**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**January 29, 2023 – 4th Sunday of Ordinary Time**

“Love alone is capable of uniting living beings in such a way as to complete and fulfill them, for it alone takes them and joins them by what is deepest in themselves.” Teilhard de Chardin



“Happy Joyous People”. <https://pixabay.com/en/fun-happy-people-happiness-joy-1012680/>

Please have bread and drink for the communion rite.

**HELLOs** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Betty/Lynn)**

**WELCOME (Richard McGinnis)**

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: Linda Donaldson, Debra Street, Kathy and Bill Cavanaugh, Ann Masters, Maria Desjardins, Judy Sholes, Bill Fanelli, Lynn Bufka, Peggy Thompson, Kathy Linabery, Sr. Susan Maloney, Sr. Melanie DiPietro, and Anne Regan.
* For those who seek to reflect more deeply on the Beatitudes, which are set forth in the Gospel for today, two references are provided on the Resource page. You may want to select one or two of the eight Beatitudes for a daily meditation during the upcoming week.
* If you are willing to read in the future, please let us know. For February 5th, contact Anne Regan, for February 12th, contact Teri Butel. Their emails will be in Chat.

**SETTLING IN (Richard McGinnis)**

Let’s begin. Be still and relax. Settle into the quiet center in yourself. Breathe deeply—in and out. Notice your breathing as it moves in you. Let it slow and deepen—filling you with the Peace of Christ. Now, let us take three more breaths. One to be here…one to be together…and one to surrender to the Spirit who never leaves us.

Richard: Now Linda Donaldson will lead us in our opening song, “Glory and Praise to Our God” by Dan Schutte.

**OPENING SONG—“Glory and Praise to Our God” (Linda Donaldson)**

### Glory and Praise to Our God

Refrain:

Glory and praise to our God, who alone gives light to our days.
Many are the blessings he bears to those who trust in his ways.

Verse 1

We, the daughters and sons of him who built the valleys and plains,
Praise the wonders our God has done in every heart that sings.  (Repeat Refrain)

Verse 2

In his wisdom he strengthens us, like gold that's tested in fire.
Though the power of sin prevails, our God is there to save. (Repeat Refrain)

Verse 3

Every moment of every day our God is waiting to save,
Always ready to seek the lost, to answer those who pray. (Repeat Refrain)

Verse 4

God has watered our barren land and spent his merciful rain.
Now the rivers of life run full for anyone to drink. (Repeat Refrain)

**CALL TO WORSHIP/ GATHERING PRAYER**  **(Kathy Cavanaugh)**

We gather together to encounter Christ, who shows us the power that comes from a surrender to God in humble faithfulness. We pray for an increase in our trust and reliance upon God, who is the preeminent guide for our lives and the fountainhead of real happiness. A trust and reliance that makes us ever more aware of the calling to participate in the creation of a kingdom here on earth through acts of loving kindness. Each morning, God sends us the same message: “You are chosen, you are beloved, you are blessed.” May the love that God has for us keep us patient as we inquire, nudge, and challenge each other. May it be so. *[Pause.]*

Richard McGinnis will introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Richard McGinnis)**

Imagine that you are in an elevator with someone who asks you to describe briefly what it means to be a Christian? What would you include in your “elevator” speech?

The Ten Commandments? The Golden Rule? What else?

For those who have spent time with the Beatitudes--surely, you would share that we are blessed. Blessed by a God who loves you, who walks beside you in your suffering and distress, and who calls you to authentic, holy happiness.

Through Jesus, God gives us the Beatitudes – a counter cultural blueprint, a framework for Christian living. They describe a divine kingdom of perfect happiness and a worldly kingdom that we are called to promote as Jesus’ humble followers.

Christianity is not for the proud and arrogant. Divine wisdom does not abide in social status, power, self-righteousness or self-sufficiency. It abides in turning to God in surrender; it abides in struggle. It is a journey that we take with God at our side.

Consider the encouraging words of Pope Francis:

…The Beatitudes are… a roadmap for our life: they do not require superhuman actions, but rather the imitation of Jesus in our everyday life. They invite us to keep our hearts pure, to practice meekness and justice despite everything, to be merciful to all, to live affliction in union with God. This is the holiness of daily life. The Beatitudes are for those who face up to the challenges and trials of each day. Those who live out the Beatitudes according to Jesus are able to cleanse the world.

In sum, the theme for today is happiness as we are chosen, beloved by God, and blessed to bring the reality of God’s love to the world.

 *[Slight pause]*

Now Ann Masters will read from the Oracle of Zephaniah and the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians. Bill Cavanaugh will offer questions that will lead us into silent reflection.

Listen for what God promises to those who embrace faith with humility.

**READING 1a Zep 2:3; 3:12-13 (Ann Masters)**

Seek Yahweh, all you humble of the earth.
I will leave as a remnant in your midst
a people humble and lowly,
who shall take refuge in the name of the Holy One:
the remnant of Israel.
They shall do no wrong
and speak no lies;
no words of deceit will pass their lips

they shall graze and lie down to rest

with none to disturb them.

*[Slight pause]*

**READING 1b** [**1 Cor 1:26-31**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/1corinthians/1?26)

Consider your own calling, brothers and sisters.

Not many of you were wise by human standards,
not many were powerful,
not many were of noble birth.

Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise,
and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong,
and God chose the lowly and despised of the world,
those who count for nothing,
to reduce to nothing those who are something,
so that no human being might boast before God.

God has given you life in Christ Jesus,

and has made Jesus our wisdom, our justice, our sanctification, and our redemption.

"Let the one who would boast, boast in our God."

**QUESTIONS 1**  **(Bill Cavanaugh)**

*[Pause after each question--silently counting to yourself one thousand, two thousand, three thousand; then proceed.]*

Where do you find the humble, foolish, or lowly among the faithful of today?

How have you been inspired by that encounter?

How has life invited you to embrace personal humility?



“Mother Teresa of Calcutta”. Wikimedia. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mutter\_Teresa\_von\_Kalkutta.jpg

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** *[****Betty****: Share slide 1, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.]*

**Richard**: Now Maria Desjardins will read from the Gospel of Matthew.

**READING 2** [**Mt 5:1-12a**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/5?1) **(Maria Desjardins )**

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain,
and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him.

Jesus began to teach them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you
and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.

Rejoice and be glad,
for your reward will be great in heaven."

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

Which Beatitude has been a special blessing to you; with which do you most struggle?

What would you include in your “elevator” speech?



"The Eight Beatitudes" (detail, circa 1578) by Hendrick Goltzius (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

<https://www.ncronline.org/jan-29-2023-fourth-sunday-ordinary-time>

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** ***[Betty****: Share slide 2, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.]*

**Richard**: Now Judy Sholes will read from an adaptation of a reflection on the Scriptures by Dominican Sister Carol J. Dempsey.

**READING 3/REFLECTION. (Judy Sholes)**

With every new year come renewed desires for a more equitable and just world for all creation.

Yet competition and conflict continue to weaken, and sometimes even destroy, the bonds of human relationships.

This Sunday's readings offer encouragement to the disenfranchised, define the interests of the divine one, and present a way forward for those seeking to live alternatively to the dominant social model.

Zephaniah offers a clarion call to the humble of the earth. They are not to embrace humiliation and the feeling of powerlessness. They are to seek justice and truth while remaining rooted in the divine presence who is the source of virtue and peace.

The reading from Corinthians reinforces that divine favor rests with and empowers those having no status and prestige, who acknowledge that all is divine gift.

Holiness and godliness entail standing with those on the margins while working toward their justice. Holiness can never be separated from mission.

Finally, we hear the Beatitudes, part of the Sermon on the Mount. It was a time of oppressive political and economic conditions, scarce resources, and power imbalances. Sound familiar?

In the Beatitudes, Jesus puts forward his agenda, in contrast to other Jewish sects that competed for followers. The Beatitudes do not value power, prestige, status and the resultant competition and conflict. They showcase a way to handle social conflict that preserves the dignity and well-being of all while establishing and sustaining peace.

The entire Sermon on the Mount, and especially the Beatitudes, functions as an invitation to personal and communal transformation for all, where differences are honored and the true exercise of power leads not to conflict and division but to unity and peace.

Will we who struggle, like the rest of humanity, choose self-serving power, prestige and status? Or will we set foot on a different, alternative path characterized by humility and blueprinted by the Beatitudes?

This alternative path and the divine one's choice for those on the margins offer us much needed hope.

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

What manifestations of social transformation have given you the most joy; for what future communal transformation do you most hope?

When has it been difficult for you to set foot on the “alternative path?”



Jesus MAFA Project, “The Sermon on the Mount”. https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/diglib-viewimage.pl?SID=20230110307723024&code=&RC=48284&Row=&code=act&return=act

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** *[****Betty****: Share slide 3, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.]*

**Richard**: Bill Fanelli will lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Bill Fanelli)**

We know the wisdom of our community includes both words shared and silent listening. 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 after 20 minutes and not later than 20 minutes after the hour]

Thank you.  Let us pause for a minute of silence to hold all that has been said, and to notice what is rising in us in response. (Long pause)

Hold onto what God is saying in you right now. We can continue sharing after the final song. For now, let us respond to God in prayer.

Now Lynn Bufka will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Lynn Bufka)**

Let’s pause to notice the prayers that arise in us now. *[Pause]* Our response will be: **“Grant us the grace to live as humble instruments of your love.”**

For blessings on women religious who seek to be the face of your mercy throughout the world, we pray: “**Grant us the grace to live as humble instruments of your love.”**

For—

the wisdom and fortitude to be peacemakers in our homes, our cities, our nation and across the world,

the empathy to mourn with those around us who are overwhelmed with personal grief or distress at social conditions,

the passion to insist on justice for the poor, the outcast, the alienated and the persecuted,

the tenderness to show mercy toward those deemed unworthy and undeserving,

the generosity of spirit to recognize and honor strength in those who appear weak,

the support for those who feel insignificant or useless,

and for the sick and dying among us; and for those who have died:

we pray. **“Grant us the grace to live as humble instruments of your love.”**

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

*[Shared prayers]* For this we pray. **“Grant us the grace to live as humble instruments of your love.”**

O You who see us, hear us, and love us more than we can imagine, thank you for receiving our intentions, spoken and unspoken. We entrust all to you. Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Peggy Thompson)**

God of all generations, we offer our whole selves to you, all that we have and all that we are. We pray that you will help us to be bold in our mission and in our witness. May we who have been given so much, give to others in need, support those who suffer or mourn, give peace to those in trouble, work for unity in our world and love our neighbor as Jesus taught us. Blessed Be!

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Kathy Linabery)**

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.

Blessed Be.

**SHARING BREAD (Sr. Susan Maloney)**

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.

(five second pause)

Let us all say: **Blessed Be! So be it!** And again: **Blessed Be! So be it!**

To extend our communion, Sr. Melanie DiPietro will lead us in the prayer of Jesus.

**THE PRAYER OF JESUS: (Sr. Melanie DiPietro)**

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

**All (muted):**

Our Father, Our Mother, you are here among us.

Blessed be Your Creation.

May Your reign be a reality here on earth.

May we become more interested in building Your kin-dom here and now

rather than waiting for it to come down from above.

Let us share our bread with those who hunger.

Let us learn to forgive as well as to receive forgiveness.

Help us through the time of temptation, delivering us from all evil.

For ours are the eternal blessings that you pour upon the earth.

Amen

**FINAL BLESSING (Anne Regan)**

As we close, let us feel this blessing upon us.

**Blessed are you**
who bear the light
in unbearable times,
who testify
to its endurance
amid the unendurable,
who bear witness
to its persistence
when everything seems
in shadow
and grief.

**Blessed are you**in whom
the light lives,
in whom
the brightness blazes—
your heart
a chapel,
an altar where
in the deepest night
can be seen
the fire that
shines forth in you
in unaccountable faith,
in stubborn hope,
in love that illumines
every broken thing
it finds. Amen.

**Richard:** Please join Debra Street in singing “Send Down the Fire” by Marty Haugen.

**CLOSING SONG (Debra Street)**

**Send Down the Fire**

Verse 1

Call us to be your compassion,
Teach us the song of your love;
Give us hearts that sing,
Give us deeds that ring,
Make us ring with the song of your love.

Refrain:

Send down the fire of your justice,
Send down the rains of your love;
Come, send down the Spirit, breathe life in your people,
and we shall be people of God.

Verse 2

Call us to learn of your mercy,
Teach us the way of your peace;
Give us hearts that feel,
Give us hands that heal,
Make us walk in the way of your peace. (Repeat Refrain)

Verse 3

Call us to witness your Kingdom,
Give us the presence of Christ;
May your holy light
Keep us shining bright,
Ever shine with the presence of Christ. (Repeat Refrain)

**REFERENCES FOR FURTHER REFLECTION/DAILY MEDITATION**

A. Ross, “7. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12), An Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew”.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/7-beatitudes-matthew-51-12>

Commentary on Matthew 5:1-12, “Sermon on the Mount”, Living Space.

<https://livingspace.sacredspace.ie/o2102g/>

**RESOURCES**

**Introductory Quotation.**

R. Karban, “Forming the Remnant”, Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, January 17, 2017, quoting Teilhard de Chardin. <https://www.ncronline.org/spirituality/scripture-life/scripture-life/fourth-sunday-ordinary-time>

**Introduction to Theme.** Various sources.

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<https://sites.google.com/view/pope-francis-homilies/beatitudes#h.ph4aje25q94f>

R. Rohr, “Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit”, Daily Meditation, Center for Action and Contemplation, January 30, 2018.

<https://cac.org/daily-meditations/blessed-poor-spirit-2018-01-30/>

Commentary on Matthew 5:1-12, “Sermon on the Mount”, Living Space.

<https://livingspace.sacredspace.ie/o2102g/>

A. Ross, “7. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12), An Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew”.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/7-beatitudes-matthew-51-12>

J. Shlichting, Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Catholic Women Preach, January 29, 2017. <https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/01292017>

Background on the Gospel Reading.

<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/sunday-connection/fourth-sunday-in-ordinary-time-a-sunday-connection/>

**Scriptures.**

Sourced from <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/012923.cfm>

**Reflection on Scriptures.**

Adapted from Carol J. Dempsey, “Jan. 29, 2023, Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time”, National Catholic Reporter.

https://www.ncronline.org/jan-29-2023-fourth-sunday-ordinary-time

**Prayers of the Community.**

**In part, J. Merchant, “Prayers 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time”.**

<https://www.ncronline.org/spirituality/scripture-life/scripture-life/fourth-sunday-ordinary-time>

**The Prayer of Jesus.**

[**https://www.minnesotaumc.org**](https://www.minnesotaumc.org)

**Final blessing.** Jan Richardson: <https://adventdoor.com/2014/12/12/advent-3-testify-to-the-light/>

**Art.**

“Happy Joyous People”.

<https://pixabay.com/en/fun-happy-people-happiness-joy-1012680/>

“Mother Teresa of Calcutta”. Wikimedia. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mutter\_Teresa\_von\_Kalkutta.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AMutter_Teresa_von_Kalkutta.jpg)

“The Eight Beatitudes”.

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Jesus MAFA Project, “The Sermon on the Mount”.

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**Music**.

Opening Song. “Glory and Praise to Our God” by Dan Schutte.

<https://catholichymn.blogspot.com/2015/07/Glory-and-Praise-to-Our-God.html>

Opening Song Video Option.

<https://youtu.be/u5BPKXkG_HU> (10-2:23)

Closing Song. “Send Down the Fire” by Marty Haugen.

https://catholichymn.blogspot.com/2016/01/send-down-the-fire.html

Closing Song Video Option.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWVq7Y22ti8> (10 to 3:00)