**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, August 16, 2020**

*This is what God asks of you: act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8*

**TECHNICAL CHECK-IN (Betty)**

I’m Betty and I welcome you here on behalf of Solidarity with Sisters.

* We sent the files of readings, responses, and lyrics.
* Camera: turn on if you want. Gallery view option. Arrow if
* Mute/Unmute: know how? Needed even during singing.
* **I will now mute everybody.** Unmute to speak.

Now let’s put technical things aside.

**WELCOME (Lynn)**

Welcome, everyone! I’m Lynn Bufka.

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* My father and I had the pleasure of preparing today’s communal prayer.
* Some of us will want to speak and to share. Others of us are quiet and will want to listen. All of what we offer is valuable and we invite you to be open to sharing and to be open to fully listening- however you are moved to be with this community.
* Thanks to Reggie Ott for leading us in music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer during our prayer today – Linda Donaldson, Richard McGinnis, Peggy Thompson, Mary Ott, Betty Thompson, Suzie DeQuattro, Jim DeQuattro. If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Lynn)**

We are here to let God transform us. In the words of our friend, Sister Marie McCarthy, let’s open ourselves as fully as we can to the presence and action of God’s love and spirit within and among us. Let’s just take a few moments of quiet to center ourselves in the love of God and one another. As we breathe in, we breathe in awareness of the goodness around us and as we breathe out, we breathe our love and God’s love to our imperfect world.

We begin with an invocation from Khalil Gibran, a Lebanese American writer, read by Betty

**INVOCATION [Betty]**

I love you my brother, *my sister,*

Whoever you are

Whether you worship in your church, kneel in your temple or pray in your mosque

You and I are children of one father, for the diverse paths of religion are fingers of the loving hand of the one supreme being, a hand extended to all, offering completeness of spirit to all, eager to receive all.

[Betty] Now Reggie Ott will lead us into our celebration.

**OPENING – (Reggie Ott)**

We Walk By Faith, verses 1 and 3

We walk by faith, and not by sight

No gracious words we hear

Of him who spoke as none e’er spoke,

But we believe him near

Help then O Lord, our unbelief,

And may our faith abound

To call on you when you are near

And seek where you are found

**GREETING (Lynn)**

Sisters and brothers, rejoice!The Spirit of Christ is among us! Alleluia!

**All:** And all God’s people reply: Amen! Alleluia!

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Lynn)**

We come together today because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as the people of God and the body of Christ. As Monsignor Lyon used to tell us, “We gather to celebrate the great fact that God is in love with us.”

We come expecting something to happen this morning. We believe that whenever two or three gather in the name of Jesus, then Jesus is right here. So we are confident that in this next hour God will act in us and give us insight about how to go forth and make the Gospel visible in more ways and in more places. We say yes to this call and we seek light for our next step. And now let us pray.

**GATHERING PRAYER (Suzie)**

O God who creates and who gives breath,

be with us now as we come to you

with the great longings of our world

and of our selves.

We come together

trusting that the Spirit will be at work in us.

Help us to let go and to let come.

Help us to live the questions

and to move with you, in you, and toward you,

ever open to what is waiting to be born in us.

Amen.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Lynn)**

God tells us in the first reading from Isaiah that God accepts and welcomes foreigners if they follow the Lord. In the Gospel, Jesus healed the daughter of the Caananite woman, a foreigner to him, because of her great faith. Faith is about trusting in God and believing God is working with us and through us to realize the goodness in us and in all of creation. People of all religions, or no religion, can have great faith.

Sometimes, though, we can get off center and lose our faith through influences of others, distractions, our own lack of perseverance or during times when God seems absent. Where can we turn when our faith seems far away? Scriptures, our community, ours and others’ actions and good deeds and, as Bishop Ken Untener reminds us today in our reflection, talking with Jesus, all help us find, retain and grow our innate faith.

Now Richard McGinnis will read from the 56th chapter of Isaiah. Then Jim will offer questions for our reflection.

**READING 1:** [**ISAIAH 56:1, 6-7**](http://www.usccb.org/bible/isaiah/55:1) **(Richard McGinnis)**

Thus says Yahweh: Make fair judgement your concern, act with justice, for soon my salvation will come and my saving justice be manifest.

As for foreigners who adhere to Yahweh to serve him, to love Yahweh's name and become his servants, all who observe the Sabbath, not profaning it, and cling to my covenant:

These I shall lead to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

PICTURE (Betty)

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro)**

How does your faith connect to people of other religious traditions, or no religion? How does that grow or challenge you?

How are you faithful to God’s call in your life?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) (Lynn)**

**Lynn:**

Now Peggy Thompson will read from the 15th chapter of Matthew.

**READING 2: Matthew 15:21-28 (Peggy Thompson)**

Jesus left that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

And suddenly out came a Canaanite woman from that district and she started shouting, 'Lord, Son of David, take pity on me. My daughter is tormented by a devil.'

But he said not a word in answer to her. And his disciples went and pleaded with him, saying, 'Give her what she wants, because she keeps shouting after us.'

He said in reply, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.'

But the woman had come up and was bowing low before him. 'Lord,' she said, 'help me.'

He replied, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to little dogs.'

She retorted, 'Ah yes, Lord; but even little dogs eat the scraps that fall from their masters' table.'

Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, you have great faith. Let your desire be granted.' And from that moment her daughter was well again.

PICTURE (Betty)

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim)**

The Canaanite woman gives us a good example of being persistent in seeking Jesus’ help. How might I need to be more persistent when I bring my concerns and needs to Jesus in prayer?

In Jesus’ time, this foreign woman with a disabled/ sick child would have been rejected in pretty much every way. And yet she’s awesome. What or who are we rejecting that might be calling us to see differently and respond?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) (Lynn)**

**Lynn:**

Now Linda Donaldson will read an excerpt from a homily by Bishop Ken Untener originally given in 2002.

**READING 3: Homily from Bishop Ken Untener (Linda Donaldson)**

**Bishop Untener's Homily (excerpts)**

In more modern times, during their visit to Rome, bishops meet privately with the Pope and can talk about whatever they wish… During one of my visits with the Holy Father, I told him that, in my opinion, we need to find ways to tap into the faith of the lay people. The Spirit is present in the entire Church, and lay people make up 98% of the Church…

I said that, in speaking of the "sense of the faithful" I cited the Canaanite woman in today's Gospel. She spoke up to Jesus and caused Jesus to change his mind…

I suppose this shouldn't be all that surprising. After all, Jesus was a human being, like us in all things but sin. It's just that we don't think of him that way. We forget that he accepted human limitations - he got hungry and thirsty, just as we get hungry and thirsty. He had to learn to read. He had to study the Hebrew Scriptures. He had to die, as you and I have to die. And, like us, he sometimes changed his mind.

This has great implications for prayer… Can we influence Jesus as she did?

When we pray to the Lord, we aren't just going through the motions. There is a real conversation going on, as there was with the woman in this Gospel passage. Which means that prayer is very simple, because we all know how to converse…

St. Teresa of Avila gives us some advice about prayer:

“Remain in the Lord's presence continually, and speak to Him, pray to him in your necessities, and complain to him about your troubles; be merry with him in your joys... All this you can do without set prayers, but with words that fit your desires and needs.”

We need to give that a try. I suspect that few of us really talk to Jesus that way. We can learn from that Canaanite woman, from Teresa of Avila. We might discover how close Jesus really is to us, and how close we are to him. We might discover how easy it is to pray.

PICTURE (Betty)

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim)**

Do I talk to Jesus as I talk to a loved one? As I talk to a fellow human being? What would it be like if I did?

St. Teresa of Avila tells us to “remain in the Lord’s presence continually.” Every moment can be conversation with God. How would our lives change if we were conscious of God’s presence all the time?

**SILENCE (Sound a chime after 2 minutes.) (Lynn)**

[Lynn] Now Mary Ott will lead us in our sharing.

**SHARING (Mary Ott)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on these readings. When we speak of our own **personal** feelings, we glimpse the many ways God is among us. We welcome new voices, and also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening.

If you would like to speak, please unmute yourself, and mute yourself again afterwards. If two people speak at once, we can take turns.

Who would like to begin our sharing?

(Sharing)

Thank you.

Now Lynn will lead us in prayer.

**COMMUNITY PRAYERS (Lynn)**

We have just listened to God’s word – in scripture, in everyone’s reflections, and in our hearts and minds. As Sr. Gerardette Philips preaches today: “Today, let us go to God, to Jesus just the way we are. Like in Tyre and Sidon, he is in our territory, waiting for us to approach him to ask, to cry out for his mercy for ourselves and for each other and like he said to the woman he will say to us, ‘you have great faith, your request is granted’. In the three readings of today we are given an invitation to be in the house of prayer together, to exclude no one, to experience the mercy of God and a promise that our requests will be granted in God’s way and in God’s time.”

Now, as we offer our prayers, our response will be: Faithful One, hear our prayer.

Jesus told her, “O woman, great is your faith!

Let it be done for you as you wish.” Make our faith as great as that of the Caananite woman. For this we pray.

The woman pleaded with Jesus for her daughter. Help us be aware of the needs of others and reach out to them with mercy. For this we pray.

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious just finished their annual assembly. May all those who participated experience a renewed sense of their missions and renewed connection to one another. For this we pray.

Isaiah reminds us to “Observe what is right, do what is just.” Help us be mindful of that every day. For this we pray.

Let us pray that the invitation and promise, the acceptance and love received from Jesus will give us the courage to go out with passion to proclaim in our words and our actions God’s mercy to others. For this we pray.

Let us be like Jesus and see differently, be open to new possibilities and adjust our plans when we are challenged by the “Canaanite women” in our lives. For this we pray.

Now let’s remember the feelings and prayers that arose in us as we shared reflections, and also the prayers we carry with us. [Pause.]

Now, for what else shall we pray? Please unmute yourself as you speak. Please end your petition with “for this we pray.”

(People speak.)

Thank you.

O Faithful One, we place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care, and we entrust the outcome to you. Amen.

**OFFERING/STEWARDSHIP (Betty)**

In response to the grace and goodness of our God, we are mindful of the great blessings we enjoy. We desire to see these as abundance to be shared with a broken world. Let us take time to name within ourselves something we will offer to others in recognition of all that we have received from God. [Pause.]

In thanksgiving for the presence and power of Jesus Christ, and in unity with the Holy Spirit, let us pray. God of abundance, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so we that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Suzie)**

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 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.

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the cup,

gifts of the earth and 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 invite God into ourselves so that we become God’s living presence. [Pause.]

Holy One, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your love.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Suzie)**

Now let us pray in harmony with all Christians throughout the world in the words that Jesus gave us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy 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 lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Lynn)**

**Lynn: We invite you to stretch out your arms and bless one another with the following words, what my father and I know as the Saginaw Blessing.**

*May our God bless and keep you!   
May he make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.   
And give you his peace.*

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The Saginaw blessing was started by Bishop Untener shortly after his arrival in the early 1980’s. Everyone in the congregation raises both arms outstretched while saying the blessing. The female gender in second verse was Untener's idea. It is from Numbers 6:24-26.

**Lynn:** Reggie will play Canticle of the Sun

**CLOSING: Canticle of the Sun (Reggie Ott)**

Refrain: The heavens are telling the glory of God, and all creation is shouting for joy.

Come, dance in the forest, come, play in the field, and sing, sing to the glory of the Lord.

Verses:

Praise for the rain that waters our fields,

And blesses our crops so all the earth yields;

From death unto life her myst’ry revealed

Springs forth in joy

Praise for the fire who gives us his light,

The warmth of the sun to brighten our night;

He dances with joy, his spirit so bright,

He sings of you.

Praise for the earth who makes life to grow,

The creatures you made to let your life show;

The flowers and trees that help us to know

The heart of love

**Resources**

The image of St. Teresa of Avila is by Brenda Nippert

<https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/08162020>

The image of the Canaanite woman is from Rev. Ally

<https://reverendally.org/2017/10/03/the-one-with-the-crumby-dog/>

<http://www.visitationnorth.org/index.php/year-a-matthew/179-twentieth-sunday-in-ordinary-time-year-a>