**SWS February 12, 2023 - Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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*If you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your sister or brother has a grudge against you, leave your gift and go be reconciled with them.*

Please have bread and drink for the communion rite.

**HELLOs** and then Dan mutes everyone. **(Dan/Terri)**

**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 – **Linda Donaldson and Debra Street** - and prayer today - **Ann Masters, Sr. Vera Rutolo, Kathleen Heller, Arlene McGarrity, Peggy Thompson, Gail DeGeorge, Kathy Linaberry,** **Nancy Sushinsky, Kate Monagan, and Peg Duchesne.**
* Pray with us during Lent with this year's Little Black Book. For those nearby: Email Joan Sklamm at jmsklamm@msn.com using the subject “Lenten books,” with your name, address and telephone number and if you are able to pick up your book at SJB Parish Office. For those who need your copy mailed: Email Anne Regan aregan@verizon.net with your address, using the subject “Lenten books.”
* We are always looking for new readers. If you’d like to read on February 26 contact Suzie De Quattro and for March 5, Lynn Bufka. Their email addresses will be in Chat. This really helps planners. Thank you!

**SETTLING IN (Ann Masters)**

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.

Now Linda Donaldson will lead us in our opening song.

**OPENING SONG: Lead Me, Guide Me (Linda Donaldson)**

Refrain:

Lead me, guide me along the way;

For if You lead me, I cannot stray;

Lord, let me walk each day with Thee.

Lead me, O Lord, lead me.

1. I am weak, and I need Thy strength and power

To help me over my weakest hour;

Let me through the darkness Thy face to see,

Lead me, O Lord, lead me. [Refrain]

2. Help me tread in the paths of righteousness;

Be my aid when Satan and sin oppress.

I am putting all my trust in Thee,

Lead me, O Lord, lead me. [Refrain]

**CALL TO WORSHIP/ GATHERING PRAYER (Vera Rutolo)**

This morning, when you began to awaken -

did you notice?

The feeling that the Beloved

had stood over you

all night long, keeping watch.

As soon as you began to wake,

the Holy One kissed your forehead

and lit a holy lamp inside your heart.

Bring now your lamp-lit heart to brighten our gathering and deepen our prayer. May it bring love and healing far beyond our gathering. *[Pause.]*

Terri Butel will introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Terri Butel)**

A theme for today is ***integrity***. I’m leaning on this definition: the state of being whole and undivided. Consider three aspects here:

1. Integrity of heart (my inner orientation) and the outer me;

2. Solidarity with all, even those people I consider the worst, who share the same heart orientation, but who may differ from me by the scale of their behavior; and

3. Simplicity, not duplicity - so that my “yes” means “yes” and my “no” means “no”.

What flows from an integrity that means “being whole and undivided”? Certainly, one fruit of this integrity is forgiveness. Forgiveness that does not say what happened was OK or didn’t hurt, but that releases both parties from the burden of what went wrong. One that repairs relationships and heals the heart.

In this next hour let’s look at what integrity and forgiveness can mean to us individually, and the very real ways in which we block both from becoming realities in our own lives.

[Pause]

Now Kathleen Heller will read from the Gospel of Matthew. Arlene McGarrity will offer questions that will lead us into silent reflection.

**READING 1: Matthew 5 (Kathleen Heller)**

You’ve heard that our ancestors were told, “No killing’ and, ‘Every murderer will be subject to judgement.’ But I tell you that everyone who is angry with sister or brother
is subject to judgment…

You have heard the commandment, ‘No committing *adultery.’* But I tell you that those who look lustfully at others have already committed adultery with them in their hearts.

Again you have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘Don’t break your vow; fulfill all oaths made to our God*.’* But I tell you not to swear oaths at all. Say ‘Yes’ when you mean 'Yes,' and 'No' when you mean 'No.' Anything beyond that is from the Evil One.



**QUESTIONS 1***[Pause after each.]* **(Arlene McGarrity)**

Jesus widens old teachings to focus on what’s in our hearts. How do his words help you pray for your enemy? With what words might you begin that prayer?

How was it for you when someone told you the painful truth? Where was God in that moment?

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

**READING 2 - Adapted from Amy G. Oden & Mary McGlone**

 **(Peggy Thompson)**

In today’s Gospel, Jesus has left the crowds and is instructing his disciples about the demands of a Jesus-following life. No longer do the teachings on murder and adultery apply literally to murder and adultery. They are also doorways to examine our interior attitudes and orientations that lead to these sins, like anger, arrogance, dishonesty, lust and “other-ing.”

Jesus connects the dots between outward acts and our internal orientation, from murder to anger, from adultery to lust. It is one thing to behave rightly. It is another thing entirely for one’s heart to be oriented toward love. Just as it is easier to show up at the temple than it is to do justice, so it is easier to keep the commandment against murder than it is to avoid anger in one’s heart.

No longer can we pat ourselves on the back for not committing murder while thinking nothing of harming a person’s reputation by gossiping. Nor can we congratulate ourselves for avoiding adultery if we create primary relationships with work, sports, or the internet rather than our spouse and family.

Mary McGlone’s writes that adultery was the most common description of Israel's religious unfaithfulness and was more about the unfaithfulness of idolatry than anything sexual. Jesus’ teaching clarifies that the sin is self-centered behaviors and attitudes that lead to the easy severing of right relationship.

Jesus offers a more radical ethic, a reign of God ethic, one already hinted at in the list of beatitudes preceding this passage in Matthew. Justice in this newly-inaugurated kingdom of God is more than following rules. It requires a life surrendered in love to God and neighbor.



**QUESTIONS 2** *[Pause after each.]* **(Arlene McGarrity)**

How do you uncover interior attitudes that have no place in a loving heart?

How do you commit adultery by prioritizing other things over love of spouse, family, and neighbor? Or over your primary relationships?

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

**READING 3 Matthew 5/Forgiveness commentary (Gail DeGeorge)**

If you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your sister or brother has a grudge against you, leave your gift there at the altar. Go to be reconciled with them, and then come and offer your gift. [Matthew 5:23-24]

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To forgive another person from the heart is an act of liberation. We set that person free from the negative bonds that exist between us. We say, "I no longer hold [the] offense against you" But there is more. We also free ourselves from the burden of being “the offended one." The great temptation is to cling in anger to our enemies and then define ourselves as being offended and wounded by them. Forgiveness, therefore, liberates not only the other [person] but also ourselves. *Henri Nouwen*

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Forgiveness refuses to allow the offense to be the basis of the relationship. *John Shea*

**QUESTIONS 3** *[Pause after each.]* **(Arlene McGarrity)**

How was it for you when someone initiated healing a painful breach in your relationship?

What particular graces do you ask God to provide so you can initiate healing with your sister or brother?

Recall a relationship where you released your feeling that you were “the offended one.”

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

**SHARING (Kathy Linaberry)**

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. [*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 and cherish all that has been shared. (Long pause)

We can continue sharing after the final song.

Now Nancy Sushinsky will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY** (**Nancy Sushinsky**)

Let’s pause to notice the prayers emerging in our hearts. *[Pause]*

Our response will be: **Faithful Guide, hear our prayer.**

In thanksgiving for, and for continued blessings upon, women religious who model faithful integrity for the Church and the world, we pray… **Faithful Guide, hear our prayer.**

That increasing public awareness about human trafficking will destroy those networks, and that we may redouble our efforts toward meaningful immigration reform, we pray…

**Faithful Guide, hear our prayer.**

For bipartisan and meaningful gun reform and an end to the senseless killing of so many innocents, we pray … **Faithful Guide, hear our prayer.**

During this Black History Month, may we deepen our knowledge of and appreciation for the many contributions of our sisters and brothers of color. May we be inspired by their bedrock faith and dedicate ourselves to encouraging the flourishing of their lives and gifts, we pray … **Faithful Guide, hear our prayer.**

For continued healing for our community members, especially Betty, Mia, Cheryl – and so many others, our families, loved ones, friends, we pray **… Faithful Guide, hear our prayer.**

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

*[Shared prayers]* … we pray… **Faithful Guide, hear our prayer.**

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 (Kate Monagan)**

God of all, we pray that you will help us to be loving and courageous in healing our relationships so that we may offer our whole selves to you - all that we have and all that we are. 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 (Peg Duchesne)**

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 one body as we take a moment to recall and let go of all that separates us – first, from our neighbor (pause) and from you. (Pause)

Give us grace to 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 (Kate Monagan)**

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 and respond to the hunger of others. Thank you for promising and providing 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.

(pause)

**THE PRAYER OF JESUS: (Ann Masters)**

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 (Vera Rutolo)**

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.

**Terri:** Please join in singing our closing song.

**CLOSING SONG: Rain Down (Debra Street)**

(Refrain)

Rain down, rain down,

Rain down your love on your people.

Rain down, rain down,

Rain down your love, God of life.

1. Faithful and true is the word of our God.

All of God’s works are so worthy of trust.

God’s mercy falls on the just and the right;

full of God’s love is the earth. (Refrain)

2. We who revere and find hope in our God

Live in the kindness and joy of God’s wing.

God will protect us from darkness and death;

God will not leave us to starve. (Refrain)

God of creation, we long for your truth;

You are the water of life that we thirst,

Grant that your love and your peace

touch our hearts, all of our hope lies in you.

(Refrain)

**REFERENCES**

# **Opening Song:** Lead Me, Guide Me,by Doris Akers

# **Call To Worship/Gathering Prayer:** adapted from “Keeping Watch” by Hafiz, Seven Sacred Pauses, Macrina Wiederkehr,p.65.

**Reading 1:** Matthew 5:21-22, 27- 28, 33-34, 37, Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation, Copyright 2007 by Priests for Equality.

**Reading 2:** Adapted from “Commentary on Matthew 5:21-37”, Amy G. Oden, Visiting Professor of Early Church History and Spirituality, Saint Paul School of Theology, Oklahoma City, Okla., <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/sixth-sunday-after-epiphany/commentary-on-matthew-521-37>

# **Mary McGlone,** Feb. 12, 2023: Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time,<https://www.ncronline.org/feb-12-2023-sixth-sunday-ordinary-time>

**Reading 3:** Matthew 5:23-24, Inclusive Bible; Henri Nouwen; John Shea

[The Spirit Master, p. 104. Chicago, Thomas More Press. 1987].

**Closing Song:** Rain Down, Jaime Cortez, OCP.

**Other resources:**

**‘Let your yes mean yes’ - a quote from St. Vincent de Paul:** “The heart must not think one thing while the mouth says another (IX, 81; IX, 605; XII, 172). The missionary must avoid all duplicity, dissimulation, cunning, and double meaning (II, 340; IX, 81). For myself I don't know, but God gives me such a great esteem for simplicity that I call it my gospel. I have a particular devotion and consolation in saying things as they are (IX, 606).” The way of Vincent de Paul: Five characteristic virtues, by Fr. Robert Maloney, p. 38. <https://via.library.depaul.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1009&context=maloney>

**IMAGES**

Woman on phone, <https://www.pexels.com/photo/black-businesswoman-speaking-on-smartphone-8067767/>

Deep well, <https://www.pexels.com/photo/famous-deep-well-of-quinta-da-regaleira-4514109/>

Shoulders, <https://www.pexels.com/photo/shoulders-of-multiracial-models-against-light-wall-7479999/>