Mary Mother of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community
First Sunday of Lent March 8, 2025
Liturgy Team: Mary Montavon, Elena Garcia ARCWP
Jim Brandi, Joan Pesce, Cathy Alexander
I-Team: Cheryl Brandi

Theme: A Lent of Wellbeing and Witness

(Mary M): We warmly welcome you to the inclusive Catholic Community of Mary Mother of Jesus in Sarasota. All are welcome here. We invite you to pray the liturgy where it says "**All**." Everyone will be muted during the service. Presiders, readers and anyone wishing to participate in the shared homily, please remember to unmute and remute before and after reading or speaking in order to avoid confusion and overlap of voices. Please have bread and wine or juice with you as we pray our Eucharistic Prayer.

Whoever you are,
Wherever you are,
Just as you are,
You are welcome at this table. (*Integral Christianity by Paul Smith*)

(Elena) We begin the celebration of our Lenten season, summoned together, in the name of the Holy One, Source of all Being; Jesus, Eternal Word; and Holy Spirit Sophia, our Wisdom within. **Amen.**

Gathering Song: **Christopher Grundy- 'Hear Us God'**
https://youtu.be/A95UbOPVQKc?si=JnDbddtLm19XM5Rs

(Elena) Opening Prayer
God of the wilderness and redeemer of land,
we gather to seek Your guidance and grace.
In this season of Lent,
draw us into deeper reflection on our lives and our world.

As we journey with You, may we be shaped by Your justice,
inspired by Your love,
and empowered to act for Your kingdom. **Amen.**

(Mary M) Transformation Rite
We pause now to remember the times we have not born fruit in our lives and our service to others. Take a moment to recall one missed opportunity, one broken or damaged relationship. Now imagine this person or situation in the light of healing love as we ask for forgiveness.

(Pause briefly. Then Extend arm over community)
All: Please forgive me, I am sorry, I love you, I thank you.

The Sign of Peace
(Elena) It is fitting that, having asked for Divine and mutual forgiveness, we now extend an expression of Peace to each other.
(Elena): Grant us Your peace, O Loving God, that following the example of Jesus and with the strength of the Spirit, we may be eager to spread that love and peace to everyone, everywhere, with no exceptions**. All: Amen**.
(Elena) Let us turn to each other and with praying hands offer one another a sign of peace.
NAMASTE 3x

(Cathy) A Prayer: *By* Joyce Rup
This prayer (adapted to read in the third person) reminds us of the way the mother of Jesus met difficulties, turbulence, and heartbreak as well as how her experience reflects ours, metaphorically and oftentimes in reality.
Mary, you have been there before us.
You have been dismayed, and shocked by terrible, unwanted news.
You have known fear, sadness, and worry about the future.
You have had to quiet the heart-aching distress within yourself.
You did not give up hope. You did not drown in a pool of self-pity.
You did not let disappointment and anger destroy your ability to love.
You placed your trust in the Holy One.
Woman of Compassion, Mother of Sorrows,
We draw inspiration from your journey.
We too, can move through the pain of our present situation.
Your faith and courage lead us to our own.
These are inspired words found in one of seven essays "Your Sorrow Is My Sorrow" written by Joyce Rupp.

(Joan P)First Reading: First Fruits and Tithes
This passage sets out the ritual of offering the first fruits of the harvest, and opens up issues of gratitude, economic justice, and collective memory. The act of presenting the first fruits is not only a religious ritual but also a political declaration. It acknowledges that personal prosperity stems from God's provision and is intertwined with communal **wellbeing.**

Deuteronomy 26:1-11
When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, 'Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us.' When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, you shall make this response before the LORD your God: 'A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me.' You shall set it down before the LORD your God and bow down before the LORD your God. Then you, **together with the Levites** and the **aliens who reside among you,** shall celebrate with all the bounty that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house. We respond: **Thanks be to God.**

I will not leave you comfortless **https://youtu.be/qqyPIk9aZ2E**

(Jim) Psalm 91 is often understood as a prayer of personal trust in God's protection, but its communal implications are equally profound. The imagery of God as a refuge and fortress speaks to the human desire for security, both individually and collectively. However, the promise of protection ("no evil shall befall you", v10) invites deeper exploration in the context of justice.
(Jim) ~Those who dwell in the shelter of infinite Light, who abide in the wings of Infinite Love, will raise their voices in praise: "My refuge and my strength; in You alone will I trust."
Res: I will not leave you comfortless
~For You deliver me from the webs of fear and illusion, from all that separates and divides; You protect me as an eagle shields its young, Your faithfulness is sure, like an arrow set upon the mark.
Res: I will not leave you comfortless
~I will not fear the shadows of the night, nor the confusion that comes by day, nor the dreams that awaken me from sleep, nor the daily changes that life brings.
~Though a thousand may deride this radical trust, ten thousand laugh as I seek to do your Will, yet will I Surrender myself to you, abandoning myself into your hands without reserve.
Res: **I will not leave you comfortless**
~ "Because you cleave to Me in Love, I will deliver you; I will protect you, who call upon my Name. When you call to Me I will answer you; I will be with you in times of trouble, I will rescue you so that you will know My Peace, All through the years will I dwell in you heart, as Loving

Companion Presence forever."
Res: I will not leave you comfortless

(Joan P) Second Reading: "Sisters In The Wilderness
The image of Jesus on the cross is the image of human sin in its most desecrated form… The cross then becomes an image of defilement, a gross manifestation of collective human sin. Jesus, then does not conquer sin through death on the cross. Rather, Jesus conquers the sin of temptation in the wilderness by resistance—by resisting the temptation to value the material over the spiritual (You shall no live by bread alone); by resisting death (If you are the son of God throw yourself down); by resisting the greedy urge of monopolistic ownership… Jesus therefore conquered sin in life, not in death. In the wilderness he refused to allow evil forces to defile the balance relation between the material and the spiritual, between life and death, between power and the exertion of it.
These were inspired words shared by Dolores Williams in "Sister in the Wilderness. And we respond : **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation: **Spirit of the Living God: https://youtu.be/nkATdLfKufE**

(Mary M) Gospel: The account of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness highlights the intersection of power, identity, and justice.

Luke 4:1-13
The Temptation of Jesus
Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.' Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone." '

Then the devil* led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil* said to him, 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.' Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." ' Then the devil* took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written,
"He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." '
Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." ' When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.
An account of Jesus' temptation as found in the Gospel of Luke, and we respond**: So Be It.**

Gospel Acclamation: **Spirit of the Living God: https://yutu.be/nkATdLf_KufE**

Shared Homily
(Jim) Statement of Faith (Taken from "The Friends in Faith" and shared by Joan Meehan)

Gathered together as people of faith, we profess our belief in a God who is larger than we can name, unable to be contained, yet present in each one of us. We have come to know this God in the living of our lives, and in the holiness of the earth we share. We believe in a God revealed in all peoples—all genders, religions, and orientations. We embrace a compassionate God, who champions justice and mercy, and is always faithful when we call. Our God gives and forgives, patiently loving without conditions. We gratefully believe in a God who feels our deepest struggles, and celebrates our greatest joys. A God who both dances with us in celebration, and holds us when we cry. This God is not "other" to us, but shares our breath in every moment, and promises we are never alone. We believe in a God who believes in us- believes that we are precious and incredible gifts, worthy to claim image and likeness to the divine. We hold fast to our God who journeys with us, who continually calls us to choose the shape of our days through the choices we make. This God accepts us as we are, and shares each hope we have for our becoming. This is the God in whom we believe, our Creator, our Mother and Father who became human in Jesus, our brother. Our God is the Spirit of Life, the voice that continues to speak love, and asks us to answer. In this God we choose to believe. AMEN

(Cathy) Prayers for the people of God
Response: All: Grant us, Holy One , hearts open to see, hear and share Your Love.
~ As we prepare for the sacred meal, we pray for the needs of the people of God in our community and around the world and for the earth and all universal life sustained by God.
R: Grant us, Holy One , hearts open to see, hear and share Your Love.
~ We pray for all suffering from natural disasters all over the world, that they not lose hope and that they feel the light of your love**.**
R: Grant us, Holy One , hearts open to see, hear and share Your Love.
~Jesus, Wonderful Counselor, give wisdom to those who negotiate to bring about justice, peace and a better quality of life to all people, that all may live in a fully human way.
R: Grant us, Holy One , hearts open to see, hear and share Your Love.
~We pray for the people who live in war-torn countries that they may live in peace without fear, and that goodness and sanity will fill the hearts and minds of those that would cause them harm**.**
R: Grant us, Holy One , hearts open to see, hear and share Your Love.
~ We bring to the table all those who are in need of healing of **body and soul** from cancer and all other chronic illnesses. Grant them O Holy One an increase of faith and the strength of hope to endure.
R: Grant us, Holy One , hearts open to see, hear and share Your Love.
~You are the Way, The Truth and the Life, awaken in us the courage to set aside all pettiness and all half-truths that keep us divided from one another.
R: Grant us, Holy One , hearts open to see, hear and share Your Love.
~We bring to the table our MMOJ intentions found in our community prayer book.
R: Grant us, Holy One , hearts open to see, hear and share Your Love.
~And for what else do we pray? Begin with, "I bring to the table." **And we all respond**:

Grant us, Holy One , hearts open to see, hear and share Your Love.
Holy One, may we respond to the needs of our sisters and brothers in loving prayer and solidarity.
Amen

Offertory: Preparation of the Gifts
Offertory Song: "Here is My Life" by Joe Wise
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsHM7_XZT5A

(Joan P) Blessed are you, God of all life, through your goodness we have bread, wine, all creation, and our own lives to offer. Through this sacred meal may we become your new creation as we respond to your call to use our gifts in loving service to our sisters and brothers.
All: Blessed be God forever.

Eucharistic Prayer
(Joan): God is within you, blessing the world through you.
All: **And also within you.**
(Joan): Lift up your hearts.
All: We lift them up in the Holy One.
(Joan): O Holy One, 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 ruled by your covenant with Israel. In solidarity with all believers who have gone before us, we lift up our hearts and sing:

Holy, Holy, Holy by Karen Drucker **https://youtu.be/nTewBnxBy30**

(Extend hands in blessing over bread and wine for the Invocation of the Holy Spirit.)
(Elena and All): Come Sophia Wisdom Holy Spirit and settle on this bread and wine. Fill them with the holiness and wholeness of our brother Jesus the Christ who is calling us to justice, peace, equality and dignity for all. We give thanks and praise this day. Amen.

(Mary and All) On the night before he died, Jesus gathered with his friends and washed their feet so that they would follow his example in service of human consciousness and evolution into Jesus the Christ.

(Elena and All) When he returned to his place at the table he spoke the blessing, broke the bread and shared it with them saying, "Take and eat of the bread of life. Whenever you remember me like this, I am among you."

(Mary and All) Jesus then raised the cup of blessing, spoke the grace saying, "Take and drink of the covenant made new again through my life in each of you and in your community. Whenever you remember me like this, I am among you."

(Elena and All) Jesus, who was with God in the beginning of the creation of the heavens and earth, is with us now in this bread. The Spirit of whom the prophets spoke in history, is with us now in this

cup. Let us proclaim the mystery of faith - Christ dies, Christ rises, Christ comes again and again and again.

Please join in praying the Litany for the Breaking of the Bread:
(Mary M. and All)
God of Courage, You call us to live the Gospel of peace and justice. We will live justly.
God of Compassion, You call us to be Your presence in the world. We will love tenderly.
God of Truth, You call us to speak truth to power. We will walk with integrity in your presence.

Great Amen by **Linda Lee Miller** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dy76fpfkNsg

(Jim) This is the bread of life and the cup of blessing. Through it we are nourished and we nourish each other. All are welcome to the Feast.

(Mary and 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 to grow in consciousness and obedience to the call of the Holy One in Jesus the Christ.

(**Mary)** Take and share communion with the words "(I am) or (You are) love for the world."
Take and share the cup with the words "(I am) or (You are) hope for the world.

Let us take a Moment of Silence to focus on Divine LOVE Present within us.
Communion Meditation : I am the One within You https://youtu.be/wXZ6Je4xeRU

(Cathy and All) Let us pray as Jesus taught his companions to pray:
We celebrate your many names.
Your wisdom come, your will be done, unfolding from the depths within us.
Each day you give us all we need.
You remind us of our limits, and we let go.
You support us in your power, and we act with courage.
For you are the dwelling place within us, the empowerment around us,
O Holy One, you are within, around, and among us.
And the celebration among us, now and forever. Amen
(Adapted from Miriam Therese Winter, MMS

Prayer of Thanksgiving
(**Elena and All**) **Loving God, may this Eucharist in which we shared Christ's healing** love, **deepen our oneness with you and with one another. May wonder and thanksgiving fill us with knowledge, understanding and experience of your love and compassion for us, your sacred people. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Christ**.

Prayers of Gratitude, Introductions and Announcements

(Mary and All): Community Blessing (Everyone please extend your hands in mutual blessing.)
May our hearts be glad on our journeys as we dream new dreams and see new visions.
~May we live and work for mercy, peace and justice, in our hearts for ourselves and our brothers and sisters…whoever they are and wherever they are.
~May we learn to bless, honor and hold in reverence one another and thus grow in gratitude and humility.
~May we continually strive to have the faith of a mustard seed, so we can move mountains that are barriers to justice and equality.
`May we be the face of God to the world, reflecting a compassionate and caring presence to everyone we meet.
~And finally, as we go forth from this sacred space, let us purposefully look with new eyes and hearts to recognize our call, to Spiritual growth and evolving consciousness.
Thanks be to God. Let it be so!

Commissioning
(**Elena)** Full of Christ's peace, let us go out in haste to share the Good news of the Divine Presence dwelling within. Remember, that as the face of Christ to the world we are absolute existence and a field of infinite possibilities. Let our service continue with hearts full of zeal and desire to answer our call to be the loving voice of the Holy One at all times. And at all times may our lives be a testimony to God's LOVE. Let us joyfully sing our hearts out.! **All: Amen**

Closing Song: My Love Colours Outside The Lines- Golden Ears United Church
https://youtu.be/10s62DicTNY?si=_-DeMVcVP793wJnH

If you would like to add your intercession to our MMOJ Community Prayers book,
Please send an email to jmeehan515@aol.com
If you would like to invite another person to attend our liturgy please refer them to www.marymotherofJesus.net where the day's liturgy is found.
Zoom instructions are also included there.

Please support our community, send your check to:

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