

EPIPHANY 2017

*Ring the bells that still can ring.
Forget your perfect offering.
There is a crack in everything.
That's how the light gets in.**

I am beginning to appreciate the Brilliance of a God who would birth me into this life on the heels of All Hallows Eve, All Saints and All Souls! My birthday is an apt time for epiphanies, as it marks change graphically, even change of civic life. Political elections are held, Daylight Savings Time goes away, and darkness envelops the Earth a bit sooner every day. The leaves begin to display their maturity in a breathtaking array of colors even as a chill comes and goes in the air. The sense that we are heading into the bleakness of winter puts a bit of a damper on the magnificence of the Season of the Fullness of Life.

And in this past year, just four days after my 78th birthday and one day after our devastating presidential elections, Leonard Cohen* passed into new life.

The biggest news of my personal life was buying a new house. After nearly 48 years in one place, this was HUGE. But it was time, as my muse revealed to me at the time of my 77th birthday in 2015. Moving day came this past September, and I am still in awe every day to wake up in this space. It is truly a sanctuary in the city. And I'm very happy that the old homestead is staying in the family too, as son John will be taking up residence if I ever get the place emptied of my "stuff"!

I was also privileged to preside at another family wedding this past summer, for my granddaughter Shelli and new grandson (in law) Matthew. It was a real joy to behold the unique celebration of "them" - with the boys (my great-grands Aiden and Liam) being their primary witnesses, but also their siblings and their little nieces and nephews having a part in the very sweet and sacred ceremony.

And life moves on. My youngest great-grand, Brayden, turned 1-year old while Trevor, the oldest, turned 19! Those eleven others in between also aged a year, and number fourteen is due sometime this month. She will be born in S Carolina, so I won't be seeing her for a while. My grandson Jason and his family left St Louis for the West Coast, leaving a new void in our lives. But five of my eleven surviving grands still live in the St Louis area, which is a pretty amazing blessing.

Of course, as we all know, my beloved St Louis Cardinals did not fare so well this year, and I was reduced to rooting for their arch rivals! But at least it was still all in the family, as my favorite son-in-law Dave bleeds blue! And there is a Chicago connection in our Therese Community as well. Besides, I was privileged to attend a HUGE Busch Stadium event: a concert with Paul McCartney. Can't get much better than that!

Four days of retreating with my RCWP Regional Community was topped off with the diaconal ordination of my "last" candidate, which means that even though I officially retired from my position of program coordinator (formation director) in 2015 I will, in fact, be done with it and off the leadership team sometime this year (after Claudia A is ordained a priest). I am blessed, also, to be mentor for a member of our Therese Community who is discerning ordination. Plus, in addition to the ordination at our retreat, our Great Waters Region ordained two new priests during the summer, Kathy R and Susan V.

The retreat was very meaningful for me, as its focus was Sophia and I was invited to present two sessions on this eternally suffusive Breath of God's Divine Feminine Wisdom. We were invited too, to experience her Presence in the yeast which is hidden in the bread we bake, in our

dancing and our weaving, and in our interaction with nature and the words its beauty inspires us to. Our multi-talented experiences and many-faceted educations served to bring us face-to-face with the Holy which lives within us and among us in ever-new and widening circles.

As a community of faith, Therese of Divine Peace certainly shared many epiphanies together in this past year as well. We celebrated yet another Therese wedding, the blessing of Bob and Sue's sacramental life together. It was the fourth one from within our small family. What an occasion of Light is that!

Joe resurrected his Prayer for Vocations, written many years ago for women priests, and with a bit of editing and design we managed to send it out in bookmark form to all the currently-ordained Roman Catholic Womenpriests in honor of International Women's Day.

We continued our First Friday gatherings, and viewed and discussed several wonderful movies. Two of my favorites were the insightful and delightful *Inside Out* and the comedically terrifying *Who Will We Invade Next?* Some of us met up and went to a movie matinee together to view the film *Spotlight*. We also enjoyed the famed Charlie King concert at Saint Louis University; a few Native American flute concerts with John MacEnery; and a wonderful weekend conference on Cosmic Christianity with the dynamic Diarmud O'Murchu.

Mary F, a priest from our Great Waters Region, came to St Louis and joined our Seder and Holy Thursday commemoration for the second year in a row, what a delight! And once again, we took part in the Pride Weekend as a contingency of the Welcoming Catholic Communities, along with Sts Clare & Francis ECC, St Cronan's RC, and the wonderful CSJ's of Carondelet.

Being blessed with few expenses, our tiny community has managed to amass a bank account that belies our mission. Accordingly, our Board voted this year to conscientiously give away \$5,000 to a handful of worthy recipients, primarily focused on vital social justice ministries. We purposely included international, national and local entities. The community also took up a separate collection for a special Christmas gift to the Heifer Foundation, as we have been doing for several years, and this year we collected \$300.

For the very first time in our nine years as Therese, we celebrated liturgy off-site for our annual Memorial Mass of All Saints/All Souls. It was an absolutely wonderful celebration, culminating in a festive pot luck supper, and leading us to decide to go off-site again for our celebration of Epiphany 2017. As I write this, we are looking forward to that day, which will be a full retreat day and end with a pot luck supper following our liturgical celebration. It may become a new tradition!

We've prayed and anointed one another through too many sicknesses and surgeries, particularly for Gary and Joe. We also prayed with and accompanied one another through the griefs and deaths of family members, including Mary's, Joan's and Irlene's mothers, Jonathan's father, and Gary's sister. And for the third year in a row, we prayed and anointed one of ours as she departed for far-away places. But we are confident that Jean carries Light with her for many refugee families in Austria, and also that her Light will return to us within the year.

Thanks be to God, our epiphanies are endless. Our Divine muse, Sophia, never stops inviting, never stops shining, never dies. Leonard Cohen* said it as well as anybody.

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Let us all lighten up in 2017. May all our epiphanies be Bright!

Shalom,

Elsie