

## EPIPHANY 2015

Last Epiphany found us coping with snow days in St. Louis ~ a rarity these last few years that hinted to us of things that were to come. The past year has been marked by deaths and rebirths that have left us bereft in so many ways ~ from tragic illnesses to tragic accidents to tragic pregnancies; and also the “normal” passing of a myriad of VIPs in the lives of this small church. Indeed, our lives are both emptier and richer for the experiences of death and new presence we have shared. My daughter-in-law Cheryl gave up her fight against cancer on April 9 and we celebrated her life on Tuesday of Holy Week. The Triduum that began two days later was powerfully poignant, she being my sixth close loss of the year to date. I would go on to lose another six dear ones before November. Altogether, Therese claimed 40 deaths and rebirths in this year, all of which we named and celebrated on our holy day of All Saints/All Souls.

On the first Friday of Lent we began a new community function ~ a monthly get-together dubbed as Therese First Friday, with a community sharing of food, movies or other thought-provoking activities, and discussion. These extras have added to our valued sharing of life and faith, and have led to occasional other events as well. We’ve shared trivia nights, folk concerts, lectures with Helmut Schuller and Tony Flannery, awards dinners with Roy Bourgeois and our own saints-in-residence (Jerry & Mary Wuller), and even Halloween parties.

A training day before our Third Sunday of Lent liturgy, devoted to explaining and practicing the ministerial roles at Therese, culminated with a Commissioning Service for all volunteer ministers. This in advance of my weekend absences, with liturgies left in the capable hands of pastoral associate Mary Hammett. I was away from Therese a total of four times in May alone: for ordinations in Springfield, IL, Cincinnati, OH and Three Oaks, MI; and for a wedding in St Louis. I was gone again in July for a Cards-Cubs weekend at Wrigley.

Former colleague Ree Hudson came to town for her first visit since moving to Arizona. She celebrated with us on Pentecost weekend, giving the homily; and also went to Illinois with me for the first Mass of our new priest, Mary Keldermans, on Pentecost Sunday.

We once again participated in the Pride Weekends events, marching and sharing an information booth with a growing group of “Welcoming Catholic Communities.” This year’s contingency added two new members, both “in good graces” Roman Catholic: the parish I was part of at the time I was ordained, and the sisters and associates from the local CSJ Motherhouse. Following the weekend, the Catholic Action Network formed a new circle for purposes of increasing our visibility in the local LGBTQB community, particularly on university campuses. We have so far reaped few results, but sharing more broadly with intentional (non-Roman) Catholic communities has been an added bonus.

Getting our new year off to a reverent communal start, a retreat day preceding our Second Sunday of Advent liturgy fittingly focused on being star-struck through the Advent themes of hope, peace, joy and love. It was ably led by Mary, Jean and Pat, with excellent input from the sickbed of Catie, and was a wonderful and deeply reflective day for all comers.

And so we have moved through our too short Season of Christmas. Epiphany shines on us once again, beckoning and reminding us of the stardust from whence we came and to whence we shall someday return. We ponder as we gaze upwards. What light has shone in our darkness since last Epiphany? Whose star has propelled us? Which dreams have we reclaimed as our own? Where have our truths been recovered? How will this year be lived differently because of our epiphanies, both personal and communal?

May our All Holy God of Infinity scatter the darkness and brighten all hearts with star-struck holiness and Epiphany blessings all year long.

Shalom,

Elsie