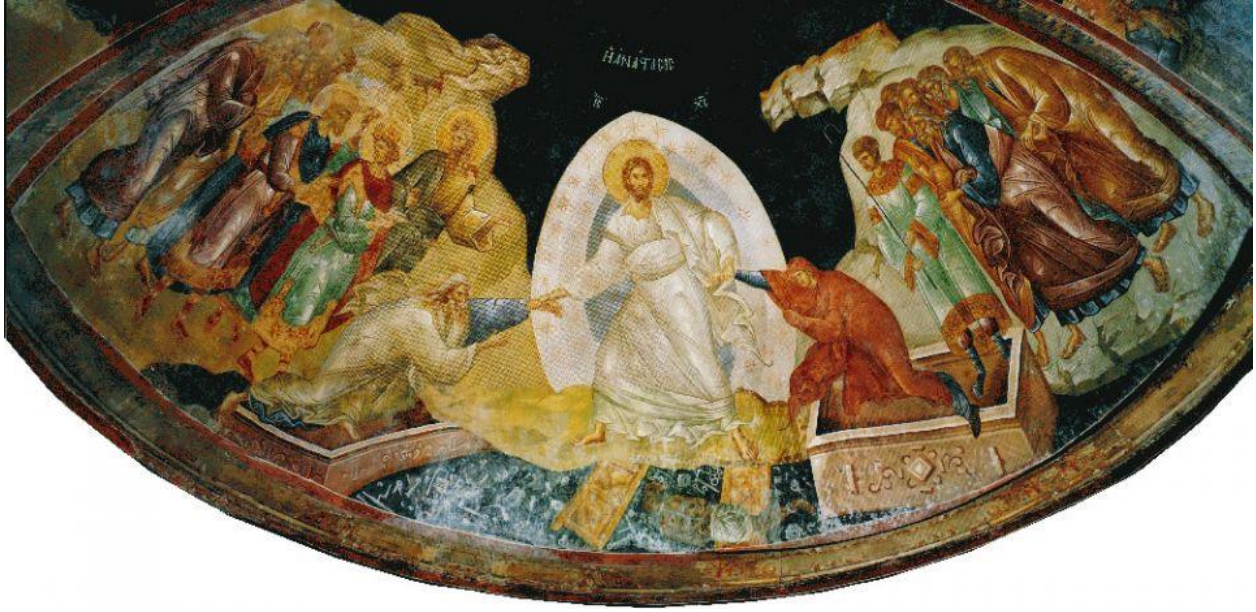

Mary Mother of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community
We Are Transformed in Christ
November 23, 2024
Our Carbondale/SEMO Liturgy Team: Jerry & Suzanne Bires, Andrea Seabaugh, Denis & Michael Rigdon, Cheryl Brandi IT

Please read before our Saturday liturgy:

Excerpts from Richard Rohr's *The Universal Christ,* Chapter 16, Transformation and Contemplation

Authentic Christianity is not so much a belief system as a life-and-death system that **shows you how to give away your life, how to give away your love, and eventually how to give away your death. Basically, how to give away—and in doing so, to connect with the world, with all other creatures, and with God.** ....

If Christ represents the resurrected state, then Jesus represents the crucified/resurrecting path of getting there. If **Christ is the source and goal,** then **Jesus is the path** from that source **toward the goal of divine unity** with all things.

It is not insignificant that Christians chose the cross or crucifix as their central symbol. At least unconsciously, we recognized that Jesus talked a lot about "**losing your life**." Perhaps Ken Wilber's distinction between "climbing religions" and "descending religions" is helpful here. He and I both trust the descending form of

religion much more, and I think Jesus did too. Here the primary language is **unlearning, letting go, surrendering, serving others**, and not the language of self development—which often lurks behind our popular notions of "salvation." ....

But in the Buddhist frame, suffering is seen as the **practical and real price for letting go of illusion, false desire, superiority, and separateness.** Suffering is also pointed out as the **price we pay for not letting go**, which might be an even better way to teach about suffering.

Any time you surrender a negative, accusatory, compulsive, or self-serving thought, word, or behavior, the Buddhists describe this as "dying"! ...

Both Christianity and Buddhism are saying that *the* pattern of transformation, *the* pattern that connects, *the* life that Reality offers us is not death avoided, but always *death transformed*. In other words, the only trustworthy pattern of spiritual transformation is death *and* resurrection. ...

Both groups are saying that death and life are two sides of the same coin, and you cannot have one without the other. Each time you **offer the surrender,** each time you **trust the dying**, your faith is led to a deeper level and you discover a Larger Self underneath. You **decide not to push yourself to the front** of the line, and something much better happens in the back of the line. You **let go** of your narcissistic anger, and you find that you start feeling much happier. You **surrender your need to control** your partner, and finally the relationship blossoms. Yet **each time it is a choice—and each time it is a kind of dying. ...**

The mystics and great saints were those who had learned to trust and allow this pattern, and often said in effect, "**What did I ever lose by dying?"** ...

Things change and grow by dying to their present state, but each time it is a risk. "Will it work this time?" is always our question. So many academic disciplines are coming together, each in its own way, to say that there's a constant **movement of loss and renewal at work in this world** at every level. It seems to be the pattern of all

growth and evolution. **To be alive means to surrender to this inevitable flow**. It's the same pattern in every atom, in every human relationship, and in every galaxy. Native peoples, Hindu scripture, Buddha, Moses, Muhammad, and Jesus all saw it early in human history and named it as a kind of "necessary dying." If this pattern is true, it has been true all the time and everywhere. ...

All of us travelers, each in our own way, have to eventually learn about letting go of something smaller so something bigger can happen. But that's not a religion—it's highly visible truth. **It is the Way Reality Works.**

Yes, I am saying:

That the way things work and Christ are one and the same.

This is not a religion to be either fervently joined or angrily rejected.

It is a train ride already in motion.

The tracks are visible everywhere.

You can be a willing and happy traveler,

Or not. (End of pre-liturgy reading)

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Feast of the Universal Christ
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Michael. *We begin our liturgy with a moment of silence*

Welcome! We warmly welcome you to Mary Mother of Jesus, our inclusive Catholic community without walls.

Whoever you are, wherever you are, just as you are, you are welcome at this table!

Theme. Michael. How are we transformed in Christ?—

"Unless a grain of wheat shall fall upon the ground and die…"

Suzanne. We celebrate together ✝ in the name of God our creator, Jesus the Christ, and the Holy Spirit our wisdom within. Amen. Let us welcome one another with a sign of Christ's peace! **All:** The peace of Christ be with us all**!** Namasté**!** Namasté**!**

🎵 **Welcoming song.** Peace is flowing like a river. https://youtu.be/FrLnCPq1GJk

Transformation Rite. Jerry. We pause now to remember times when false messages of our unworthiness have clouded our vision of the infinite love within us. Let us imagine all our imperfections brightly lit by the love of our divine Mother/Father that transforms us as we grow in awareness of our divinity and our humanity. *(Pause briefly. Then extend arm over your heart.)* I love you. I'm sorry. Thank you. I forgive you.

Opening Prayer. **Den.** Spirit of the Holy One, we gratefully acknowledge your presence within and among us. You have transformed us into the one Body of Christ, making us the face of Christ's love in the world. Guide us to be present to victims of and perpetrators of the pandemics afflicting our country—the pandemic of racism, the pandemic of misogyny and the pandemic of white nationalism. We pray this in Christ's name. **All:** Amen

Liturgy of the Word

Andrea. The first reading is from Paul's letter to the Philippians. For me **to live is Christ** and to die is gain.
The second reading is from Paul's letter to the Galatians. **Christ lives in me**. The life you see me living is not "mine." These are the inspired words of the Apostle Paul, and we respond, **All:** May Christ always live in me!

🎵 Alleluia. https://youtu.be/IC4nbwmQDVw

Suzanne. *A few moments of silence as we await God's word to us.*
A reading from John's Gospel: Jesus said, "Listen carefully:

Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground,
dead to the world,
it is never any more than a grain of wheat.
But if it is buried,
it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over.
In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is
destroys that life.
But if you let it go, reckless in your love,
you'll have it forever, real and eternal."

(Readings excerpted From *The Message,* translated by Eugene H Peterson)

These are the inspired words of Gospel writer John, and the community responds:

All: May I be that grain of wheat, letting go & reckless in love!

🎵 Unless a Grain of Wheat. Bernadette Farrell.
https://youtu.be/9FzMQnCM3hA

Shared homily. Michael. For my homily starter I want to repeat three of Richard Rohr's statements:

1."Things change and grow by dying to their present state, but each time it is a risk. 'Will it work this time?' is always our question."

2.**"There's a constant movement of loss and renewal at work in this world at every level. It seems to be the pattern of all growth and evolution. To be alive means to surrender to this inevitable flow."**

3.**"(This) is the Way Reality Works."**

I wonder if the election results represent an opportunity for me to surrender to this flow of Life?

As Spirit/Sophia moves you, now is your opportunity to share about the readings, the liturgy, or anything else. Please mic on to share, then mic off.

Profession of Faith. Jerry & All.

We believe in God, who creates all things,
who embraces all things, who celebrates all things,

who is present in every part of the fabric of creation.
We believe in God as the source of all life,
who baptizes this planet with living water.
who is present in every part of the fabric of creation.
We believe in Jesus Christ, the suffering one,
the poor one, the malnourished one, the climate refugee,
who loves and cares for this world and who suffers with it.
And we believe in Jesus Christ, the seed of life,
who came to reconcile and renew this world and everything in it.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the breath of God,
who moves with God and who moves among and with us today.
We believe in everlasting life in God.
And we believe in the hope that one day
God will put an end to death and all destructive forces.
(Gurukul Theological college, India/adapted by Keld B. Hansen 2009)

Community Prayers. Den. (*A few moments of silence before we bring our community prayers and offerings to the table)*

As we prepare for the sacred meal, we pray for the needs of the people of God in our community and around the world. "I bring to the Table." Our Response to each prayer is: Amen

We bring to the table our MMOJ members who aren't with us today. May we always find ways to remain close and connected to our family, our friends, and our community. We pray. ***R***

MMOJ Book of Intentions

Please share your spontaneous prayers.

Presider: We give thanks for all those we hold in the circle of grace, those we will continue to pray for and serve. Amen.

We offer our gifts. Andrea.
O Holy One, we bring you our gifts from creation, bread 🥖 of the grain 🌾 and wine 🍷 of the grapes 🍇. We recognize that they

are holy in you their creator. And we know that they will make us holy, one with you, one with each other, & one with all creation.

Eucharistic Prayer. **Michael.** (*Adapted from communion services in A Wee Worship Book by Wild Goose Worship Group. The wild goose is a Celtic symbol of the Spirit*.)

We are Holy, **https://youtu.be/orKBBIj5LZA**

Suzanne & All: Jesus was always the guest.
In the homes of Peter and Jairus,
Martha and Mary, Joanna and Susanna,
he was always the guest.
At the meal tables of the wealthy
where he pled the case of the poor,
he was always the guest.
Upsetting polite company,
Befriending isolated people,
welcoming the stranger,
he was always the guest.

Jerry & All: But here at this table,
Jesus is the host.
Those who wish to serve him
must first be served by him,
Those who want to follow him
must first be fed by him,
Those who would wash his feet
must first let him make them clean.

Den & All: For this is the table
where God intends to nourish us;
this is the time when Christ can make us new.
So come, you who hunger and thirst
for a deeper faith,
for a better life,
for a fairer world.
Jesus Christ,

who has sat at our table,
now invites us to be guests at his.

Andrea & All: For us you were born,
for us you healed,
preached, taught
and showed your way.
You died and rose
to show us the path of transformation.
Jesus Christ, present with us now,
for all that you have done
and all that you have promised,
what have we to offer?

Suzanne & All: Our hands are empty,
our hearts are sometimes full of doubt and fear.
But with you is mercy
and the power to change.

Jerry & All: So as we do in this place
what you did in an upstairs room,
send down your Spirit
on us
and on these gifts of bread and wine
that they may become for us your body,
healing, forgiving
and making us whole;
and that we may become,
for you,
your body,
loving and caring in the world
until your kindom comes. Amen

(All raise the bread)
Den & All: Among friends gathered around the table,
Jesus took bread, broke it and said,
"This is my body,

It is broken for you."

(All take the cup of wine)

Andrea & All: Later, after they had eaten,
Jesus took a cup of wine and said,
"This is the new relationship with God,
made possible because of my life, death and resurrection.
Drink this, all of you, to remember me."

Communion. Suzanne & All:

Look: Here is Christ coming to us
in bread and wine.
These are the gifts of God
for the people of God.
We are the Body of Christ.
(All receive Communion)

Kerani, Sunset Lake
https://youtu.be/ykEAlMPzEw0?si=kVWgdh4AMALrUcZw

Prayer of Jesus. Jerry. We pray our common prayer that Jesus taught us:

All: Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echoes through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
May your beloved community of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever. Amen.

(Adapted from The New Zealand Book of Prayer | He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa. This version of the Lord s prayer was influenced by Maori theologians)

Thanksgiving. Introductions. Announcements. Michael

Final prayer. Den & All.

May we go out from here full of Christ's peace,
to love and serve one another
in our community and in our wider world.

Mutual blessing. (*Extend your hands in blessing*)

Andrea & All: May the God of Sarah and Abraham bless us;
may the God of Jesus and Mary Magdalene bless us;
may the God of all our MMOJ saints bless us;
and may we always celebrate our oneness
in the Universal Christ. Amen

Dismissal

Andrea: Go in peace, let the celebration continue!
All: Thanks be to God! Alleluia!
Let us go in peace. May we be transformed into the love of Christ for all those we meet. Alleluia!

Concluding song. Unless a grain of wheat. Bernadette Farrell
https://youtu.be/Z2fR9fUD5bM?si=_mMqfV2fMLi_xLeV

If you want to add an intercession to our MMOJ Community Prayer book, please send an email to:
Joan Meehan: *jmeehan515@aol.com*

Mary Mother of Jesus website: MaryMotherOfJesus.net

To support our community, please send your check to:
Mary Mother of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community
5342 Clark Road #3079, Sarasota, FL 34238

All Sing: Seed Scattered and Sown,
https://youtu.be/r7CWT7q5ybQ

Gathering Here I am, God. https://youtu.be/-Nha2wwhAEs