**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**July 9, 2023 – Fourteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time**

*“There is freedom in surrender - Lay it down and let it go.”*

**

**HELLOs** and then Zoom Host mutes everyone. **(Terri Butel)**

**WELCOME**

Welcome, everyone!

* I am **Terri Butel** - **Peg Duchesne** and I prepared our prayer for today.
* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today:

Susan Harford; Cheryl Dowden; Kate Monagan; Ann Jelen; Sr. Jacqueline Quinn; Mary Dolmage; Cecilia Estrada; Nancy Sushinsky; Peggy Thompson; Judy Sholes; Judith Galleazzi; Peg Duchesne; and myself.

* We are always looking for new readers and grateful for all readers. If you are available for July 23, please contact Kathy Linabery. Then come the two Sundays we won’t gather on Zoom, July 30 and August 6. Suzie and Betty would be glad to hear from anyone who knows they can read when we return on August 13.
* As you read in the email Betty sent, Peg and I have invited several people who seldom speak to begin our sharing this morning.

**SETTLING IN (Susan Harford)**

Good morning. As we settle in, let your body relax as your eyes move around the screen and you recall our voices, joyful as we have all gathered today.  Let your breath slow and deepen as we offer thanks to the Holy One for this time together, and for each person here. Let us take a deep breath and realize that, rather than barely hanging on, we are invited to put our trust in God.

Another breath, to stop holding on so tightly and instead, with our Faith in God, to **just be held**, to simply “Let Go and Let God!” One final breath as we celebrate the monumental fact that God is in love with us. *(Take time to do that.)*

Now let us enter into our prayer together by singing our Opening Song, The Summons - Will You Come and Follow Me by John L. Bell.

**OPENING SONG** **- The Summons - Will You Come and Follow Me (John L. Bell)**

<https://youtu.be/FLRDXK0z67c> (play at 1.25 16”-2’10”)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **"The Summons"** |  |

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown?
Will you let my name be known?
Will you let my life be grown in you,
and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare,
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you
and you in me?

God, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In your company I'll go,
where your love and footsteps show,
thus I'll move and live and grow in you,
and you in me.

**GREETING/CALL TO WORSHIP/ GATHERING PRAYER (Nancy Sushinsky)**

Ordinary time is a season for us to pause, reflect, and to recognize the ordinary, extraordinary sacraments around us and in us. Ordinary time is when we take the gifts of Pentecost and turn them into active graces in ordinary situations. We pray that we ourselves will be ordinary sacraments. May we be everyday signs of God’s presence and sources of grace. May we recognize when we have been summoned to Move and Live and Grow in God – even if that means surrendering some aspect of our lives or of ourselves. May we also know and recognize when we need to turn to God for strength to carry out what God has called us to do in this world. And may we encourage, inspire, and challenge each other to imagine what none of us could conceive alone. May it be so.

*[Pause]*

Peg Duchesne will introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Peg Duchesne)**

The theme for today’s communal prayer is the transformative power of surrendering to God and finding freedom in God’s embrace throughout the journey of life. Our prayers and reflections will highlight the significance of humility, trust, and reliance on God’s love and guidance. In surrendering our struggles to God, we experience freedom.

Rather than holding on so tight during our times of struggle, when we surrender, we will be held by God. By yielding to God’s presence, we discover that it is God’s strength that sustains us on the long and winding road of life, enabling us to find peace, joy, and purpose in our daily experiences, and to share that peace and joy with others.

*[Pause]*

Now Sr. Jacqueline Quinn will read from the Gospel of Matthew. Ann Jelen will offer questions that will lead us into silence.

**READING 1**  **(Sr. Jacqueline Quinn)**

Then Jesus prayed:
"Abba God, Creator of heaven and earth, to you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and the clever, you have revealed to the youngest children. Yes, Abba, everything is as you want it to be.”

Jesus continued,

“Everything has been handed over to me by Abba God.
No one knows the Only Begotten except Abba God,
and no one knows Abba God except the Only Begotten - and those to whom the Only Begotten wishes to give that revelation.

Come to me, all you who labor and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.
Here you will find rest for your souls,
for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

*[Slight pause.]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS 1 (Ann Jelen)**

* Consider a moment or time in life that you risked a “hostile stare” to respond to God’s call.
* “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” What does your heart say about this?
* When you have entrusted your struggles to God, what was it like for you to surrender your vision of the desired outcome?

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

****

**Betty**: Now Peggy Thompson will read a reflection by **Erin Herrigan**, Christian Coach.

**READING 2 (Peggy Thompson)**

Do you ever feel like your path in life is a long and winding road, and not what you planned or expected? It is reminiscent of the Beatles song:

 ***The long and winding road***

 ***That leads to your door***

 ***Will never disappear***

 ***I’ve seen that road before***

 ***It always leads me here***

 ***Leads me to your door***

Maybe Abba God has taken you on what you would describe as an uncommon journey, but isn’t that true of all of us who choose to place our trust in God to lead us?

Yes indeed, my friend, I’ve been there too! Yet sometimes what we think is uncommon in God’s direction, is exactly right! It can be difficult when we are redirected, or a door we thought for sure would lead to the next big breakthrough or opportunity suddenly slams shut.

BUT GOD.

God’s redirection, door closing, and uncommon path is always best for our good, even when we don’t understand it. It’s our opportunity to lean in closer, build our TRUST muscle, and to know that we have everything we need at this moment. To know that we are always safe and secure in God’s hands!

And if you are in a season of struggle or redirection, let me remind you that:

***God has you, and you can breathe easy because you know God wins!***

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS 2 (Ann Jelen)**

* How was it for you when you had to exercise your TRUST muscle and lean into what God was calling you to do?
* How do you grow in surrendering your path to God’s direction?
* Reflect on a significant moment when you felt a divine summons to embrace the call to move and live and grow in your relationship with God.

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

****

Betty: Now Mary Dolmage and Cecilia Estrada will read from a reflection by Mary McGlone).

**READING 3 and MEDITATION SONG (Mary Dolmage and Cecilia Estrada)**

 [Mary]: Why does Jesus reveal Abba God to the “little ones” and not others who are more sophisticated? Those “wise and learned” acquired skills, achievements of mind and muscle that enable people to manage their world. And they often let the world know they have earned their status as being above the rest.

The little ones? They're different. Their strength lies in the fact that they don't think they know it all. They're open to the free gift of God's love, never expecting to deserve it. The more they surrender to God’s love, the humbler they become.

[Cecilia]: Not only that, but the humbler people are, the freer they become. Paul would recognize them as people who are in the Spirit.

This brings us to Jesus' invitation, "Come unto me all who are burdened … my yoke is easy."  Imagine the freedom of never feeling you had to impress others or demonstrate your worth! Imagine surrendering all those heavy burdens!

This is the invitation of the Gospel. When we rejoice in the fact that we can never earn it, we are prepared to enjoy it. And it is always there for us when we surrender ourselves to God.

Now let’s listen to a musical meditation that reminds us what it means to “just be held.”

**Meditation Song** – Just Be Held (by Casting Crowns)

<https://g.co/kgs/C98JDP> [BETTY: Play from *0:15 – 3:28*]

Hold it all together
Everybody needs you strong
But life hits you out of nowhere
And barely leaves you holding on

And when you're tired of fighting
Chained by your control
There's freedom in surrender
Lay it down and let it go

So when you're on your knees and answers seem so far away
You're not alone, stop holding on and just be held
Your world's not falling apart, it's falling into place
I'm on the throne, stop holding on and just be held
Just be held, just be held

If your eyes are on the storm
You'll wonder if I love you still
But if your eyes are on the cross
You'll know I always have and I always will

And not a tear is wasted
In time, you'll understand
I'm painting beauty with the ashes
Your life is in My hands

So when you're on your knees and answers seem so far away
You're not alone, stop holding on and just be held
Your world's not falling apart, it's falling into place
I'm on the throne, stop holding on and just be held
Just be held, just be held

Lift your hands, lift your eyes
In the storm is where you'll find Me
And where you are, I'll hold your heart
I'll hold your heart
Come to Me, find your rest
In the arms of the God who won't let go

So when you're on your knees and answers seem so far away
You're not alone, stop holding on and just be held
Your world's not falling apart, it's falling into place
I'm on the throne, stop holding on and just be held
(Stop holding on and just be held)
Just be held, just be held
Just be held, just be held

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS 3 (Ann Jelen)**

* How is recognizing your limitations and embracing humility opening you to grow more free?
* Where are you on the continuum of little ones to learned ones? What would it take to move?
* What makes it hard for you to surrender your autonomy and let God hold you?

 *[Slight pause]*

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

****

**Peg**: Kate Monagan will lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Kate Monagan)**

Take a moment to look at all of us gathered here this morning – we regularly have 40 connections, and since many include two people, more than fifty faithful are present. We long to hear from everyone who wishes to share, and so we have invited several people who seldom speak to begin this morning.  After them, we invite you to share one thought or feeling that emerged in your heart this morning as you reflected upon our readings and music.  We welcome **everyone** who wants to speak, because each of you bring a unique glimpse of God.   We ask that you allow a bridge of respectful silence after each speaker to receive the gift they offer – enough time to take two slow breaths.

So let’s begin in silence to gather our reflections and prepare our hearts to listen deeply.  [Long-ish pause]

[call name of sharer], please unmute yourself…

[two slow breaths]

[call name of sharer], please unmute yourself…

[two slow breaths]

call name of sharer], please unmute yourself…

[two slow breaths]

[*People share brief personal reflections.]*

*[Stop by 20 minutes after the hour.]*

Kate Monagan (at 20 minutes after the hour):  Thank you to each of you who shared and to all who listened.  If there was not time for you to share or speak fully, we can continue after the final song as we often do or send your reflection to Judy Sholes for our follow-up email.

Let us cherish what the Holy One has spoken in our reflections as we turn to God in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Judy Sholes)**

Let’s pause to notice the prayers that arise in us now. (Pause)

Our response will be: **Hear our burdens; hold us.**

God with us, we pray that through our surrender, we experience freedom and strength in Your embrace throughout our journey of life. For this we pray. **Hear our burdens; hold us.**

God among us, be comfort, strength, and inspiration for women religious as they answer you when you call their name, especially in these times of profound changes. For this we pray. **Hear our burdens; hold us.**

God beside us, help us to recognize the “little ones” in our communities, in our country, and around the world, and let us answer Your call to do the next right thing about violence and injustices we witness. For this we pray. **Hear our burdens; hold us.**

God beyond us, having just celebrated the United States’ Independence Day as well as Canada Day, help us to appreciate the gift and freedoms we enjoy and not to take them for granted. Help us understand and support other people to achieve freedom in their lives as well. **Hear our burdens; hold us.**

For what else shall we pray? Please conclude your prayer with “For this we pray. **Hear our burdens; hold us**.”

**{Sharing}**

[After people share their personal prayers.]

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. Blessed Be.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Sr. Jacquelin 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 surrender all that separates us from you,

and as we are held and we hold 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.]*

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.

To extend our communion Cheryl Dowden will lead us in the Prayer of Jesus.

**THE PRAYER OF JESUS (Cheryl Dowden)**

Now let us join our hearts as if we could join our hands in harmony with our family throughout the world: Now let us join our hearts with all who seek the coming of God, using the words that

Jesus gave us as written by the Polynesian and Māori 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. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Judith Galleazzi)**

May you be blessed with the profound freedom that comes from surrendering to God's loving embrace. May God hold you through the twists and turns of life's journey, providing solace and guidance during times of struggle. May you find comfort in the knowledge that you are not alone, for God walks beside you, holding you with unwavering love and compassion. Blessed Be.

{pause}

**Judith**: Having just celebrated Independence Day and Canada Day, let us join together in our Closing Song, “This is My Song.” –

**CLOSING – This is My Song (Finlandia). - 2 verses**

[**https://www.facebook.com/VOCES8/videos/154766273151116/**](https://www.facebook.com/VOCES8/videos/154766273151116/)

This is my song, O God of all the nations,

A song of peace for lands afar and mine.

This is my home, the country where my heart is;

Here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine.

But other hearts in other lands are beating

With hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.

My country's skies are bluer than the ocean,

And sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine.

But other lands have sunlight too, and clover,

And skies are everywhere as blue as mine.

So hear my song Thou God of all nations,

A song of peace for their land and for mine.

**RESOURCES** – share sources that helped you in preparation, with links if you want.

Alternate versions of The Summons - Will You Come and Follow Me (John L. Bell)

<https://youtu.be/FLRDXK0z67c>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiXnbOORTAU> (w/ lyrics – script)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o469PRLdbHU> (w/ lyrics – shoes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-Bq1YtpQL8> female vocalist – w/ lyrics

**Just Be Held** – Casting Crowns - <https://g.co/kgs/C98JDP>

**This is My Song** (Finlandia) - https://www.facebook.com/VOCES8/videos/154766273151116/

Erin Harrigan, Christian Coach –

<https://erinharrigan.com/> and <https://www.youtube.com/user/erinharrigan>

Mary McGlone - <https://www.ncronline.org/july-9-2023-fourteenth-sunday-ordinary-time>