



Community of St. Bridget
an inclusive catholic experience
First Sunday of Lent – February 22, 2026

Liturgist: Nancy Tondy
Presider/Homilist: FFrances



Suggestion: *Please provide a piece of bread and cup of wine/juice, and a copy of this liturgy so that you can fully participate.*

Come in. Come into this place which we make special by our presence. Where the ordinary is sanctified, the human is celebrated, 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. Christ's Spirit is alive and living among us. May the fire of this light continue to shine.

Opening Song: **Root of the Root** Sara Thomsen, *Song Like a Seed*, 2019.

https://youtu.be/fqQzGmlqtzo?si=8--Fe2_p1PDhtK59 (no video)

Return, returning	Come home, come home
Return, returning	Come home, come home
To the root of the root	Come home, come home
Home of your home	Home of your home
Return, return	

Shining light, guide me
Golden light, inside me

Today is the First Sunday of Lent. Our chosen scriptures — the suggested readings for Ash Wednesday — call us to share our bread with the hungry, bring freedom to the oppressed, and keep our countenance joyful. We walk this Lenten journey together, believing that Love bears everything and overcomes everything, in the name of the Divine: Source of All Being, Eternal Word, and +Holy Wisdom-Sophia. Amen.

Transformation Rite:

We long to follow The Way of Jesus — to accept God’s love, forgiveness, and healing. And so, we pray...

ALL: Holy Companion, transform us.

1. We denounce the ways of hatred: the threats, oppression, and acts of terror happening in our world.

ALL: Keep us on the Path of Love.

2. We renounce inner violence and any desire for vengeance, choosing instead to be channels of your peace.

ALL: Show us the world as you intend it to be.

3. We welcome a world where riches are shared, the powerless are protected, and no one goes hungry, where peace is attained through nonviolence.

ALL: Empower us to co-create such a world. For we are your hands and feet, your mind and heart, in this, your beautiful creation. Amen.

Opening Prayer

God of our Wilderness, be with us as we walk this Lenten journey. Help us find peace and purpose in the knowledge that we are an expression of your love and that within each of us there is a divine light that can never be extinguished. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD*

*The Spirit moves within us as we listen to the Scripture readings
broken open and shared by all.*

First Reading: Isaiah 58:4b, 6-7, 10-11a

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah:

Do not fast as you do today
to make your voice heard on high!

...Rather, is not the fast I choose
releasing those bound unjustly,
untying the thongs of the yoke,
setting free the oppressed,
breaking off every yoke?

Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry,
bringing the afflicted and houseless into your home,
clothing the naked when you see them,
and not turning your back on your own flesh?

...If you lavish your food on the hungry
and satisfy the afflicted,
then your radiance shall shine
and your distress shall be dispelled.

Then the Beloved will guide you always
and satisfy your thirst in parched places...

The inspired word of an ancient prophet. Amen. **(pause to reflect)**

Responsorial: Psalm 83 (*Merrill, edited*)

Cantor: ***When trouble comes, do not be silent.***
When trouble comes, be not afraid.

O Great Creator, do not keep silence.
Do not withhold your peace or be still, O Giver of Life!
Fear is rampant in the world.
Those who rule by oppression rise up with power.
They lay deceptive plans against the people.
They consult together against freedom and justice. **R**

O Great Creator, do not keep silence.
Do not withhold your peace or be still, O Giver of Life!
Crafty words belie intent as thousands reap dire consequence.
Nations go to war and the innocent suffer!
Yes, they conspire with one accord.
Against Love they make a covenant.
No institution is free from the insidious arm of corruption,
at home and in fields afar. **R**

Clothe us in the dress of your peace,
in the stronghold of your mercy,
that we might bear the power of Love.
Let us walk in shoes of integrity,
and don the mantle of truth.
Let us shed the tatters of envy and fear,
the rags of anger and greed,
and say, "We shall seek only the truth,
the truth which will set us free!" **R**

Acclamation: **Spirit of the Living God**, Michael Crawford, *On Eagle's Wings*. Atlantic Recording Corp. (1998).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GO_BODpTbUI (lyric/video-end at 1.31)

Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me (x2)
Melt me. Mold me. Fill me. Use me.
Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me.

Second Reading: - Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6

A reading from the Holy Gospel attributed to Matthew:

Jesus taught the crowds and the disciples, saying:

"Take care not to perform righteous deeds so that people may see them; otherwise, you'll have no recompense from your heavenly Father/Mother God. When you give alms, don't blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in places of worship and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they've received their reward. When you give alms, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. Your God, who sees in secret, will bless you. When you pray, don't be like hypocrites who love to stand and pray in their places of worship and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they've received their reward. When *you* pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to God in secret. God, who sees in secret, will bless you....

"When you fast, don't look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so they appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they've received their reward. When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so you don't appear to be fasting, except to your God who is hidden. Your God, who sees what is hidden, will reward you.

The inspired words of the evangelist, Matthew. Amen. **(pause to reflect)**

Third Reading: *The Boundaries of Our Being* by Paul Tillich.

An excerpt from the writings of Paul Tillich:

It is love, human and divine, which overcomes death in nations and generations and in all the horror of our time... Death is given power over everything finite, especially in our period of history. But death is given no power over love. Love is stronger. It creates something new out of the destruction caused by death; it bears everything and overcomes everything. Love is at work where the power of death is strongest, in war and persecution and homelessness and hunger and physical death itself. It is omnipresent and here and there, in the smallest and most hidden ways as in the greatest and most visible ones, it rescues life from death. It reaches each of us, for love is stronger than death.

The prophetic words of Christian theologian, Paul Tillich. Amen.

Shared Homily: Frances

Let's take a moment of silence together, giving the space and opening ourselves to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. *(pause)*

There is some urgency in these readings which introduce our Lenten pathway—some urgency and a call to get out of our heads and into our embodied hearts. I invite you to do that now; get out of your head and feel the words that you have heard, resonating in your body. The shocking image that came to my mind as I heard the first reading, was of a 1972 photograph, 'The Terror of War', or 'Napalm Girl'. There is a photograph of Nick Ut, the photographer of 'The Terror of War', with the girl, Phan Thi Kim Phuc, now a woman in her fifties, presenting a copy of the photograph to Pope Francis in 2022. Earlier interviews with Kim Phuc reported that she hated and was traumatized by the worldwide exposure of her vulnerability to the world. It took her many years to come to a place of peace about the photo. The photographer put down his camera and took her and the other children to the hospital.

Why did I think of that picture, and why do I talk about it now? It somehow seems an embodiment of vulnerability, of the call to us to respond to those familiar words "Clothing the naked when you see them, feed the hungry, satisfy the afflicted, set free the oppressed." Don't hear them in your rational mind, let those words touch your heart. If you know that photograph, let the raw terror of that naked child, tearing off her burning clothes and running naked away from soldiers of war enter your heart, stir your heart with love and compassion for the afflicted of the world today. I felt uneasy, looking at the picture. The vulnerability of the female, the child, the power dynamics of the relationships between photographer, viewer, race, geography, gender, the ethics of photojournalism, where the person in the picture must not become merely an object of moral prompting for the viewer, but honored in their experience somehow... all these things stirred my mind and heart. What about you? Stay with these thoughts, these feelings, for a moment, if you can bear it. *(pause)*

Then cry from your heart the words of the Psalm which pleads with the Great Creator to clothe us as we strip ourselves naked of the tatters of envy and fear, the rags of anger and greed, beseeching the Great Creator to clothe the world, in the dress of peace, in the stronghold of mercy, to walk with love in the shoes of integrity, donning the mantle of truth.

What would we look like, clothed in this way?

I have a dog who brings me the newspaper every morning and gets a treat when he gives it to me. Some days, later on in the morning, he sometimes

seems to fancy an extra treat. Then he goes to the paper recycle bin, finds a newspaper, drops it at my feet and sits satisfied and hopeful that this will earn him a treat. I have tried explaining to him that it is not a reward every time, just for that morning delivery, but he seems to think I just need prompting to remember to reward him, and goes off shaking his head in exasperation when no treat is forthcoming. In Matthew's gospel reading, I wonder if Jesus is feeling the need similarly to remind people that there is only one reward opportunity, and it isn't in the here and now. But perhaps what he is nudging the people toward is an understanding that they need to be acting in love, out of love, for love.

And Paul Tillich makes this explicit, in his words that 'where the power of death is strongest, in war and persecution and homelessness and hunger and death, there love is at work.' Love is the site of our work today, now and throughout our Lenten journey and beyond.

I invite you to share your reflections...

Holding these thoughts in the sacred space among us and strengthened by the support of one another, we now proclaim our affirmation of faith:

Affirmation of Faith**

4. We believe in God who takes our smallest moment of hope and grows it forth like a tree with spending branches for the sheltering of new life.
5. We believe in Jesus the Christ who walks among us, is seen in our faces, felt in our hearts, bedded deep in the longing of our souls for all that is true, just, and full of hope.
6. We believe in the Holy Spirit who waits on our moments of openness and springs into the unknown with joy and delight, that we might be called beyond where we thought we could go, where every step is walked on holy ground.

Prayer of the Faithful

We now bring to this Table our blessings, cares, and concerns — for ourselves, our loved ones, our leaders, and our world. Our response remains,

We awaken to your call.

For whom and for what shall we pray?

Eternal Source of Life, move us on this journey for justice. Hold our hands. Guide our feet. Protect our bodies. Search our hearts. Keep us moving forward, so that justice may come, Earth may thrive, and all may live joyfully. 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: (All raise bread and cup)

We place on our plate the harvest to be won by labor's love. And into the cup we pour all the sap which is to be pressed out this day from Earth's fruits.

ALL: O Gracious One, giver of the gifts we bring, receive them from all those gathered here today, affirming the sacrament of your Presence among us.

The Holy One is with us, abounding in Love!

7. Giving thanks to the Source of All Life, we open our hearts in the name of Jesus, who lives and loves, heals and empowers through us.

1. All Embracing Presence, the first passion of Jesus was his passion for You and his passion for justice; namely, to incarnate your justice by demanding for all a fair share of a world belonging to and guided by your covenant with Israel. In solidarity with Jesus, and with all the faithful women and men who have gone before us, we lift up our hearts in song:

Holy, Holy, Holy: Holy Is This One, Richard Bruxvoort Colligan, *Our Roots Are in You*, Worldmaking.net (2013).

https://youtu.be/wc13T8GMuao?si=S5l_IeXMuRVZbylN (no video)

Refrain: Holy, holy, holy is this one
Holy, holy, holy is this one

In the wilderness, on the mountain
Were you always? **R**

Here among us, come to love us
Were you always? **R**

2. Loving Creator, 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.

3. Sending among us Jesus, our Light and Hope, you birth afresh in our world the power of Sophia Wisdom, and in the gift of this Spirit, your creative goodness blooms anew, amid the variety and wonder of life.

ALL: Generous Gifter of Life, make us ever more aware of the presence of Your Spirit in these, our gifts, as 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.

4. As a Christian people we celebrate the Open Table, proclaimed by Jesus our liberator and our friend, a Table of abundant life, inclusive love, and liberation, where all are welcome, and from which no one is to be excluded.

On the night before he died, Jesus did more than ask us to remember him. He showed us how to live when he washed the feet of his friends. At the Table, he took the Passover Bread, spoke the grace, broke the bread and offers it to us now, saying: **(All raise bread)**

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

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

ALL: *Take and drink this cup, the lifeforce 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)*

We give thanks for who we are in this Unfolding Love:

ALL: Matter becomes conscious, the universe coming to reflect on itself: earthen vessels that hold a treasure, a temple of the Spirit, the Body of Christ.

(All raise bread and cup)

ALL: All honor to the Creator of All, the Giver of Life,
To Jesus, the Risen One,
And to the Spirit, Bond of Love.
Let glory and praise be sung!

Cantor: Amen! (x2)

We pray as these gifts are shared among us:

5. Loving Teacher, you call us to live the Gospel of peace and justice,
We will live justly.
6. Loving Companion, you call us to be your presence in the world.
We will love tenderly.
7. Loving Prophet, you call us to speak truth to power.
We will walk with integrity in your abiding presence.

(Presider raises bread and cup)

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

ALL: What we have heard with our ears, we will live with our lives; as we share communion, we will become communion, both Love's nourishment and Love's challenge.

All are welcome to receive at our Tables of Friendship!

Communion Song for Meditation: *Beyond the Days* Ricky Manalo, Arranged by Craig Kingsbury Publisher: ©1997 OCP.

https://youtu.be/kp3DWyqEN28?si=mX_3dt_SH2B5zFFc (lyric video)

Refrain: Beyond the days of hope and mystery,
we see a light of faith renewed,
and in our longing, we search for guidance
to walk with you day by day.

Forty days and nights,
you guide the steps of our journey.
May your presence be felt
in the whisper of your voice. **R**

Not on bread alone
are we to walk on this journey.
Speak the words that give life
to the yearnings of our hearts. **R**

*Together, we lift our voices in the Name of Jesus:****

1. God of Love, who we experience as mother, father, friend, lover,
our deepest longing, our best thought, our solid ground,
the sacred soil from which everything grows, our greatest hope.
2. Your love covers the entire earth, holding us all in your embrace.
You hold everything together.
We want to know what your vision for the world is - help us.
We want to live in that vision - guide us.
3. Everything we eat and drink, everything that gives us life and joy,
it all comes from you. We want to thank you for your mercy.
You hold nothing back. Help us be that open and generous
with others and with ourselves. Help us forgive each other.
4. Deep in our hearts we believe that this is your world and that you love us
all. Help us live with you and with each other in that powerful love. And
together we will sing of your mercy and grace and power, forever and
ever. Amen.

Closing Prayer

We thank you and praise you, Holy Mystery. Teach us to let go of fear, release the weight of what has been, and step into the mystery of what is yet to be. May our lives be poured out, filling the world with the fragrance of love, sowing seeds of hope where the ground is dry, and pressing onward with joy toward our call in Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Announcements

Blessing - *All are invited to extend your hands for our mutual blessing:*

5. Faithful and loving God: Bless each of us as we begin our journey to return to you once again and come closer to who you have called us to be.
6. We make a +cross on our forehead as a sign of our commitment to follow The Way of Jesus. May we remain faithful to this commitment and challenge ourselves to become better persons, more closely in line with Jesus' teachings and ministry. Amen.
7. We go into this week, held together by the Source of All That Is, clothed in the nature of Jesus our Companion, and reinforced by the strength of +Wisdom-Spirit within us. Amen.

Closing Song: ***Every Step of the Way***, Christopher Grundy, from *Stepping In* (2017).
<https://youtu.be/WjOcHXzAGTI> (lyric video)

Help me do the justice to be done today.
Help me love kindness in all I do and say.
Help me walk humbly with you, O God, I pray,
Every step of the way, every step of the way. *(repeat)*

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

***Please gather with us again and again to support this Community
with your presence and prayer.***

- * Today's scriptures are the suggested readings for Ash Wednesday from the *Comprehensive Catholic Lectionary* made available by the Women's Ordination Conference. Third Reading: *The Boundaries of our Being*, Paul Tillich (Collins Fontana, 1973), pp. 280, 281.
- ** Affirmation of Faith: Dorothy McRae-McMahon, Australian writer and theologian.
- *** An adaptation for our times by Lenora Rand (The Plural Guild).