



Sisters of  
**Benet Hill  
Monastery**

*A program of the Leadership Conference  
of Religious Women (LCWR)*

*2024 Lenten Series  
First Sunday*

## Opening Song

[At This Table](#) by Idina Menzel (3:48)

“At this table, Everyone is welcome, So come, pull up a chair”

## Opening Prayer

Loving God,

Be present in our midst as we open our hearts to what divides and distracts us. Let us remember that you are present in our creation, in all that separates us, and in the invitation to build bridges of relationship. Assist us in knowing peace, stillness, and the invitation to deepening truth.

## Scripture

“This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” MK 1:14

## Poem

*We look with uncertainty – Anne Hillman*

We look with uncertainty  
beyond the old choices for  
clear-cut answers  
to a softer, more permeable aliveness  
which is at every moment  
at the brink of death;  
for something new is being born in us  
if we but let it.  
We stand at a new doorway,  
awaiting that which comes...  
daring to be human creatures,  
vulnerable to the beauty of existence.  
Learning to love.



## Reflecting

What feelings arose for you during this time of contemplation? Where did you feel it in your body?

What feelings come up when you think about polarization today and the seemingly hard divisions in our country? Where do you hold those feelings in your body?

## Understanding Polarization, Part 1

What blinders keep us from seeing what divides us?

[PBS: A look at the history of racism in America and its role in today's divisions. \(10:47\)](#)

Dwell in 2 – 3 minutes of silence after viewing. Notice what rises within you. Share with a partner from your group.

[PBS: How US History could provide a path out of polarization. \(6:38\)](#)

As you reflect on what you have heard, spend a few moments recalling your own story of division and polarization. Consider the following for 2-3 minutes in silence then share with a partner from your group:

How did you learn to identify with a particular group, political party or issue organization?

How has your consciousness shifted in the last 10 years?

What influences have shaped the shifts in your identify?

## Practice for this week

**Find a 20-30 minute block of time for this practice.**

Choose an audio, television or video recording of a news source that you trust. Listen without interruption for 12 minutes. Identify words or phrases which strengthen polarization.

Next, choose an audio, television or video recording of a news source that you ordinarily reject. Listen without interruption for 12 minutes. Identify words or phrases which strengthen polarization.

Spend 3-5 minutes reflecting on your experience in light of the information from this gathering. Be prepared to share about your practice next week.

## Closing Prayer

*A Prayer from Apollo 8, Frank Borman*

Give us, O God, the vision which can see Your love in the world in spite of human failure. Give us the faith to trust Your goodness in spite of our ignorance and weakness. Give us the knowledge that we may continue to pray with understanding hearts. And show us what each one of us can do to set forward the coming of the day of universal peace.

**Closing Song:** [Walk With Me, Goldford \(2:48\)](#)