

**Community of St. Bridget *an
inclusive catholic experience***
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
World Marriage Day – February 11, 2024
Liturgist: Susan Russell



Canva Image - Susan Russell

Suggestion for Zoom liturgy: Please have a copy of the written liturgy on hand and a piece of bread and a cup of wine/grape juice so you can participate fully in this liturgy.

Come in. Come into this place, which we make special by our very presence. Where the ordinary is sanctified, the human is celebrated, and the compassionate is expected.

ALL: Together, we make it a holy place with our every act of celebration.

With the flame of St. Bridget’s fire, we proclaim the transformative power of God. We give thanks that God’s transforming love has been, is now, and will ever be at work within us and in all creation. May the fire of this light continue to shine! Amen.

Opening Song: ***Come Follow Me*** Gael Berberick · Barney Walker; Album: Through The Eyes Of Faith © 2005 OCP, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland OR 97213. All rights reserved.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XI2xeJwrTt0> (no video)

Refrain: Come follow me and live
Do not be afraid, believe and trust in me
Your faith will give you strength
Leave all your fears behind you

Let your heart be free, for I will be your guide
O come and follow me.

Come follow in these footsteps
I'll lead you gently home
No shelter food nor money will you need upon this road. **R**

Come walk across the water
Place all your faith in me
Cast all your doubts behind you to the wind and raging sea. **R**

If you remain within me, my words remain in you.
Whatever you may ask of me, that is what I will do. **R**

Today we celebrate Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time, as well as World Marriage Day. Our readings today focus on being healed, being grateful, and having hope. As we celebrate World Marriage Day let us honor this deep vocation - one that should be open to all. Marriage and deep friendships call us to explore the deepest parts of ourselves as we navigate our differences and projections. We open ourselves now to a relationship with each other, all sentient beings, and the Divine: Source of All Being, Eternal Word, and Holy Spirit, Sophia. Amen.

Transformation Rite

As we prepare to celebrate our love for Jesus and each other, let us be open to the healing and transformative power of the Spirit's presence in our lives as we pray:

1. Source of All, open our hearts and minds to embrace others living in different countries, ethnicities, continents, and towns with various worldviews, so that we may better become one in your Kingdom.
2. Give courage and steadfastness to those who are working hard to reduce consumption, pollution, contamination, overuse, and violation of your precious resources. Enlighten those who don't see the effects of the human lifestyle on this planet. Unite us in these causes.

3. Creator Spirit, help us lighten our loads so we fret less over things that don't really matter. Show us how to inspire one another's awakenings.
4. Send forth your Spirit of Kinship that we may see the sacredness in all creatures. Help us be the beauty you intend.

Gloria

Cantor: *Glory to God, glory! O praise God, alleluia!
Glory to God, glory! O praise the name of our God!*

Opening Prayer

Source of Love and all that sustains us, thank you for your abundant generosity and healing presence. May our hearts be filled with awe at the beauty you have created and gifted to us. Help our hearts spill over in the generous sharing of all your resources, knowing that we all belong in this sacred circle. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD*

*We experience the Spirit of Our Living God as we listen to the Scripture readings
broken open and shared by all.*

Old Testament Responsorial: Psalm 32; Unfailing Love Richard Bruxvoort Colligan
Sharing the Road 2016 Augsburg Fortress

<https://youtu.be/DkjRiQs6jGk?si=n0jojdGfmJ2GFwDe> (no video)

Tried so hard to cover it up,
Avoiding the truth, pretending to be strong
Turns out God can cover it all
There's no need to hide when everything's gone wrong
Come and begin again
Come and begin again

Refrain: Unfailing Love forgives it all
Unfailing Love, a brand-new start
No matter what, we trust in God's
Unfailing Love

Anytime we're falling apart,
Forgetting the One that loves us forever

We are still the people of God
Confessing our need, forgiven together
Come and begin again
Come and begin again **R**

One day Jesus happened along
when trouble was deep and I could hide nowhere
Fear was choking me
Then I heard the words of his love:
Come and start over
Come and begin again
Come and begin again **R**

Cantor: Alleluias

Gospel: Mark 1:40-45

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark:

A person with leprosy approached Jesus, knelt down and begged, "If you are willing, you can heal me." Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out a hand, touched the person with leprosy, and said, "I am willing. Be cleansed." Immediately the leprosy disappeared, and the person with the disease was cured. Jesus gave a stern warning and sent the person off. "Not a word to anyone," Jesus said, "Go off and present yourself to the priest and make an offering for your healing as Moses commanded, as a testimony to the religious authorities."

But the person who had been healed went off and began to proclaim the whole matter freely, making the story public. As a result, it was no longer possible for Jesus to enter a town openly, and Jesus stayed in lonely places. Even so, people kept coming to him from all directions.

The inspired words of the evangelist, Mark. Amen.

Cantor: Alleluias

New Testament Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 A
reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians:

Whatever you eat or drink — whatever you do — do it all for the glory of God.
Give no offense, whether to Jew or to Greek or to the church of God, just as I

try to please everyone in any way I can. I do this by seeking not my own advantage, but that of the many. Imitate me as I imitate Christ. The inspired words attributed to the apostle, Paul. Amen.

Shared Homily: Susan Russell

In 2016, I heard the story of Jim Obergefell and John Arthur's landmark legal battle to have their love recognized as valid by the highest court in our land. Years before Jim and John had traveled in a private plane complete with medical equipment to Maryland to be married in a state that would legally recognize their love.

John, who was in intense pain from the ravages of ALS, chose to take this journey to provide support for his husband after his death. This journey would have been unnecessary if our culture were not homophobic. God created them just as they were intended to be. However, this journey also provided the loophole their attorney, Al Gerhardstein, needed to attempt to succeed in winning equal rights for LGBTQIA individuals.

Our Old Testament Responsorial, Psalm 32, is interpreted by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan as an example of unfailing love and a reminder to remember the one who loves us forever. We witness the promise of forgiveness – an essential component of all relationships.

In Mark's gospel, we hear the story of the person with leprosy being healed and despite Jesus' warning to keep it a secret, tells everyone he meets. This healing story makes it difficult for Jesus to continue his ministry. Jesus and his disciples try to avoid populated areas, but others continued to seek him.

How long have our LGBTQIA friends and family been treated as unclean or unwelcome members of our community? How long have they been asked to keep their identity private – so others don't have to witness them or whom they love? Why would our LGBTQIA friends and family *not* want to rejoice in finally being recognized as belonging?

When I chose to end my marriage, I also felt like the leper, like I no longer belonged in the traditional Catholic Church. I explored other spiritual paths

and eventually returned in the hopes of supporting women's ordination and speak of how LGBTQIA individuals are mistreated by the Church.

As we celebrate World Marriage Day, let us extend our blessings and prayers to all those who have chosen the path of marriage and other partnerships. I believe it is one of the deepest ways to grow in our spirituality through learning to love and honor our beloved. Jesus chose the wedding feast as the place of his first miracle.

Theologian Richard Gaillardetz writes in *A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage*, that the marriage commitment is the crucible in which we discover our potential to overcome our struggles together through our strengths and weaknesses. It is a way of following our call to holiness that we received in our baptism. He calls it one of the "most radical things we do as Christians."

Jesus modeled beautifully how all are welcome to the Table. Our reading from Paul to the Corinthians encourages us to do all we do for the glory of God. We are to give no offense to Jews or Greeks. Most importantly we are to imitate Christ. Jesus Christ loved everyone, accepted everyone, and celebrated everyone.

Here at the Community of Saint Bridget, we welcome everyone to the Table. We make every effort to create liturgies and homilies that are inclusive of all, and you make them come alive through your presence and participation. You are welcomed over and over to come and begin again.

Please share your thoughts and reflections on our readings for today.

Holding all our shared thoughts in the sacred space among us, we now proclaim our affirmation of faith:

Affirmation of Faith

5. We believe in God,
Who is creator and nurturer of all.

6. We believe in Jesus, the Christ,
Who is our love, our hope, and our light.

7. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the breath of Wisdom Sophia, Who energizes and guides us to build caring communities, And to challenge oppression, exploitation and injustices.

1. We believe that God loves us passionately and forgives us everything.
2. We believe that we are radiant images of God who calls us to live fully, Love tenderly, and serve generously.
3. We believe in the Communion of Saints, our forever companions, Who support us on life's journey.
4. We believe in the partnership and equality of women and men In our church and our world.
5. We believe that all are one in the Heart of God, and believe that God embraces all who are single, in challenging relationships, and in loving unions who continue to heal and experience transformation through the love of God.
6. We believe that women's liberation is human liberation. Here we dwell in loving relationships. Here we live our prophetic call of Gospel equality. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

Always mindful of our Creator's love and care for us, we bring to our Table prayers of thanksgiving, and petitions for help and compassion. We know that the Body of Christ is present in our community of faith, and that we will awaken to the call of responding in the name of Jesus.

7. We turn our hearts and minds through these prayers to the message, to the hopes and dreams, to God's ardent desire for a better society. After each request, our response remains: ***We awaken to your call.***

For whom and for what shall we pray?

Christ Jesus, our friend and brother, we know that you hear the prayers of your people and all unspoken concerns that we hold in our hearts. In your compassionate love, strengthen our faith so we may believe that with your guidance we can renew the face of our world and truly become a universal community of peace and revolutionary love. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Sign of Peace

As we prepare for this sacred meal, we reaffirm that just as Jesus was anointed, so is each of us. And so, we celebrate our Creator's fruitful love as we extend our blessing to one another with joy. May the peace that our brother Jesus offers, be always with us!

Offertory (Raise bread and cup)

Blessed are you, Source of All Life! Through your goodness we have this bread, this fruit of the vine, all creation, and our very lives to offer. Through this sacred meal may we become your new creation.

ALL: Holy Mystery, we offer this prayer in union with all believers.

Prayer Over the Gifts

1. O Gracious God, giver of the gifts we bring, receive them from your church gathered here today, affirming the sacrament of your Presence among us.

The Holy One is with us, abounding in Love!

2. We open our hearts in Christ, who lives and loves, heals and empowers through us!
3. Let us give thanks to the Source of All Life.
4. As the Ground of our Being, O God, we marvel and wonder at the size and complexity of our universe. We give thanks for your Creative Presence that "charges" this life and all that exists.

5. We praise you with great joy and give thanks for all your blessings as we celebrate your universal kinship. May we, with your help and the support of our faith community, follow your living example as we now dance and sing with the choirs of angels:

Here in This Place by Christopher Grundy; Album: Come to the Feast; Broadcast Music Inc., and 3 Music Rights Societies (adapted)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgkWXOSGmOQ> (lyric/video)

Holy One, may your presence here open our minds. May your Spirit among us help us to find You are rising up now like a fountain of grace from the holy ground here in this place. Here in this place.

Holy, holy, holy God of love and majesty the whole universe speaks of your glory from the holy ground here in this place. Here in this place.

6. Creator God, we see around us the work of your hands, the fruit of your wisdom and love. The unfolding story of creation witnesses unceasingly to your creative power. We, your creatures, often deviate from that wisdom, hindering your creative presence in our midst.
7. Sending among us Jesus, our Light and Hope, you birth afresh in our world the power of Sophia Wisdom, and in the gift of the Spirit, your creative goodness blooms anew, amid the variety and wonder of life.

ALL: Loving God, we acknowledge the presence of Your Spirit in all your gifts. We celebrate the transformative energy within this bread and fruit of the vine given to nurture afresh in us, the discerning gifts of wisdom, light and truth.

1. We remember all the courageous companions who have gone before us, the holy women and men who have lived lives of love and service in the midst of hatred, violence and injustice. They are ever-present with us at our Tables of Friendship.

At this gathering, we take bread, as Jesus took bread, and we remember, as Jesus remembered, the constant presence of the Spirit of Life and Love. And Jesus offers it to us now, saying: **(Raise bread)**

ALL: *Take and eat, all of you. This is my body which I give to you. (pause)*

When supper ended, Jesus took the cup, spoke the grace, and offers it to us now, saying: **(Raise the cup)**

ALL: *Take and drink this cup of my life-blood, the life of the new and everlasting covenant. It is poured out for you and for all, so that you might be free. Whenever you re-member me like this, I am among you. (pause)*

2. As we celebrate this sacred meal, we recall the wise and gracious gifts bestowed on us down through the ages; and we look forward in hope, knowing that you, our wise and faithful God, will continue to endow us with abundant blessings.

(Raise bread and cup)

ALL: For it is through learning to live as Jesus lived,
And why he lived,
And for whom he lived,
That we awaken to your Spirit within,
Moving us to worship you truly,
Life-giving God,
At this time, and all time, and in all ways.

Cantor: Amen

Communion Rite

In the power of this Eucharistic meal, O Divine Spirit, and in union with all peoples, living and deceased, we unite our thoughts and prayers, asking for wisdom and courage:

3. To discern more wisely the Spirit's call to us in the circumstances of our daily lives;

4. To act justly and courageously in confronting the pain and suffering that desecrates the Earth and its peoples;
5. To take risks in being creative and proactive on behalf of the poor and marginalized.

(Presider raises bread and cup)

This is the Bread and Cup of Life, through which we are nourished and we nourish one another.

ALL: We receive this bread and fruit of the vine as the presence of Christ among us!

All are welcome to receive at our Tables of Friendship!

Communion Meditation: ***Leaning In: A Prayer of Intention*** by Christopher Grundy © 2013 Hand and Soil Music. Released 2018-06022.

<https://youtu.be/rot5M9Kirhc> (lyric video)

We pray for the lonely ones knowing that some of us are lonely and we pray for the heartbroken ones knowing that some of us are heartbroken.

Refrain: All our hearts and minds are leaning in with clear intention joining in your way of love in the world.

We pray for the wounded ones knowing that some of us are wounded and we pray for the regretful ones knowing that some of us are regretful. **R**

We pray for the starving ones knowing that some of us are starving and we pray for the imprisoned ones knowing that some of us are imprisoned. **R**

We pray for the dying ones knowing
that some of us are dying and we pray
for the newly born ones
knowing that some of us are arriving. **R**

Together, we pray to God as Jesus did: (Miriam Therese Winter, MMS, adapted)

6. O Holy One, you are within, around and among us.

We celebrate your many names.

Your wisdom come; your will be done,

Unfolding from the depths within us.

7. Each day you give us all that we need;

You remind us of our limits, and we let go.

You support us in our power, and we act with courage.

1. For you are the dwelling place within us,

The empowerment around us,

And the celebration among us, now and forever. Amen.

Closing Prayer

As we reflect on our kinship with Jesus, O Gracious One, help us to recognize that it is because of your love that you give us all good things to share in your name. Help us to recognize your summons to be your hands and feet in this world, working for equity, justice, and peace in all our relationships. We offer this prayer in your name, in the light of Holy Sophia. Amen.

Announcements

Blessing - Please extend your hands for our mutual blessing:

2. This is our prayer—that the Holy Spirit guides our thoughts and actions to bring more love to our communities, countries, and world.

3. May our hearts be opened to the love our brother Jesus demonstrated in his ministries, and may we share this love with each other, our friends, coworkers, partners, parents, and children.

4. May we take these prayers and reflections with us to love and serve God and our brothers and sisters throughout this week and beyond.

ALL: We go into this week, held together by the love of God, clothed with the nature of Jesus our Companion, and reinforced by the strength of the +Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Song: ***Be Our Vision Now***, by Andra Moran *Prayers from the Bridge*, © 2023 AMMO Music.

https://youtu.be/PLM5OpPCYSY?si=RcL89G_PWTb-KYtl (no video)

Be our vision now.
In all that we do, let us see You.
Be our vision now.
In the shadow of night, let your presence be our light.

Be our wisdom now.
Filtering through our words and the things we do.
Be our wisdom now.
Give us power to choose the way that is right and true.

Refrain: Here in this moment and forever, help us to love more. Amen.
Here in this moment together, help us to love more. Amen.

Be our loving now.
Heart of our hearts, center of who we are.
Be our loving now.
Honest and true, as we were first loved by you. **R**

Be our vision now.
In all that we do, let us see You.
Be our vision now.
In the shadow of night, let your presence be our light.

We are honored to have you with us during this liturgy, and encourage you to invite a friend to be with you here next week!

***Thank you for your courage to worship with us in a spirit of equality
and justice!***

***All are welcome to join us again and support this Community with your
presence and prayer.***

* The Scripture readings are taken from the Inclusive Lectionary from the Quixote Center, MD.