Mary Mother of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community
Fourth Week of Lent, March 29 2025

Liturgy Team: Cheryl Brandi & Jerry Bires (IT), Jim Brandi, Beth & David Ponce, Jane Shugrue, Michael Rigdon

Beth: Welcome to Mary Mother of Jesus,
our inclusive Catholic Community, our church without walls.
"Whoever you are, wherever you are,
you are welcome at our table."

Michael & All: Let us begin together ✝ in the name of God our creator, Jesus our brother, and Spirit Sophia. Amen.

Theme: With an unconditional love, our Abba welcomes us home 70 times 7 times! How many times is that? **Always** one more!

We welcome each other with a sign of Christ's peace:
All: Namaste, Namaste, Namaste. May Christ's peace be with us!

Gathering Song 🎵
Peace before us, Peace behind us, Peace under our feet.
Peace within us, Peace over us, Let all around us be Peace.
Love before us, Love behind us, Love under our feet.

Love within us, Love over us, Let all around us be Love.

Opening Prayer. David. Jesus the Christ, we celebrate today the marvel of your Abba's unconditional love breaking into the lives of each one of us—into the lives of all people everywhere. May we rejoice in your Abba's love, as you do. **All:** Amen

Liturgy of the Word. Excerpts from *The Message* by Eugene H Peterson

Jim. The first reading is from the book of Joshua.
God said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt.”
The People of Israel continued to camp at The Gilgal. They celebrated the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the plains of Jericho.
Right away, the day after the Passover, they started eating the produce of that country, unraised bread and roasted grain. And then no more manna; the manna stopped. As soon as they started eating food grown in the land, there was no more manna for the People of Israel. That year they ate from the crops of Canaan.

Michael & All

Love before us, Love behind us, Love under our feet.
Love within us, Love over us, Let all around us be Love.

Jane. The second reading is from Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians.
Our firm decision is to work from this focused center: One man died for everyone. That puts everyone in the same boat. He included everyone in his death so that everyone could also be included in his life, a resurrection life, a far better life than people ever lived on their own.
Because of this decision we don't evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know. We certainly don't look at him that way anymore. Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with

himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you.
How? you ask. In Christ. God put the wrong on him who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God.

Michael & All

Love before us, Love behind us, Love under our feet.
Love within us, Love over us, Let all around us be Love.

Beth. A reading from the Good News attributed to Luke.
By this time a lot of men and women of doubtful reputation were hanging around Jesus, listening intently. The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, "He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends."
Their grumbling triggered this story.
Jesus said, "There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what's coming to me.'
"So the father divided the property between them. It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any.
"That brought him to his senses. He said, 'All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I'm going back to my father. I'll say to him, Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.' He got right up and went home to his father.
“When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.'

"But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!' And they began to have a wonderful time.
"All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day's work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. He told him, 'Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast—barbecued beef!—because he has him home safe and sound."
"The older brother stalked off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. The son said, 'Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!'
"His father said, 'Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and he's found!'" These are the words of Gospel writer Luke, and we respond, **All:** Let it be so!

Shared Homily. Michael & Community (and CHAT GPT)
The story of the Prodigal Son, as seen through the eyes of Henri Nouwen in his profound work, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, is a tale that echoes the journey of many of our lives. It is a parable of forgiveness, love, and the endless mercy of the Father, beautifully captured in the one moment that transforms a life.

The Prodigal Son's tale is familiar: a young man's reckless request for his inheritance, his journey into a distant land, and his squandering of wealth in wild living. But Nouwen invites us to delve deeper, encouraging us to find ourselves in the shoes of each character in this story. Perhaps we are the younger son, lost in a world of instant gratification, searching for meaning in material pleasures, only to find ourselves empty and longing for home.

Nouwen writes of the moment of return, a moment characterized not just by longing, but by the courage to come back, the bravery to face the consequences, and the hope that transcends failures. He highlights the son's ultimate return as a more profound event than his departure, likening it to a decision moment that we are all called to in our journeys with God—the decision to return home and accept the warmth of Abba's embrace.

The father in the story is an embodiment of God's unconditional love. The profound mystery of divine forgiveness is illustrated in his response: arms wide open, filled with joy, ready to celebrate without shedding a word of reproach. This radical love calls us to wonder: Can we accept this gift? Do we allow ourselves to be embraced, despite our imperfections?

Nouwen also invites us to consider the elder son, the one who stayed behind, yet harbors resentment and jealousy. His story reminds us of the dangers of self-righteousness and bitterness. In recognizing him, we are urged to reflect on our own hearts and the barriers we create between ourselves and God's boundless love.

In the end, Nouwen reminds us that the real spiritual work is to claim our true identity as children of God, daring to return and celebrate that the lost can be found, the dead can live again. It's an invitation to live not as strangers, but as beloved sons and daughters, constantly returning, and dwelling forever in the home of Abba, who is love itself.

May we, inspired by Nouwen's insights, find the courage to return, to forgive, and to embrace the unfathomable grace that awaits us, each day, anew. Amen.

David & All. Profession of Faith.

We believe in God, the creator of the universe,
the fountain of life, flowing through every being.
We believe in Jesus the Christ
who reflects the face of God and the fullness of humanity.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the breath of God in the cosmos,
who calls us to loving service without counting the cost.
We believe in our global communion with all in the circle of life.
Amen to loving actions on behalf of justice, healing,
compassion and equity for all in our world!

We are called to be light to the world!

Prayers of the Community
Jim: Aware that the Holy One is present within us and works through us, we bring to the table our intentions.
Response: We remember and we pray.
We bring to the table the many families and children who suffer due to wars in the Ukraine and in Gaza and Israel, **R.**
We bring to the table the hundreds of thousands of displaced, starving women & children in Gaza. May love drive us to provide for so many who are suffering and dying. **R.**
We bring to the table the seriously ill, particularly members of MMOJ and our family and friends. **R.**
Joan M. We bring to the table the petitions in our MMOJ prayer book, especially….
Jim. And who/what else do we bring to the table today? **R.**
We can do all things in the power of the Spirit of love working through us. **All:** Amen

Offering of Our Gifts at the table *Have bread and wine on your table*
Jane. 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 and one with each other.

Jane. Please join in song to begin our **Eucharistic Prayer**
🎼 Here in This Place **https://youtu.be/sgkWXOSGmOQ**

Beth & All, *with hand extended in blessing:* As we do in this place what you did in an upstairs room, send down your Spirit Sophia on us and on these gifts of bread and wine that they may become for us your body, healing and making us whole. And that we may become for you, your body, loving and caring in the world until your kindom comes. Amen.

David & All:
On the night before he died, while at supper with his friends,
Jesus took bread said the blessing,
broke the bread 🥖 and gave it to them saying,
"Take and eat. This is my very self." (Pause)

Jesus then raised high the cup of blessing
and offered them the wine🍷with these words,
"Take and drink of the covenant made new
through my life for you and for everyone.
Whenever you do this, remember me."

Jim & All:

Remember, gracious God, your Church throughout the world.
Open us to welcome everyone.
In union with all people,
may we strive to create a world where suffering is diminished,
and where all people can live in health and wholeness.
Thru Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in union with the Holy Spirit,
all glory is yours, gracious God. Amen

Jane. This is Jesus, God with us, loving us forever. All are invited to partake of this sacred banquet of love. **All:** We are the Body of Christ. **All** sing 🎵: Holy gifts for holy people, come you hungry and believe. Come receive Christ's body offered, come and be what you receive(x2)

Communion Instrumental 🎵 Sentinel Meadow, Mars Lasar
http://youtube.com/watch?v=B9JFOEcq1GA&fea 2:33

Beth: 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,
Abba and Amma 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 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

Michael. Prayers of Thanksgiving. Announcements.

Final Blessing. *With hand extended in prayer*
Michael & All
Peace before us, Peace behind us, Peace under our feet
Peace within us, Peace over us, Let all around us be Peace.
Love before us, Love behind us, Love under our feet
Love within us, Love over us, Let all around us be Love.
Christ before us, Christ behind us, Christ under our feet,
Christ within us, Christ over us, Let all around us be Christ!

David. Go in the peace of Christ.
Let us bring God's reign of love and peace to all those we meet!
David & All: Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

Final Song Hymn of Promise, Natalie Sleeth. **STOP @ 2:07**
https://youtu.be/sDpByzZqeQ4?si=H0rT4_0lT7C_CAv-

Email your prayer petitions to Joan Meehan: **JMeehan515@aol.com**

You can find our weekly liturgy at: **MMOJliturgies.blogspot.com**