Singer 2: (Marilyn) Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

Singer 1: (Debra) Holy God, earth made whole shall be!

Singer 2: (Marilyn) Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

**Mary:** Each Sunday of Advent, we will light a candle. Let us cherish this simple, calming practice as our way to take notice of the “Reason for the Season.”  May we light each candle with the intention of adding our light to the darkness and uncertainty surrounding us, with the willingness to do our part to bring about God’s Reign in our world. Please join us in lighting your Advent candle. (Light candle.)

We pray – God of light, let your reign begin in each of us.  Give us light for our next steps.

Singer 2: (Marilyn) (and all, muted): Rejoice! Rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

**GATHERING PRAYER (Mary Dolmage)**

We gather because God comes to us, not only in a singular Christmas event but also in each person and in each generation’s lifetime. The scriptures tell us a long-treasured story of salvation for a people beloved of God. We are called today to tell this story in a fresh, compelling way – with our lives. We ask to make the pathway straight for the coming of God.

And so, we pray: Emmanuel, God with us, we give you this next hour with confidence that you will act in us and through us. We believe that you will give us light for our next step. Blessed Be!

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Mary Dolmage)**

Today’s reading, like our Advent candle, invites us into this sacred time.  It heeds us to take notice, it then encourages us to stay awake, and finally, it advises us to be prepared.

Now Sister Jennie Lechtenberg will read from the Gospel of Saint Matthew. Then Peggy Thompson will offer questions for our reflection. You can stay with whatever question calls you.

(Slight pause)

**READING 1 Matthrew 24: 37-44**   **(Sister Jennie Lechtenberg)**

“The coming of the Promised One will be just like Noah’s time. In the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, having relationships and getting married, right up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They were totally unconcerned until the flood came and destroyed them. So it will be at the coming of the Promised One. Two people will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two people will be grinding meal; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore, be vigilant! For you do not know the day your Savior is coming. Be Sure of this: If the owner of the house had known when the thief was coming, the owner would have kept a watchful eye and not allowed the house to be broken into. You must be prepared in the same way. The Promised One is coming at the time you least expect.

**QUESTIONS 1** (Pause after each question.) **(Peggy Thompson)**

What is Jesus telling us to prepare for… in our present age… in our own lives?

When you have been caught “off guard” how did you feel? Have you ever caught someone else “off guard”? What was your goal if you did?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(**Share slide 1, time 2:00, chime, stop slide – **Betty)**

Audio setting: Background noise suppression LOW.

On initial Share Screen menu of your open windows: Check box for Optimize for video clip.

Ask someone else to time and chime if you prefer.

**Cecilia:**  Now Richard McGinnis will read an adaptation from a selection from Catholic Women Preach by Sister Teresa Maya, a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

**READING 2 –**   **(Richard McGinnis)**

The scripture today heeds us to take notice of the times we live through. The Great Flood Jesus alludes to in the Gospel today should serve as a warning. Remember Noah building the ark, telling people to get ready, and gathering the animals? We, too, have Noahs around us; prophets who care for our common home, telling us to do something about our carbon footprint, work for climate justice, live with what we need, and advocate for clean energy.

Jesus is emphatic, and the Gospel reading has an exclamation mark.  It is not simply- “be vigilant”- but a command “Be Vigilant!” [exclamation]  We use exclamations too loosely, but when we find them in the Gospel, we must pay attention.  Jesus is “ordering” his followers to “be vigilant, for you do not know on which day your Savior will come.”

What does it mean to be vigilant?  Beyond the “armoring” of our life and house to prepare for the “thieves,” as the reading warns, I believe that staying awake is a spiritual practice.  Words like conscious, alert, and alive come to mind when we try to understand what vigilant means.  This Advent season, we are called to move beyond noticing what goes on around us.  We need to pray for a conversion of heart, to kindle our soul’s light, to hope, to trust, and to believe, so we can genuinely “throw off the works of darkness.”  The silence of those who stay vigilant through the night is a good practice.  We need to keep our souls vigilant, awake, alive, and aware.

**QUESTIONS 2** (Pause after each question.) **(Peggy Thompson)**

Why do you think Jesus makes it abundantly clear that we will not know when

the Promised One is coming?

In what ways can you be vigilant in preparing for the coming of the Promised One?

What might dull your ability to be conscious, alert, and alive?

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

**Cecilia:**  Nancy Sushinsky will continue to read from Catholic Women Preach by Sister Teresa Maya.

**READING 3 –**   **(Nancy Sushinsky)**

The Christian life is an active life, a movement, a constant process.  This advent season, we have some “doing” to do and some “moving” to do.

Preparing the way is not just decorating, reading, or meditating – though all those practices are graced reminders of the season we begin. Preparing the way is moving, walking in Jesus’ paths, and finding those he blessed, healed, and accompanied.

“You must also be prepared,” Jesus tells us today.  May our first candle of Advent remind us to prepare our souls’ home, and community, to celebrate God’s promise to be with us always.

**Cecilia shares screen.** Power Point with music.

**QUESTIONS 3** (Pause after each question.) **(Peggy Thompson)**

How do you reach out to forgive, listen, accompany, and bless?

Think of an Advent in which you more fully prepared yourself to welcome the

Promised One. What made that Advent different?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(**Share slide 3, time 2:00, chime, stop slide – **Betty)**

**Cecilia:** Paula Lake will lead us in sharing our personal reflections.

**SHARING (Paula Lake)**

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. And let’s leave a bridge of silence between speakers.

We begin in silence as we gather our reflections. (Long pause.)

Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute again afterwards.

Who would like to begin?

(Sharing)

(Let sharing continue for about 20 minutes. Long silences often indicate fruitful reflection.)

Thank you for your insights and thoughts.  We have to stop now, and we can continue after the final song, as we often do. Now let us pray, led by Betty Thompson.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Betty Thompson)**

Now, we bring what is in our hearts to God. Our response will be**:**

**Promised One, help us prepare for your coming.**

For ourselves and our families, that we understand and practice the true meaning of this Advent season, we pray**...** **Promised One, help us prepare for your coming.**

For the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and all committed sisters and brothers who joyfully, steadfastly, and unconditionally reach out to all in need, we pray**… Promised One, help us prepare for your coming.**

For those who will experience deprivation of home, country, food, family, or safety. That your presence be with them this season through the generous work of others, we pray… **Promised One, help us prepare for your coming.**

For what else shall we pray? Please remember to unmute and mute yourself.

(People speak.) **Promised One, help us prepare for your coming.**

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 – wh~~i~~le entrusting the outcome to you. Blessed Be.

**OFFERTORY (Cecilia Estrada)**

Cecilia: Each of us has traditional ways of Advent preparation. Today I will share mine.

Last year, I shared about how my family celebrated Our Lady of Guadalupe with matachine dancing and mariachi music at a special Mass. This year I’d like to share about how my family celebrated Las Posadas…

Cecilia: We thank you, Holy One, for all that we treasure in our lives, and all that sustains our lives. In grateful quiet, each of us will now tell you something we will do or offer this week for you and your creation. (Pause.)

Blessed Be.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Sister Jo’Ann De Quattro)**

As we prepare to share this meal, let us be conscious of the Holy One we call our Creator, Friend, Mother, Father, Sister, Brother, Redeemer, Provider, Sustainer.

Mindful of those who tilled the soil, those who harvested its bounty, and those who toiled in the heat of sun and kitchen, we ask blessings on them as they are here with us in a special way.

We ask you, Holy One, to accept our gifts and transform them into plenty to share with our sisters and brothers. Accept our gratitude for your love and grace. Accept our efforts to give thanks for each other.

Bless and inspire us, as we struggle to realize our vision of a better world, a world of peace, a world where generosity and commitment makes the seemingly impossible, possible.

Bless us as we become eucharist for one another.

Give us and our world, we pray, plenty of knowledge and wisdom,

plenty of justice and compassion, plenty of bread and peace.

Blessed Be!

**SHARING BREAD (Sister Jo’Ann De Quattro)**

Holding the bread and drink let us pray together, as we extend our hands outward and bless these gifts in thanksgiving for life. Open our eyes to see the hunger of others. Thank you for promising and giving us food for the journey.

We are one bread. We are one body.

Let us now eat the bread and drink, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by God’s love.

(pause)

Let us say: Blessed Be! So be it!

To extend our communion,Sister Vera Ruotolo will lead us in the prayer of Jesus.

**THE PRAYER OF JESUS (Sister Vera Ruotolo)**

Now let us join our hearts 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,
Father and Mother 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. Blessed Be!

**FINAL BLESSING (Mary Dolmage)**

(We extend our hands over each other.)

May we prepare for your coming with fervent vigilance.

May we reflect upon the wonder of your love and to allow your teaching to penetrate our hearts and minds.

May we share the spirit of the season and grace others with kindness, generosity, and compassion.

May your blessing be upon each of us so that we can be your light to all we encounter.

Blessed Be.

**CLOSING SONG (Cecilia Estrada)**

**Cecilia:** Join us singing our closing song.

**We Are Marching in the Light of God**

Betty: Share screen[**https://youtu.be/gl24\_27wW1E**](https://youtu.be/gl24_27wW1E)

That is a rare video in that it doesn’t need to be cut at the beginning or faded at the end.