



33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 13, 2016

Readings

This week:

Malachi 3:19-20a

2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

Luke 21:5-19

Next week:

2 Samuel 5:1-3

Colossians 1:12-20

Luke 23:35-43

Psalm

The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice. (*Psalm 98*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. Larry Percell.

The Thomas Merton Center community worships and celebrates Sunday liturgy each week at the regularly scheduled 8:45 am parish Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas Church. Members of the Thomas Merton community plan these liturgies in the spirit of Vatican II and its call to "full, active and conscious participation" in Catholic liturgical life.

The Thomas Merton Center is supported by your donations. If you choose to donate by check or cash, every Sunday there is a donation basket in the back of church or by the coffeepot after Mass—or you can use the envelope in the bulletin the last Sunday of every month to mail your donation. Please do not put your TMC donation in the collection baskets passed during Mass (these are for parish contributions only).

Calendar

Monday, November 14, 6:00 pm

TMC Liturgy Team, Thomas House

From Thomas Merton

The great question, then, is how *do* we communicate with the modern world? If in fact communication has been reduced to pseudo-communication, to the celebration of pseudo-events and the irate clashing of incompatible myth-systems, how are we to avoid falling into this predicament? How are we to avoid the common obsession with pseudo-events in order to construct what seems to us to be a credible idol?

. . . I do not have an answer to this question, but I suspect the root of it is this: if we love our own ideology and our own opinion instead of loving our brother [and sister], we will seek only to glorify our ideas and our institutions and by that fact we will make real communication impossible.

I think Bonhoeffer was absolutely right when he said our real task is to bear in ourselves the fury of the world against Christ in order to reconcile the world with Christ.

—*Faith and Violence*

The Thomas Merton Center for Catholic Spiritual Development, P.O. Box 60061, Palo Alto, California 94306, was founded by a group of Roman Catholic lay persons in 1995, and incorporated in 1996, to offer Catholic liturgy; to augment, support and lead the development of ecumenical spirituality; and to foster new ways for Catholics and other Christians to develop a deeper spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ and, through him, with God. From its Catholic roots, it seeks to join with members of other faiths, Christian and non-Christian, to support religious education and spiritual development.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Shoes needed:

If you have any gently used sturdy shoes in your closet that need a new home, the Opportunity Center really needs them! Comfortable sturdy walking shoes are most appreciated. Every day clients ask for shoes but there are none to give. To help alleviate this need, the Human Concerns Committee of the parish is placing a collection box at each church site in November through December. We thank you and are most grateful for your donations.

Year of Mercy ends this week:

Abridged from an article by Fr. John Kartje, Rector and President of Mundelein Seminary, who also serves as Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies. A priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, he holds doctorates in Biblical Studies (Catholic University) and Astrophysics (University of Chicago), combining his passion for faith and science. From yearofmercy.org. The year of mercy ends November 20.

Now that we're nearly through the Year of Mercy, it would be a good idea to have an honest gut-check and ask yourself: "How am I doing?" Does your life feel any more mercy-full? Can you name one or two concrete instances in which you either extended or received mercy in a significant, lasting way? Has the resolve to be merciful gone the way of your last New Year's resolution? In spite of how badly we say we want it, why is it that mercy can be so difficult to extend and receive? Nobody rolls out of bed in the morning and declares that they want to resist the opportunities for mercy that come along that day. So why do we struggle to embrace what we supposedly long for so deeply?

Answering that question requires admitting that the struggle with mercy is, at root, often a struggle with control. Mercy is one of the most powerful agents of freedom. A heart racked by guilt or shame; an unanswered plea for forgiveness or reconciliation; a self-loathing that renders accepting pardon impossible; a resentment or bitterness that we refuse to relinquish—all these instances of mercy resisted or withheld produce souls that are confined and restricted by despair or anxiety. Faced with the potential for such desolation, how could anyone possibly not opt for mercy?

Perhaps the reason can be found in the language of a common mercy idiom: to "hold" a grudge. We "hold on" precisely when we are afraid of losing control and spiraling off into chaos. A grudge, or resentment, or bitterness may not ultimately bring one joy, but it does provide a sense of order and stability: everyone is properly put in their place and there is at least a semblance of control. If I hold you in the grip of guilt or shame, then I always

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Kenyan crafts today: back by popular demand:

Kenya Help will again offer a variety of craft items from Kenya, plus a few homemade items by Gladys Low and Margo McAuliffe. The event will be today—Sunday, November 13—right after our mass until about 11:30.



Margo has found a few new items as well as the things you have loved in the past. Please note this is not a sale. All items are gifts for donations. The

craft display will be outside, weather permitting. Otherwise we'll be in the bride's room at the back of the Thomas House.

Kenya Help is happy to announce that they can now process donations by credit card. Margo would greatly appreciate anyone who would like to help: please call 322-0821 or e-mail margo@kenyahelp.us to volunteer.

Pope Francis' year of mercy prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,

You have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved. Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the adulteress from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: "If you knew the gift of God!"

You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified. You-willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God. Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy, you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.



COMMUNITY NOTES

News Announcements Requests

US bishops' conference to vote on new leadership: A Francis agenda for the US bishops:

Abridged from an article by Dennis Coday, NCR editor, November 7, 2016, at www.ncronline.org.

At their annual fall gathering in Baltimore Nov. 14-16, the U.S. bishops are to elect new leadership of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and observers are watching to see if the winners signal greater or lesser adherence to the agenda of Pope Francis. . . .

The president and vice president are elected to three-year terms. Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., will step down as president at the end of the fall assembly. A simple majority vote elects a president, which traditionally has been the sitting vice president; this year that would be Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston. The vice president then is elected from the remaining nine candidates.

Church historian Massimo Faggioli looks at the slate of candidates and sees "a clear split" with "two kinds of bishops." On the one hand, Faggioli told *NCR*, there are bishops, "like DiNardo and Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia...they express a clear cultural-warrior approach. You have on the other side those who clearly represent the church of Francis, like [Bishop Robert]

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Year of Mercy ends this week, continued:

know who you are: you are the one who insulted me; you are the one who betrayed me; you are the one who embarrassed me—and by withholding mercy I can ensure that you will forever remain that person. Therefore, I have the right to ignore you and shut you out of my life. Then I will be safe. Then I will be free. Except, of course, such "freedom" is entirely ephemeral. It keeps me isolated and locked in a world of frozen relationships. If you offer or accept mercy, then prepare for a wild ride. You will be placing yourself in the hands of another's free will—they may be open or resistant, joyful or angry, contrite or prideful, grateful or scorning. But to enter the world of mercy is to enter the worldview of Christ, in which cheeks are turned, enemies are loved, and seemingly every rule of human nature that was designed to preserve order is cast aside. Take away grace and mercy can present an awfully frightening proposition. But that's the difference the Paschal Mystery makes: the chaos of Good Friday need not devolve into the frozen rage of revenge or hatred. The chaos of evil can transform into the freedom of mercy if one is courageous enough to seek it. If you want mercy, pray for the courage to relinquish control.

*Abridged from an article by Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese, November 3, 2016, at ncronline.com. Fr. Reese is senior analyst for NCR and author of *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*.*

During the second week of November, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops will meet in Baltimore to consider a strategic plan to implement their priorities as a conference. Last November when the bishops set their priorities, some pointed out that those priorities seemed little influenced by the papacy of Pope Francis.

The priorities they selected were:

- Evangelization: Open wide the doors to Christ through missionary discipleship and personal encounter.
- Family and marriage: Encourage and heal families; inspire Catholics to embrace the sacrament of matrimony.
- Human life and dignity: Uphold the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death with special concern for the poor and vulnerable.
- Vocations and ongoing formation: Encourage vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, and provide meaningful ongoing formation to clergy, religious and lay ministers.
- Religious freedom: Promote and defend the freedom to serve, witness and worship, in the U.S. and abroad.

"While I couldn't find any real problem with the five priorities," said Indianapolis Archbishop and Cardinal-designate Joseph Tobin in spring 2015, "I thought that they were quite closely a restatement of the priorities that this body has adopted in the past. And I was concerned that the newness that Pope Francis is bringing to the church universal ... would not be reflected in the priorities."

In other words, there is nothing particularly wrong with these priorities, but they don't sound like they came from Pope Francis. They could have been written before he ever became pope.

Last year, I suggested that a Francis set of priorities would look more like this:

- A poor church for the poor
- The church as a field hospital, a church of mercy and compassion
- The practice of synodality at all levels of the church
- The end of clericalism; the empowerment of the laity
- The promotion of justice and peace and the protection of the environment

Or if the bishops wanted to have priorities in sync with Pope Francis, they could simply list the Francis documents they want to implement in the United States. . . .

US bishops' conference, continued:

McElroy [of San Diego] and the bishop of Santa Fe.”

“Whoever is elected . . . it will send a clear message: This is an episcopate that is sticking to its old playbook or is deciding for dramatic change,” said Faggioli, a professor in religious studies at Villanova University. He added that he thinks a dramatic change “is very unlikely.”

John Gehring, a former bishops' conference staffer and now Catholic program director at the Washington-based advocacy group Faith in Public Life, sees a conference “still wrestling with what the Francis era means for the leadership of the church in the United States.”

“There are bishops who recognize the pope's pastoral approach and priorities are exactly what's needed to begin recalibrating the church's voice in the public square,” said Gehring. “Other bishops seem more comfortable doubling down on an approach that hasn't been successful at inspiring people.”

. . . Faggioli says “It is important to remember that DiNardo was one of those 13 cardinals who signed a letter given to Pope Francis at the synod last year about the handling of the synod. That is on his record.” Faggioli added that it was also DiNardo who, at the U.S. bishops' meeting last year, said the conference could not update its biannual statement on Catholics and electoral participation, a document known as “Faithful Citizenship,” because, DiNardo said, “Ours is a hermeneutic of continuity.”

“I think that puts him squarely on the side of those who don't exactly think that Francis is doing something good for the church,” Faggioli told *NCR*. “I am not against diversity in the church; I am just saying that if you elect one bishop or another to lead the bishops' conference, you expect very different things from them.”

Gehring agreed, but he also sees some risks. “Some of this tension within the conference is natural and healthy, Gehring said. “But bridging these real divides is going to be something the next president of the conference has to tackle.” . . .

Faggioli also said . . . “The church is struggling to understand not just what kind of bishops it needs, but who can do this very difficult job of being a bishop. You have a pool that is going to be redefined by this pontificate, but you don't have that many priests who clearly fit the profile of the bishop for the 21st century. This is a global issue, I think.”

Francis, he said, has created “a radically new job description for bishops,” which is decidedly against an elite clericalism and characterized by the idea of accompanying the people. . . . “Finding candidates that fit that description, Faggioli said, can be difficult. “Francis has to fish for these candidates.” . . .

Reformation anniversary is a chance to move the Church forward:

Abridged from an article by Bill Tammeus, October 26, 2016, at ncronline. Tammeus, a Presbyterian elder, writes the daily “Faith Matters” blog for The Kansas City Star's web site and a column for The Presbyterian Outlook.

A year from now Christians around the world—some with pride, some with sorrow, many with ignorance—will commemorate the start of the Protestant Reformation 500 years ago. Commemorate—not celebrate—should be the goal, given all the pain and divisiveness the Reformation ultimately caused. I'm part of a planning group at my Presbyterian church that already is thinking about how to do this. I hope Catholic parishes will find appropriate ways to mark the occasion, too. . . .

This 500th anniversary offers a good opportunity not just to teach people some important history but also to heal some of the wounds that Catholics and Protestants have both suffered and caused and to look forward. Here are some Reformation-related ideas we're kicking around at my church:

- We may offer classes or programs that explore art and music before and after the Reformation.
- We also may offer classes on the history of Christianity, including the issues Luther raised that led to the Reformation. As part of that we might set up a lecture series on some of the lesser-known reformers, including Luther's wife. . . .
- We hope to find ways to join with a neighboring Catholic parish to share some conversation and, ultimately, to create a ministry partnership of some kind. . . . Our hope is that years from now our congregation still will be in some kind of useful relationship with a Catholic parish that focuses on common goals and that unplugs some of the anti-Catholic and anti-Protestant prejudice that has long harmed us all.

. . . Many Protestants and Catholics know little about the circumstances that led to the Reformation and even less about the Catholic response, which came to be called, first, the Counter-Reformation and later the Catholic Reformation. There's no need to relive all that history, but we need to know enough about it to understand why the body of Christ is so divided today and whether there's any possible path toward reconciliation.

Perhaps the most redemptive activity for both Protestants and Catholics would be for each to create a modern 95 theses list aimed not at the other branch of the faith but at what needs attention in their own church. Self-examination, done with clarity and motivated by a spirit of renewal and forgiveness, can move the church from stagnation and slippage to a place where the Holy Spirit might have more of a chance to change hearts.

That would be a true reformation.