**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, August 30, 2020**

*Broken, we gather. Nourished, we reach out.*

**TECHNICAL CHECK-IN (Betty Thompson)**

I’m Betty Thompson 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 multiple screens.
* Mute/Unmute: know how? Needed even during singing.
* **I will now mute everybody.** Unmute to speak.

Now let’s put technical things aside.

**WELCOME (Betty Thompson)**

* Welcome, everyone! Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Mary Ott for preparing today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to Stu Sklamm and Reggie Ott for leading us in music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading today – Bill Fanelli, Gail DeGeorge, Richard McGinnis, and Lynn Bufka . If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.
* Some of us will want to speak and to share; some of us prefer to listen. Some of us like to arrive early or stay late to talk; some like a quieter time. Whoever you are, however you are, you are welcome here. We all want to be open to sharing and to be open to fully listening - however you are moved to be with this community.

**SETTLING IN (Suzie DeQuattro)**

We are here to let God transform us. So let’s open ourselves to God. Feel the comfort of your chair and relax into it… and relax into God’s love for you. Feel your chest and stomach rise and fall as you breathe… and know the Spirit is moving in you gently and easily. Now let’s take 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together….and one to be open to God’s action.

Now Stu Sklamm will lead us into our celebration.

**OPENING – “Here I am, Lord” by Dan Shutte (Stu Sklamm)**

All (muted): I, the Lord of sea and sky,

I have heard my people cry.

All who dwell in dark and sin

My hand will save.

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

I who made the stars of night,

I will make their darkness bright.

Who will bear my light to them?

Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

**GREETING (Mary Ott)**

Beloved Community, rejoice!The Spirit of Christ is among us! Alleluia!

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

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Mary Ott)**

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 (Betty Thompson)**

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. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Mary Ott)**

Our two readings today relate to prophecy and prophets. In Jeremiah we read of his prophecies: that the people of Judah would be punished for worshiping false gods and turning away for Yahweh, of their Babylonian captivity and eventually of the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah suffered and was attacked because of his prophesies, yet he persisted. His anguished words give us a sense of why he did that.

After each reading, we will offer questions before we pause for silent reflection. Don’t feel you have to answer all of the questions. To stay with only one might lead you into a deeper place.

After each reading today, Jim DeQuattro will offer questions for our reflection.

Now Bill Fanelli will read from the 20th chapter of Jeremiah.

PICTURE (Betty) start now; end at end of Jeremiah text.

**READING 1: JEREMIAH 20: 7-9 (Bill Fanelli)**

You duped me, O LORD, and I let myself be duped;  
you were too strong for me, and you triumphed.  
All the day I am an object of laughter;  
everyone mocks me.

Whenever I speak, I must cry out,  
violence and outrage is my message;  
the word of the LORD has brought me  
derision and reproach all the day.

I say to myself, I will not mention him,  
I will speak in his name no more.  
But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart,  
imprisoned in my bones;  
I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim DeQuattro)**

When have you faced criticism for speaking up about injustice?

When have you grown weary trying to resist what God is asking of you?

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

**(Mary Ott)**

The selection from Matthew’s Gospel marks a turning point in Jesus’ ministry. Jesus tells the disciples what is coming as he makes his way to Jerusalem. In this way Jesus is prophesizing his own death. Peter didn’t like this prophesy, as the people of Judah did not like Jeremiah’s prophecies. And we hear those familiar lines “Get behind me, Satan.” But Jesus doesn’t end his instructions to the disciples there; we also hear of what we need to do to be his followers.

Now Gail DeGeorge will read from the 16th chapter of Matthew.

PICTURE start now; end at end of gospel text

**READING 2: MATTHEW 16: 21-27 (Gail DeGeorge)**

From that time on Jesus began to show his disciples  
that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly  
from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes,  
and be killed and on the third day be raised.  
Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him,  
“God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you.”  
He turned and said to Peter,  
“Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me.  
You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”

Then Jesus said to his disciples,  
“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself,  
take up his cross, and follow me.  
For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it,  
but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.  
What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world  
and forfeit his life?  
Or what can one give in exchange for his life?  
For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father’s glory,  
and then he will repay all according to his conduct.”

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro)**

Do you question why God allows suffering, especially of innocents ?

How have you responded to Jesus’ command to take up your cross? What makes doing this hard for you?

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

**APPLICATION OF THE THEME TO TODAY (Mary Ott)**

PICTURE OF CANDLE start now; end at end of application of the theme.

Jeremiah and Jesus both lived during difficult times in the history of the Jewish people. Our current time is also difficult. It is difficult to acknowledge that our feelings and actions and our silence in the fact of injustice may have contributed to the suffering of others, through our implicit support of systems that foster white supremacy. It is often easier to ignore those who lack food or shelter than to reach out to help them. It may be easier to ignore ways to slow the spread of Covid19 than to comply with them. How can we maintain our awareness of the suffering of others and our own complicity through what we do and what we fail to do?

What have been the reactions of some in our communities to people who have taken up the cross?

The people who support Black Lives Matter are told that “all lives matter.”

The people who support strong social networks for those lacking food, housing and health care are resisted by those who believe a balanced budget is more important.

The scientists who are providing guidance on how to control the spread of Covid19 are derided; some have been threatened, as the prophets were in ancient times.

Jesus says that we should take up our cross and follow him. Following Jesus, we must resist the temptation to do nothing, but proceed with steps necessary to overcome these difficulties, even if these steps lead to our suffering.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro)**

What is difficult for you about influencing policies that will support people in need?

How do you sustain your energy to support the people who are fighting Covid19?

How are you willing to suffer in support of the prophets of our time?

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

(Mary Ott) Now Richard McGinnis will lead us in our sharing.

**SHARING (Richard McGinnis)**

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 we 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 Bufka will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Lynn Bufka)**

We have just listened to God’s word – in scripture, in everyone’s reflections, and in our hearts and minds. What has the word of God invited us to become or to do? [Pause….]

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

God of wisdom, bless the LCWR as it carries out its mission to support women’s religious communities. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

God of love, uplift women religious and other lay people as we become the church you call us to be, for the good of the world and especially for those who are unheard and vulnerable. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

God of all peoples, bless the people of the United States as we discern how best to fulfill your will. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

God among us, help us take up the cross and follow Jesus. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

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.] 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. Oh God, we place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care, and we entrust the outcome to You. Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Mary Ott)**

Often, through our shared reflections, we discern a call to take some kind of action. The late John Lewis often quoted a West African proverb that says, “When you pray, move your feet.” How are we to move our feet this week? In response to the grace and goodness of God, how are we to share our abundance 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 that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Suzie DeQuattro)**

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 (Betty Thompson)**

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.

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 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 “The Saginaw Blessing” (Mary Ott)**

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.

May our God bless and keep you!   
May she make her face shine upon you and be gracious to you.   
And give you her peace.

Now Reggie Ott will lead us in “Be Not Afraid.”

**CLOSING – “Be Not Afraid” by St. Louis Jesuits and Bob Dufford, S.J. (Reggie Ott)**

You shall cross the barren desert

But you shall not die of thirst.

You shall wander far in safety

Though you do not know the way.

You shall speak your words to foreign men

And they will understand.

You shall see the face of God and live.

Be not afraid.

I go before you always.

Come, follow me and I will give you rest

If you pass through raging waters in the sea

You shall not drown.

If you walk amid the burning flames

You shall not be harmed.

If you stand before the power of hell

And death is at your side

Know that I am with you through it all.

Be not afraid

I go before you always.

Come, follow me and I will give you rest.

And blessed are your poor

For the kingdom shall be theirs.

Blest are you that weep and mourn

For one day you shall laugh.

And if wicked men insult and hate you

All because of me

Blessed, blessed are you.

Be not afraid.

I go before you always.

Come, follow me and I will give you rest.

**SOURCES**

**IMAGES**

*Jeremiah* is from Wikipediaen.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremiah: SA\_160- Jeremia\_op\_de\_puinhopen\_van\_Jeruzalem.jpg Jeremiah on the ruins of Jerusalem by Horace Vernet (1844) [public domain]

*Deep Prayer* is from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)

*Take Your Cross* is from an article in America Magazine on-line by James Martin, S.J., February 19, 2014: cns4martin1000.jpg from americamagazine.org/issue/take-your-cross.

**TEXT**

Scriptural Readings: USCCB

Saginaw Blessing-- Bishop Untener, Saginaw, Michigan.