**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**APRIL 2, 2023**

**Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion**

*“Let the same mind be in you that is in Christ Jesus.” Phil 1: 5*



**HELLOs and WELCOME (Judy)**

After Betty mutes everyone:

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Maryann and I prepared today’s prayer. As we all know, the Palm Sunday readings are long, and we have provided you with multiple opportunities to sit with them in silence. Thus, in order not to go well beyond our usual time, we will have less time for sharing during the service. As usual, however, we can continue after our last song.
* Thanks to the people who will be singing and leading us in prayer today: Linda Donaldson, Debra Street, Srs. Jo’Ann De Quattro, Jennie Lechtenberg, and Jacqueline Quinn, Peg Duchesne, Betty Thompson, Marilyn Voigt, Kathleen Cross, Norb Bufka, Lynn Bufka, George Urban, Paul Voigt, Mia Brown, Tim Brown, Karen McCarthy, and Dan McCarthy. If you would like to read on future Sundays, please put a note in Chat or email later.

**SETTLING IN (Judy)**

Let your breath bring you into quiet so you can be attentive to each other and to the Spirit. Notice your breath as it goes in and out…. Let it slow and deepen… and slowly fill you with the peace of Christ. We begin with 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together… and one to know the Spirit who never leaves us.

**OPENING RITUAL**  **(Sr. Jo’Ann De Quatttro and Sr. Jennie Lechtenberg)**

(Jo’Ann): 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.

(Jo’Ann): Beloved Community, Lent calls us to return to Yahweh with all our heart.

(Jennie) and All: O God, we hear you calling.

(Jo’Ann): Beloved Community, we begin just where we are.

(Jennie) and All: O God, we hear you calling.

(Jo’Ann): Holy One, you appeal to us for justice, peace, and communion for all creation!

 (Jennie) and All: O God, we hear you calling.

(Jo’Ann): 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.]*

(Jennie): 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.

**(Jennie**) Sr. Jacqueline Quinn will read from the gospel of John.

**Reading from John 12:12-15 (Sr. Jacqueline Quinn)**

A reading from the gospel of John.

The next day, the great crowd that had come for the Passover Feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, so they got palm branches and came out to meet him.

They shouted joyfully,

“Hosanna!”

“Blessed is the One who comes

in the name of our God –

The Ruler of Israel.”

Jesus rode in sitting upon a donkey in accord with scripture:

“Fear not, O people of Zion!

Your ruler comes to you

sitting on a donkey’s colt.”

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME**  **(Maryann)**

The gospel account of Palm Sunday that we just heard is full of joy and jubilation. In the short version of Matthew’s gospel to be read today, the mood quickly shifts to darkness, suffering and death. We know it as the Passion.

Matthew, in his account of the Passion, sought to tell the story of Jesus to devoted 1st Century Palestinian Jews to convince them that Jesus was the promised Messiah of God. We hear that message clearly at the end of this agonizing story.

Rather than concentrating on the horror of Jesus’ physical suffering, we will examine ourselves in ordinary situations where the integrity of Jesus may challenge us. The way of the cross is the pattern of our own life and, on this day, we once again open the door to Holy Week for a deeper understanding of the cross and resurrection

**(Judy**) Let us now listen as Peg Duchesne reads from the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 27, verses 11-54. Those who also will participate in the Gospel reading are: George Urban, Paul Voigt, Tim Brown, Mia Brown, Dan McCarthy, and Karen McCarthy. The gospel has been divided into five readings. After each reading, George Urban will read reflection questions, followed by a 90 second silence. Feel free to stay with any questions or thoughts of your choosing.

**READING 1**  **(****Peg Duchesne)**

Jesus was arraigned before Pontius Pilate, the governor, who questioned him. “Are you the Ruler of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “You say that I am.”

Yet when Jesus was accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no reply. Pilate said to Jesus, “Surely you hear how many charges they bring against you?” But Jesus did not answer Pilate on a single count, much to the governor’s surprise.

Now, on the occasion of a festival, the governor was accustomed to release one prisoner, whomever the crowd would designate. At that time, they were holding a notorious prisoner named Barabbas. So, when the crowd gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you wish me to release for you? Barabbas? or Jesus, the so-called Messiah?” Pilate knew, of course, that it was out of jealousy that they had handed Jesus over.

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS 1** (**George Urban)**

If you have been **unjustly** accused of something, how did you respond then?  How would you respond now?

If you have ever been **justly** accused of something, what were you expecting or willing to endure?

(*Betty will show slide, and Judy will time for 90 seconds and chime.)*

**READING 2 (Peg Duchesne)**

While Pilate was presiding on the bench, his wife sent him a message. “Have nothing to do with that innocent man. I had a dream about him last night, which has been troubling me all day long.”

But the chief priests and elders convinced the crowds that they should ask for Barabbas, and have Jesus put to death. So, when the governor asked them, “Which one do you wish me to release for you?”, they all cried **“*Barabbas*!!”**

Pilate said to them, “Then what am I to do with Jesus, the so-called Messiah?”

***“Crucify him!”*** they all said.

“Why? What crime has he committed?” Pilate asked. But they only shouted louder***, “Crucify him****!”*

Pilate finally realized that he was getting nowhere with them. In fact, a riot was breaking out. Pilate called for water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, declaring as he did so, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. The responsibility is yours.” The whole crowd said in reply**, “Let his blood be on us and on our children.”** At that, Pilate released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus whipped, then handed him over to be crucified.

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS 2** **(George Urban)**

Have you ever washed your hands of something, choosing to not deal with the situation? Looking back now, how do you feel about your decision?

How are you influenced…or not…by the persuasiveness of an individual or a crowd?

(*Betty will show slide, and Judy will time for 90 seconds and chime.)*

**READING 3**  **(Peg Duchesne)**

The governor’s soldiers took Jesus inside the Praetorium and assembled the whole cohort around him. They stripped off his clothes and wrapped him in a scarlet military cloak. Weaving a crown out of thorns, they pressed it onto his head and stuck a reed in his right hand. Then, they began to mock Jesus by dropping to their knees, saying, “**All hail, Ruler of the Jews.”** They also spat on him. Afterwards, they took hold of the reed and struck Jesus on the head. Finally, when they had finished mocking him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes and led him off to crucifixion.

On their way out, they met a Cyrenian named Simon, whom they pressed into service to carry the cross. Upon arriving at the site called Golgotha… which means Skull Place…they gave Jesus a drink of wine, mixed with a bitter herb, which Jesus tasted and refused to drink.

Once they had nailed Jesus to the cross, they divided his clothes among them by rolling dice; then they sat down and kept watch over him. Above his head, they put the charge against him in writing: “This is Jesus, Ruler of the Jews.” Two robbers were crucified along with Jesus, one on his right and one on his left.

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS 3** **(George Urban)**

Like Simon, if you have ever been **pressed** into service, how did you feel? How were you changed…or not?

In what ways are you **called** into service… to console or help someone in their agony today?

(*Betty will show slide, and Judy will time for 90 seconds and chime.)*

**READING 4** **(Peg Duchesne)**

People going by insulted Jesus, shaking their heads and saying, **“So. you are the one who was going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days! Save yourself, why don’t you? Come down off that cross if you are the Son of God!”**

The chief priests, the religious scholars and the elders also joined in the jeering**. “He saved others, but he cannot save himself! So, he’s the Ruler of Israel! Let’s see him come down from that cross and then we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God rescue him now, if God is pleased with him! After all, he claimed to be Son of God!”** The robbers who had been crucified with Jesus jeered at him in the same way.

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS 4 (George Urban)**

What does it mean for you to trust in God?

If you feel as if you have not been rescued by God, how does this affect your belief?

(*Betty will show slide, and Judy will time for 90 seconds and chime.)*

**READING 5 (Peg Duchesne)**

At noon, a darkness fell over the whole land until about three in the afternoon. At that hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*?” which means “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” This made some of the bystanders who heard it remark**, “He is calling for Elijah!”** One of them hurried off and got a sponge. He soaked the sponge in wine, and, sticking it on a reed, tried to make Jesus drink. The other said**, “Leave him alone. Let’s see whether Elijah comes to his rescue.”**

Once again, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, then he gave up his spirit. Suddenly, the veil of the temple was ripped in half from top to bottom. The earth quaked, boulders were split, and tombs were opened. Many bodies of holy ones who had fallen asleep were raised. After Jesus’ resurrection, they came out of their tombs and entered the holy city, and appeared to many.

The centurion and his cohort, who were standing guard over Jesus’ body, were terror-stricken at seeing the earthquake and all that was happening and said, “**Clearly, this was the Son of God!**

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS 5** (**George Urban)**

When have you felt abandoned or descended into a darkness that caused you to feel forsaken?

How does the Spirit of God guide you in your own journey of the cross?

(*Betty will show slide, and Judy will time for 90 seconds and chime.)*

**( Judy)** Marilyn Voigtwill now lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Marilyn Voigt)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you have reflected upon our readings. 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 11:20.]*

Thank you.  We have to stop now, and we can continue after the final song, as we often do.

**(Marilyn)** Now Kathleen Cross will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY *(*Kathleen Cross*)***

Let us pause in silence and notice the prayer that rises in us now.

Our response will be … **God of enduring Love, we trust in you.**

For this Faith Community, as we enter Holy Week, that our deep understanding of the dying and rising of Jesus will strengthen our commitment to following Jesus… **God of enduring love, we trust in you.**

For all who suffer injustice, inequity, oppression, division, natural disasters, privilege, and greed, and for our willingness to help in any possible way… **God of enduring love, we trust in you.**

For the LCWR, and all women religious, and all of us who journey with them, that we may speak out for those who have no voice… **God of enduring love, we trust in you.**

For peacemakers who work tirelessly to root out the love of power and replace it with the power of love, and for our contributions to this effort…. **God of enduring love, we trust in you.**

And for what else shall we pray ….

Loving God, we give you all these prayers, spoken and unspoken. We will do all that we can to put our prayers into action while entrusting the outcome to you.

(**Kathleen Cross**) Let us now listen to a musical meditation so that we may be fully open to our loving God.

**OFFERTORY Open my Eyes, Lord by Jesse Manibusan (Linda Donaldson)**

Open my eyes, Lord
Help me to see Your face.
Open my eyes, Lord;
Help me to see.

Open my ears, Lord.
Help me to hear Your voice..
Open my ears, Lord;
Help me to hear.

Open my heart, Lord.
Help me to love like You.
Open my heart, Lord;
Help me to love.

And the first shall be last
And our eyes are opened
And we'll hear like never before
And we'll speak in new ways
And we'll see God's face in places we've never known.

I live within You.
Deep in Your heart, oh love.
I live within You;
Rest now in me.

Open my heart, Lord.
Help me to love like You.
Open my heart, Lord;
Help me to love.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Betty Thompson)**

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, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your presence. May it be so.

**(Betty)**To extend our communion, Norb Bufka will lead us in the Prayer of Jesus.

**OUR FATHER, OUR MOTHER (Norb 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 (Lynn Bufka)**

Lord, open our eyes

that we may see you

in our brothers and sisters.

Lord, open our ears that we

may hear the cries of the hungry,

the cold, the frightened,

the oppressed.

Lord, open our hearts

that we may love each other

as you love us.

Renew in us your spirit.

Lord, free us and make us one.

**(Lynn Bufka)** **Debra Street** will now lead us in our closing song..

**Closing Song:**  **Hosea -Come Back to Me With All Your Heart (Debra Street)**

Come back to me with all your heart,
don't let fear keep us apart.
Trees do bend, tho' straight and tall;
so must we to others' call.

Long have I waited for your coming
home to me and living deeply our new life.

The wilderness will lead you
to your heart where I will speak.
Integrity and justice
with tenderness you shall know.

Long have I waited for your coming
home to me and living deeply our new life.

You shall sleep secure with peace;
faithfulness will be your joy.

Long have I waited for your coming
home to me and living deeply our new life.

**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/>

Gospel Readings, The Inclusive Bible, Rowman and Butterfield Publishers, 2007

Offertory Meditation Song: Open My Eyes, Lord by Jesse Manibusan.

Final Blessing, A Prayer of Compassion by Mother Teresa

Closing Song; Come Back To Me With All Your Heart by Gregory Norbert.