**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer for Sunday, July 26, 2020**

“Separately and together, we must make God’s gospel visible.”

(Sister [Joan Chittister](http://www.joanchittister.org/articles/let-call-be-heard))

**TECHNICAL CHECK-IN (Betty)**

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.
* 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)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to **Ann and Bob** for preparing today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to **Reggie** for leading our closing hymn.
* Thanks to readers today **– Stu, Joan, Lynn and Mary**
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays or prepare a future Sunday liturgy, just get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Betty)**

Let’s move from getting here to being here. Settle into a comfortable position. Feel if there is any tightness in your body and let your muscles loosen. Notice your breath as it goes in and out. As you exhale, let tensions leave you. As you inhale, feel God’s love flowing into you. And now let’s take 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together….and one to create space for how God will lead us today.

**OPENING SONG (Intro - Ann and technical - Betty)**

Our opening hymn will be a You Tube version of “Gather Us In” composed by Marty Haugen. The lyrics are shown on the photos that accompany the song. These remind us of the church building in which we can no longer gather and suggest the “place where new light is streaming” in which we find ourselves gathering now.

**GREETING ( Bob)**

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

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

**CALL TO WORSHIP ( Bob)**

We come together today because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as the people of God and the body of Christ. We gather to remember that God is in love with us. Jesus promises us that wherever two or three are gathered in his name, Jesus himself is right here in the midst of us. In this extraordinary time we are called by the Spirit to clarity and action. We are called to make God’s Gospel visible in more ways and in more places. We are here together this morning to say yes to this call, and to find light for our next step. And now let us pray.

**GATHERING PRAYER (Bob)**

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 (Ann)**

During the last two Sundays, we have read from the Gospel of Matthew 13. Jesus explains the mystery of the kingdom of heaven by telling what it is like and how to grow it in the present even though we may not see its future. In the parable about sowing the seed, we hear that good soil matters since it takes time for the sown seeds to grow and thrive. The parable of the wheat and darnel seeds suggests that we let both types of plants coexist and grow in a common field until the harvest. These parables tell us that the kingdom does not suddenly just appear fully formed but is emerging. The mustard seed reminds us that patience is needed for something larger to grow. The yeast must be mixed with the flour and allowed time to transform into something larger. These parables all suggest the fragility of attaining the kingdom and the overwhelming expansiveness of the kingdom.

In today’s readings Jesus shares three parables about the joy and price of pursuing and attaining the kingdom of heaven. The parables of the treasure in the field and the pearl illustrate the joy of pursuing the kingdom of heaven after one has recognized its great value. The net suggests our collection of life experiences that will finally be sorted into ones that will build the kingdom.

Before we read the parables, our first reading is from Kings 3:4, 7-12. In this story Solomon, son of David, receives a message from the Lord that says, “Ask something of me and I will give it.” Solomon does not ask for riches, long life, or victory over his enemies. Solomon recognizes this amazing opportunity that he has been given and asks the Lord for “an understanding heart…to judge right from wrong.” Because the Lord was so pleased with his request, he gives him a wise and understanding heart and says “there has never been anyone like you up to now and after you there will come no one equal to you.” We recognize that Solomon has found something of great value because he was humble and recognized his need for understanding if he was to rule his kingdom wisely. In the same way, the Gospel today introduces two people who recognize the value of the kingdom of heaven and joyfully give up all to possess it.

Now **Stu** will read from 1 Kings. And **Bob** will offer a question for our reflection.

**READING 1:** **1 Kings 3:5, 7-12 ( Stu )**

The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream at night.

God said, “Ask something of me and I will give it to you.”

Solomon answered:

“O Lord, my God, you have made me, your servant, king to succeed my father David;

but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act.

I serve you in the midst of the people whom you have chosen,

a people so vast that it cannot be numbered or counted.

Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart

to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong.

For who is able to govern this vast people of yours?”

The Lord was pleased that Solomon made this request.

So God said to him:

“Because you have asked for this —

not for a long life for yourself,

nor for riches,

nor for the life of your enemies,

but for understanding so that you may know what is right —

I do as you requested.

I give you a heart so wise and understanding

that there has never been anyone like you up to now,

and after you there will come no one to equal you.”

**REFLECTION QUESTION (Bob)**

With humility, Solomon came before God and seized the opportunity to ask for understanding and for judgement. If given the opportunity what might you request of God and how might you use it to build the kingdom of God?

**SILENCE**

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

Now **Joan** will read from Matthew 13

**READING 2: Matthew 13: 44-49 (Joan) Bob**  will offer reflection questions.

Jesus said to his disciples:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field,

which a person finds and hides again,

and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven like a merchant

searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price,

he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea,

which collects fish of every kind.

When it is full they haul it ashore

and sit down to put what is good into buckets.

What is bad they throw away.

Thus it will be at the end of the age.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS ( Bob )**

In your search for the kingdom of heaven, you might be like the person who stumbled upon the treasure in the field, or you might be like the person who recognized the great worth of the pearl, or you might be like the person who cast a wide net while trying to let go of the “bad fish.”

How do you identify with one or more these?

Consider how difficult it might be to discern the price for the field with the buried treasure. Can you imagine selling ALL joyfully to purchase it? What might be hard for you to let go of or sell for the treasure? Why?

**SILENCE**

**Sound a chime after two minutes (Ann)**

Now **Mary**  will read from Mary McGlone’s column in the NCR. Bob will offer a reflection question.

**READING 3 (Mary)**

**An excerpt from “Fulfilling Desire” by Mary M. McGlone**

**From NCR July 10-23, 2020.   July 26, 2020, Seventeenth Sunday,**

As Jesus comes to the end of the parable discourse we’ve been hearing for a few weeks, he changes perspectives. Now, instead of describing the kingdom’s irrepressible dynamism, he talks about its value and what it costs those who desire it…

In the first parable, someone — just for the sake of 21st-century balance, let’s think of her as a woman — discovers a treasure no one else had noticed. Note what Jesus says about her motivation: “Out of joy,” she sold everything she had and bought the field. She hadn’t been combing the beach with a metal detector, but she stumbled on something that could fulfill her desires more than everything else she already had.

In the second case, we’re dealing with a connoisseur, somebody who knows his pearls and comes upon one that is absolutely incomparable. He is willing to give up everything else for this one pearl.

These stories describe the vocation to discipleship, what it’s worth and what it costs. Jesus never hid the truth that following him is an all-or-nothing deal that will cost us our lives. But the secret ingredient in these stories is joy. The treasure finder and the pearl merchant were anxious to give up possessions they had relished and even their occupations because they discovered something more valuable than everything they had ever acquired or accomplished.

We see the contemporary parallel in the people who make it their vocation to help others during the pandemic. That vocation is the pearl they value more than plans, safety and comfort. It has cost some their lives. It has been fulfilling for them all.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Bob)**

Consider whether the treasure in the field of our time may be the chance to do something different about racism and other disparities in our country.  If this is the treasure, then what is the value and the challenge to you?  Is there something you would give up for this?

**SILENCE**

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

**SHARING (Betty)**

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.

If you would like to speak, you will need to unmute yourself on your phone or in Zoom. After you speak, please mute yourself again. If more than one person speaks at once, one will go first and the other will speak after that.

Who would like to begin our sharing?

(Sharing)

Thank you.

Now **Lynn** will lead us in prayer.

**INTENTION (Lynn)**

O God, as you gave your servant Solomon the gift of understanding to help him do what is right, give us the wisdom to recognize your invitation to build the kingdom in our daily lives. Make us into seekers of the precious things hidden around us. Give us the joy that comes from keeping your word. And so we pray.

Our response will be: Holy One, hear our prayer.

God of Understanding, show us how to recognize the signs of divine Love that you have bestowed everywhere. For this we pray.

God of Discernment, help us to see the barriers that stand in the way of finding you. For this we pray.

God of Joy, help us to experience the pleasure of living in solidarity with people of all nations, religions, cultures and abilities. For this we pray.

God of Justice, grant our elected representatives the wisdom and understanding to enact just and merciful laws and regulations that embrace us as a nation of unity and common goals. For this we pray.

God of Abundance, let our solidarity with Catholic sisters and the leadership Conference of Women Religious bear rich fruit in unexpected ways. For this we pray.

God of Transcendent Treasure, show us how to transform what is useless in our lives into the abundant treasure of living according to your words. For this we pray.

Let us 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 yourselves as you speak. Please end your petition with, “For this we pray.”

Thank you.

We place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care, and we entrust the outcome to you. As we do, we use the words of Sister Sharlet Wagner. We thank you, God, that “It is not ours to see the future. Our task is not to create a plan for the new to emerge. It is to create a space for the new to emerge. For the young. For the growing diversities. A space where the Holy Spirit is free to work. If we can do this, the future will emerge. And it will be good.” Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Bob)**

O Great Love, we are humbled and emboldened

to know that you trust us to be your body in this world.

We offer you our lives.  We give you thanks for your love.  [Pause.]

We remember the night before Jesus died.

Jesus, who was having dinner with his friends,

looked at what was in front of him, the bread and the cup,

and he 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.]

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

May we nourish others with your presence.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Bob)**

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  (Ann)**

Let us now go forth in peace and understanding:

in communion with each other

and offering communion to a hungry world.  Amen.

Now **Reggie** will lead us in our closing song

**CLOSING SONG: (Reggie)**

**Earthen Vessels**

We hold a treasure, not made of gold

In earthen vessels, wealth untold

one treasure only: the Lord the Christ in earthen vessels.

1. Light has shown in our darkness, God has shown in our heart.

With the light of the glory of Jesus the Lord.

 Refrain

2. He has chosen the lowly who are small in this world,

In His weakness is glory, In Jesus, the Lord.

Refrain