**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**March 5, 2023 the Second Sunday of Lent**

*“Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news;*

*lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news;*

*lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’”*

*(Isaiah 40:9)*

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

**WELCOME (Lynn Bufka)**

Welcome, everyone!

* I prepared our prayer for today by updating our prayer from last year.

Thanks to the original planners!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Debra Street for leading our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Sr. Jacqueline Quinn, Mary Dolmage, Cecilia Estrada, Maryann Dolan, Norbert Bufka, Kathy Heller, Debbie Ballard, Suzie and Jim De Quattro.
* We are always looking for new readers and grateful for all readers. Contact Terri Butel for March 19 and Richard McGinnis for March 26. Their emails can be found in Chat.
* This Friday Betty and Suzie are speaking at the SJB Lenten Supper Talks about our Sunday services. Please feel free to join us at 7:00 pm EST by accessing this link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/9614661537?pwd=K3RqcXJwYVNVZHpZN3AzQ0lVR0dUUT09> Meeting ID: 961 466 1537 Passcode: SN94Ey

**SETTLING IN (Lynn Bufka)**

Now let’s move from greeting each other to greeting the presence of God living within us. Allow yourself to be drawn into this present moment. Notice what is all around you. Now deepen your breath and feel it filling you as you breathe in and out. . . in and out. . . Quiet your thoughts and feel that light within. . . And now let’s take 3 deep breaths. One to be here. . . One to be together. . . And one to listen to the voice that is already speaking deep within.

Now Maryann Dolan will lead us into our prayer together.

**OPENING RITUAL** **(Maryann Dolan)**

God of our deserts, God of our transformation, God of our fruitfulness, God of all who forget you and all who return to you, God of all who hope for new life, we are here to listen to you.

Leader: Beloved Community, Lent calls us to return to Yahweh with all our heart

All: O God, we hear you calling.

Leader: Beloved Community, we begin just where we are.

All: O God, we hear you calling.

Leader: Holy One, you appeal to us for justice, peace, and communion for all creation!

All: O God, we hear you calling.

Leader: “Lent is a call to weep for what we could have been and are not. Lent is the grace to grieve for what we should have done and did not. Lent is the opportunity to change what we ought to change but have not…. Lent is about becoming, doing and changing whatever it is that is blocking the fullness of life in us right now.”

Let us pause and reflect on what is blocking us, or maybe even protecting us, from being tugged into the unknown magnificence of resurrection.

[*Pause about 15 seconds – about 2 slow deep breaths.]*

Leader: Let us pray together:

All (muted):

I ask you, my sisters and brothers, to pray for me to our God.

Holy One, accept my deep sorrow for ways in which I participate in the brokenness of your world -- in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and what I have failed to do.

Thank you for your endless love for me, and for your forgiveness that comes even before I ask.

Help me to forgive myself.

Strengthen me to take an active part in bringing your grace to the world, in the company of all your children, all the saints, and all the Earth. Amen.

Leader: Cecilia Estrada will now introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME**  **(Cecilia Estrada)**

Today we hear of Jesus shining out in fullness, radiant, astonishing.  We want to be both a witness to that radiance and a reflection of it.  Isn’t that the Gospel call to each of us?

Today we will look more closely at Peter, James and John and their varied reactions to the Transfiguration. First when they hear the voices of Moses and Elijah they get busy building. But that energy and focus give way to fear when they find themselves in a cloud.  Finally the voice of God names Jesus My Own Beloved.  And Peter, James and John at Jesus’ instruction fall silent and tell no one.

What can these three stories tell us about ourselves and the ways in which we can be transformed?  What happens when we have mountain-top experiences?  We will focus on each portion of this gospel individually, with a different type of reflection following each.

*(Slight pause)*

Donna Ellerman will read the scriptures, with Ann Jelen inviting your reflection using music, commentary, and poetry. Jim De Quattro will offer questions for you to take into silence.

**GOSPEL, PART 1 Matthew 17: 1-**[**Lk 9:28b-29**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/luke/9?28)  **(****Donna Ellerman)**

Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother,  
and led them up a high mountain by themselves.  
And before their eyes. Jesus was transfigured;  
his face shone like the sun  
and his clothes became as radiant as light.

**Gospel Reflection 1 (Ann Jelen)**

We will now reflect on this gospel listening to Odetta sing “This Little Light of Mine.”

(Betty) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2kDsqGeoLU> play at 1.25, end at 2:03.

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[Pause after each question.]* **(Jim De Quattro)**

How does **your** light shine?

When does your light tend to grow dim?

Recall a time when you found light shining where you didn’t expect it.

**COMMUNAL REFLECTION** (**Betty:** Slide, time 2:00, chime, stop slide**)**

**GOSPEL, PART 2 Matthew 17: 3-4 (Donna Ellerman)**

Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared to them,  
conversing with Jesus.  
Then Peter said,  
"Rabbi, it is good that we are here.  
With your permission, I will erect three shelters here,  
one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

**Gospel Reflecti”**

“Transfiguration” by Malcolm Guite:

For that one moment, ‘in and out of time’,  
On that one mountain where all moments meet,  
The daily veil that covers the sublime  
In darkling glass fell dazzled at his feet.  
There were no angels full of eyes and wings  
Just living glory full of truth and grace.  
The Love that dances at the heart of things  
Shone out upon us from a human face  
And to that light the light in us leaped up,  
We felt it quicken somewhere deep within,  
A sudden blaze of long-extinguished hope  
Trembled and tingled through the tender skin.  
Nor can this this blackened sky, this darkened scar  
Eclipse that glimpse of how things really are.

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[Pause after each question.]* **(Jim De Quattro)**

When have you felt your light leap up in response to another’s light?

How do you respond to ‘that glimpse of how things really are’?

When have you wanted to set up structure when God wanted you to stay loose?

**COMMUNAL REFLECTION** (**Betty:** Slide, time 2:00, chime, stop slide)

**GOSPEL, PART 3 Matthew 17:5-9 (Donna Ellerman)**

While Peter was still speaking,  
a bright cloud cast a shadow over them.  
Out of the cloud came a voice which said,  
"This is my Own, my Beloved, on whom my favor rests.

Listen to him!"

When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate  
and were very much afraid.  
But Jesus came and touched them, saying,  
"Get up! Do not be afraid."  
And when the disciples raised their eyes,  
they did not see anyone but Jesus.  
  
As they were coming down from the mountain,  
Jesus commanded them,  
"Do not tell the vision to anyone  
until the Chosen One has been raised from the dead."

**Gospel Reflection 3 (Ann Jelen)**

We need mountaintop experiences in our lives, but society has a tendency to level off the mountains and flatten them out, take the curves out of roads and make them flat. Mountaintop experiences are singular and take preparation, time and effort. Things look different. We need to be in places where we experience the closeness of God.

But mountaintop experiences are moments, not perpetual highs or exalted faith. God reveals in different ways and how we, individually, most need to see in a new way. We have to resist the temptation to flatten out the mountain for convenience. And we have to come down from that mountain to affect the valley. What was revealed on the mountain propels us towards our purpose.

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS** *[Pause after each question.]* **(Jim De Quattro)**

When have you had a mountaintop experience? How did it propel you?

How does silence help you in profound moments?

How do you find living in the “normal” after a mountain top experience?

**COMMUNAL REFLECTION** (**Betty:** Slide, time 2:00, chime, stop slide**)**

Betty: Now Suzie De Quattro will lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Suzie De Quattro)**

We invite you to share the essence what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you have reflected upon our reading and music. We welcome everyone who wants to speak, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening.

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. *[Long-ish pause]*

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

[Sharing]

[If there is silence more than about 30 seconds before anyone speaks:] Take whatever quiet you need before you speak.

[If there is extended silence during the sharing:] Is there anyone else who would like to share?  *[Pause for a slow, deep breath.]*

*[Stop by about 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.] We can continue after the final song, as we often do.

Holding onto what the Holy One is saying, we turn to God in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Mary Dolmage)**

Let’s pause in silence to notice what prayer rises in us now. *[Pause….]*

Our response is: Christ, be our light.

God within us, give us wisdom and courage, fierceness and mercy, to shine with your light. For this we pray: **Christ, be our light**.

God among us, strengthen all who continue to serve humbly, steadfastly and unconditionally those in need throughout the world, especially all women religious and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. For this we pray: **Christ, be our light**.

God beside us, hold and inspire all who stand in solidarity with those impacted by violence: the people living in and defending Ukraine, those who are terrorized by guns or are fleeing oppression, those whose climate has made life unsustainable. For this we pray: **Christ, be our light**.

God everywhere, stretch our minds and hearts to remain mindful of other urgent situations that are getting few headlines. For this we pray: **Christ, be our light**.

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

(Shared prayers) Christ, be our light.

O You who love us more than we can imagine, we are grateful for this chance to give you our prayers, spoken and unspoken. We entrust the outcome to you. Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Debbie Ballard)**

Holy One, we bring you ourselves knowing you accept us just as we are and forgive us before we forgive ourselves.

We pause in silence to reflect on our Lenten intentions – how is that intention taking root or evolving in me? *(Long pause)*

We turn again to you and ask - In what specific way am I hearing your call to me for this coming week? *(Long pause)*

Holy One, 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 (Sr. Jacqueline Quinn)**

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 give you thanks for your presence in and among us.  *[Pause.]*

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.]*

Let us know God within ourselves so that we become God’s living presence in our world. [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.

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

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, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily 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. Come swiftly Mother, Father, come. For yours is the power and the glory and the mercy. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Kathy Heller)**

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.

**CLOSING SONG “Christ, Be Our Light”** – Bernadette Farrell **(Debra Street)**

Longing for light, we wait in darkness  
Longing for truth, we turn to You  
Make us Your own, Your holy people  
Light for the world to see

Refrain: Christ, be our light!

Shine in our hearts,  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ, be our light!  
Shine in Your church gathered today

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.  
Longing for warmth, many are cold.  
Make us Your building, sheltering others,  
Walls made of living stone. Refrain

Longing for peace, our world is troubled,  
Longing for hope, many despair,  
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.  
Make us your living voice, Refrain

**RESOURCES**

* Opening Ritual – “Lent is a call…” quote from Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister: <http://rosemarieberger.com/2011/03/15/joan-chittister-lent-is-a-chance-to-grieve/>
* A sonnet for the feast of the Transfiguration by Malcolm Guite

<https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2012/08/04/a-sonnet-for-the-feast-of-the-transfiguration/> and image (read the artist’s comments!)

* Reflection 3 derived from the Little Black Book and <https://www.tounearth.com/articles/how-to-use-the-mountain-top-experience-in-the-valley>
* Image 3- personal photo, Cusco, Peru
* Final blessing – Jan Richardson: <https://adventdoor.com/2014/12/12/advent-3-testify-to-the-light/>
* Christ, Be Our Light – Bernadette Farrell - 3 beautiful versions
  + <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlLgTyWidlw> (Nigerian choir)
  + <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5g0c4YeABTs> (Notre dame folk choir)
  + <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMkfKXLcm5Q>

