



Second Sunday of Advent

December 4, 2016

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 11:1-10

Romans 15:4-9

Matthew 3:1-12

Next week:

Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10

James 5:7-10

Matthew 11:2-11

Psalm

Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace forever. (*Psalm 72*)

Today

Today's presider is Msgr. John Sandersfeld

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

Thursday, December 8, 7:00 pm

TMC Board, Thomas House

From Thomas Merton

It is important to remember the deep, in some ways anguished seriousness of Advent, when the mendacious celebrations of our marketing culture so easily harmonize with our tendency to regard Christmas, consciously or otherwise, as a return to our own innocence and our own infancy.

But the Church, in preparing us for the birth of a "great prophet," a Savior and a King of Peace, has more in mind than seasonal cheer. The Advent mystery focuses the light of faith upon the very meaning of life, of history, of man, of the world and of our own being. In Advent we celebrate the coming and indeed the *presence* of Christ in our world.

—*Seasons of Celebration*

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

More Kenya crafts to show you:



We are offering a last chance for you to find the perfect gift/treasure among our Kenyan crafts. Not only were many folks not at mass the day we showed them before, but also, I failed to include several popular items, like soapstone dishes and wooden African map puzzles. We will be in the bride's room of the Thomas House from 9:45 to 11:30 on Sunday, December 18. Please join us.—Margo McAuliffe

Rally in King Plaza December 18:

Peninsula Peace and Justice Center, of which the parish is a member, is one of the sponsors of a rally on Sunday, December 18, 2:00 pm, in King Plaza (in front of city hall, 250 Hamilton) to speak to the Trump administration before it takes office—Stop the deportations! No Muslim watch lists! Black Lives Matter! Hands off our health care, Medicare, and Social Security! Confirmed speakers to date are retired Superior Court Judge and former Palo Alto City Council member LaDoris Cordell, and Zahra Billoo, Executive Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), San Francisco Bay Area chapter. Other speakers and rally endorsers are being lined up, and we hope for a big turnout. Please plan to come!

Seton school thank-you next Sunday:

The children and parents of Seton School will be here in the Thomas House after Mass on December 11, selling tamales (the parents) and singing Christmas carols (the children) to us—as a thank you for the continued support of Seton by TMC. TMC members should know that \$1,000 is donated each month as unrestricted funds to Seton School from TMC. This event is the school's thank you to TMC. Do stay that day, and remember to bring some cash to pay for a tamale or two.



Adopt a Family:

The 2016 Adopt-a-Family drive continues today, until all the gift tags are gone. These are for St. Elizabeth Seton students and their families. You can purchase a child's or family's special gift request or purchase a gift certificate from Target (available at most grocery stores now). We are suggesting a \$40 value per gift this year.

If you haven't picked them up, the pictures that you placed on the Altar of Remembrance during November are in a box in the back of church. If you don't pick them up today, we'll call you and remind you!

COMMUNITY NOTES

News Announcements Requests

Human Rights Day—December 10:

Stand up for someone's rights today! Human Rights Day is observed every year on December 10. It commemorates the day on which, in 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This year, Human Rights Day calls on everyone to stand up for someone's rights! Many of us are fearful about the way the world is heading. Disrespect for basic human rights continues to be widespread in all parts of the globe. Extremist movements subject people to horrific violence. Messages of intolerance and hatred prey on our fears. Humane values are under attack. We must reaffirm our common humanity. Where-



continued on page 3

Immigrants face a terrifying future under Trump, and Christians must be there:

By Tracy Kemme, a Sister of Charity of Cincinnati who ministers at the Catholic Social Action Office in Cincinnati and as the Latino Ministry Coordinator at a local parish. Published November 25, 2016, at GlobalSistersReport.org.

What is an immigrant to do now that Donald Trump has been elected? While well-meaning people encourage us to think positively or wait it out, many among us don't have that luxury. The new administration is poised to directly and significantly alter the lives of certain groups of people. My fellow Guatemalan parishioners are in that group, and they're deeply troubled by the promises Trump has made to deport them and to build a wall. . . . Last Sunday, after our bilingual liturgy, I invited our Latino parishioners to gather in the cafeteria for a space of

continued on page 3

Human Rights Day, continued:

ever we are, we can make a real difference—in the street, in school, at work, in public transport; in the voting booth, on social media.

Here is a simplified version of the 30 Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, created by the UN especially for young people but a helpful reminder for all of us.

- 1. We Are All Born Free & Equal.** We are all born free. We all have our own thoughts and ideas. We should all be treated in the same way.
- 2. Don't Discriminate.** These rights belong to everybody, whatever our differences.
- 3. The Right to Life.** We all have the right to life, and to live in freedom and safety.
- 4. No Slavery.** Nobody has any right to make us a slave. We cannot make anyone our slave.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY



- 5. No Torture.** Nobody has any right to hurt us or to torture us.

6. You Have Rights No Matter Where You Go. I am a person just like you!

- 7. We're All Equal Before the**

Law. The law is the same for everyone. It must treat us all fairly.

- 8. Your Human Rights Are Protected by Law.** We can all ask for the law to help us when we are not treated fairly.
- 9. No Unfair Detainment.** Nobody has the right to put us in prison without good reason and keep us there, or to send us away from our country.
- 10. The Right to Trial.** If we are put on trial this should be in public. The people who try us should not let anyone tell them what to do.
- 11. We're Always Innocent Till Proven Guilty.** Nobody should be blamed for doing something until it is proven. When people say we did a bad thing we have the right to show it is not true.
- 12. The Right to Privacy.** Nobody should try to harm our good name. Nobody has the right to come into our home, open our letters, or bother us or our family without a good reason.
- 13. Freedom to Move.** We all have the right to go where we want in our own country and to travel as we wish.
- 14. The Right to Seek a Safe Place to Live.** If we are frightened of being badly treated in our own country, we all have the right to run away to another country to be safe.
- 15. Right to a Nationality.** We all have the right to belong to a country.

Immigrants face a terrifying future, continued:

solidarity in the wake of the election results. About 30 men and women [came]. . . First we prayed together. I gave background information on what to expect from our country's political process over the next few months. Then, I asked if anyone had anything they needed or wanted to share with the group.

. . . Angelica stood up. . . "I was shopping at Kroger on Thursday, minding my own business. Someone I didn't know approached me. They said to me, 'Haha! Trump won; now you have to go back to your country!'"

. . . When Angelica finished, a man in the back row lifted his hand. His name is Andres. "Hermana," he said, "*Yo tengo miedo*. I am scared. I know I'm grown man, but I have to be honest and tell you that I have cried in the last few days." . . . Andres and his wife Cecilia have six kids, four of whom are U.S. citizens. Lying in the dark with his eyes open after Trump's win, Andres' brain raced with heart-wrenching scenarios. He could be deported, or his wife, or their oldest children, or all of them. If just one parent is deported, would the other stay in the U.S. with the children? Would they all go back to Guatemala, allowing the family to be together but severely diminishing the opportunities for and safety of their children? "How would I live?" he uttered in a quivering voice. "I can't imagine our family separated."

The adults aren't the only ones who feel the anxiety. Kids hear what we hear, and they absorb it. On Wednesday morning after the election, our school principal called me at the parish office and asked if I could pop over to the school for a minute. Distressed, she told me, "We have some situations over here with some of our immigrant families and students." Some of the students had come to school upset and confused about what's going to happen to them. They were asking about their parents being deported. And the most unsettling news was that several families had already bought tickets back to Guatemala. . . .

Because Trump has no political experience or policies on the books, it is impossible to look to precedent as a guide for what to expect from his administration. But his anti-immigrant rhetoric and proposed policies have planted terror in the hearts of our immigrant brothers and sisters. Our church demands that we not remain complacent. Unfortunately, I know that it's possible for some to hear these stories and still compartmentalize. Knowing about the suffering of our sisters and brothers isn't enough. People want reasonable, quantifiable answers. I witness it each time I give a presentation about Catholic Social Teaching and immigration. Good-hearted folks ask honest questions that are easy to ask from a comfortable life. *Why don't they just get in line? Why don't they come*

Immigrants face a terrifying future, continued:

legally? I mean, I don't mind immigrants, but I simply want them to follow the rules. Aren't they a drain on our system?

We talk about how complicated the system is, how there isn't a line for most people coming today, how long it would take for these families to come legally, if ever. We talk about our own connections to immigration, how most of us are where we are because someone in our family lineage decided to undertake the journey of migration. We talk about how it could just as easily be us in these dire situations.

"Yes, but my relatives came here legally," I hear. We then talk about the progression of history, how different the world is now, how the immigrants of today often come the same way that our ancestors did, but there weren't immigration laws then. There was a Statue of Liberty with arms open. We talk about how these people are coming because of similar push factors to our ancestors—poverty, hunger, war—but that in many cases the destitution and danger are even more extreme now. We talk economics. We explore how undocumented immigrants can't receive government benefits but do pay taxes. We talk about how they work long hours for unfair pay at thankless jobs that sustain our way of life. We talk religion. We discuss the deep spirituality of our Latino community members and how they are revitalizing the United States Catholic church.

Most people leave my immigration presentations with a new perspective. There are a lot of angles to take, and all of them point to the beneficial presence of immigrants. But if we are looking at immigration through a Christian lens—none of that should matter. Being a Christian is never about "what's in it for me." Being a Christian is never about fairness in the worldly sense of the world. It's not about security or suspicion or selfishness. It's about loving one another. These are people's lives that we're talking about. If we are comprehensively pro-life, we should care.

As we enter the Advent season, I am keenly aware that our immigrant families are living in a space of waiting, but not in joyful hope; they wait in dread at the prospect of forced radical life changes, a return to danger and poverty, and prolonged family separation — that could last years. If our own Advent journey is to be authentic, we must let their pain disturb us. We cannot blissfully sing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" and ignore the Christ who is here and suffering. The Jesus we long for this Advent is in our midst, in the faces of Angelica, Andres, and millions more. As they are forced to wait in this new era of Trump, we must not. As Christians, we need to let them know they're not alone and work tirelessly so that what they dread does not become reality.

Loving God, be with us as we light the second candle of our Advent wreath. Its flame reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world. Prepare our hearts to welcome him with joy.

As we look forward to Christmas, help us to keep our focus on Jesus. Do not let us get so caught up in activities that we forget about Jesus.

Help us always to remember what Christmas is all about: Jesus, Our Savior. Send your Holy Spirit to fill us with the gift of wisdom. Amen.



What do Muslims think of Jesus?

Abridged from an article by Marianne Farina, CSC, a professor at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology in Berkeley, published in the September 2016 issue of U.S. Catholic and at www.uscatholic.org.

... The Quran mentions Jesus, or *Isa*, 25 times, but differently each time. The Quran explains that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary and is "high honored in this and the next world." Thus, he is called Jesus son of Mary. The Quran also refers to him as "Spirit from God," "the Messiah—someone blessed by God," "Word from/of God," and Prophet-Messenger of God.

Muslims believe that Jesus was a prophet who was given a special message—*injl*, or the gospel—to convey to all people. This message both confirmed what was taught in the Torah and foretold the coming of Prophet Muhammad. Thus, Jesus has a vital and unique role to play in the Muslim faith. However, while Muslims accept that Jesus was a servant, teacher, and lover of God's Word, they do not believe that he was divine or the son of God. The Quran describes the miracles Jesus performed, such as healing the sick and raising the dead, but does not ascribe these miracles to his divinity. Instead, Jesus is a sign to all humankind of God's endless mercy.

Muslims do not believe in original sin. They see no need for a savior and, moreover, do not believe in Jesus' crucifixion. . . . Like Christians, Muslims believe that Jesus will return. Islamic texts say that Jesus will come back on the Day of Judgment, when he will destroy the *ad-dajjal*—anti-Christ or imposter.

Throughout history and today many Islamic thinkers have used Jesus as an important religious model. . . . Mahmoud Ayoub, a modern Islamic theologian, has developed an Islamic Christology that explores how Jesus exemplifies the fulfillment of humanity by being fully illuminated by God's light (*tajalli*). Of course Islamic thought on Jesus differs from Christian teachings. But we also share many common beliefs: the virgin birth of Jesus to Mary, profound respect for the mystery of God, love for Jesus, and a willingness to learn from his life as we seek happiness with God. Perhaps here is an opening for a productive conversation between our faiths.