



# 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 1, 2017

## Readings

*This week:*

Ezekiel 18:25-28

Philippians 2:1-11

Matthew 21:28-32

*Next week:*

Isaiah 5:1-7

Philippians 4:6-9

Matthew 21:33-43

## Psalm

Remember your mercies, O Lord. (*Psalm 25*)

## 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

No meetings this week.

## From Thomas Merton

We are living under a tyranny of untruth which confirms itself in power and establishes a more and more total control over [people] in proportion as they convince themselves they are resisting error. . . . The basic falsehood is the lie that we are totally dedicated to truth, and that we can remain dedicated to truth in a manner than is at the same time honest and exclusive: that we have the monopoly of all truth. . . .

We then convince ourselves that we cannot preserve our purity of vision and our inner sincerity if we enter into dialogue with the enemy. . . . The adversary, of course, has exactly the same thoughts about us and exactly the same basic policy by which he defends the "truth." He has identified us with dishonesty, insincerity, and untruth. He believes that, if we are destroyed, nothing will be left but truth.

—*Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*

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 NOTES

*News Announcements Requests*

## ***Crop hunger walk:***

A St. Thomas Aquinas Parish team has been created to support the Crop Hunger Walk on Sunday, October 8 at Nealon Park, 800 Middle Ave., Menlo Park. Walk with us, make a donation or both! Festivities begin at 1:00 pm; and walks start at 2:00 pm. Walkers may choose a .6-mile, 2-mile or 5-mile walk and enjoy live bands, food, and games. Thanks to our parishioners who raised \$1,140 last year!

Crop Hunger Walk is sponsored by Church World Service, a cooperative ministry of 37 Christian denominations. Over 5 million walkers have participated in more than 36,000 walks in the last two decades alone. This ecumenical effort helps to provide food and water, as well as resources that empower people to meet their own needs. From seeds and tools, to wells and water systems, to technical training and micro-enterprise loans, the key is people working together to identify their own needs. One-quarter of funds raised by us will be contributed to the Ecumenical Hunger Program in East Palo Alto for distribution to the needy in our local community. For information, please call Paul Chestnut, Human Concerns Committee, (650) 426-8499 or email [pcchestnut@comcast.net](mailto:pcchestnut@comcast.net). Website to register for the walk and donate is <https://www.crophungerwalk.org/menloparkca>.

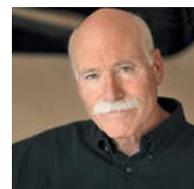
## ***Benefit for SES School October 11:***

On Wednesday, October 11, St. Elizabeth Seton School presents Ron Hansen and Tobias Wolff in conversation.



Hansen is a Catholic novelist, essayist, and deacon. He is the Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ, Professor in Arts and Humanities at Santa Clara University, where he teaches fiction and screenwriting. Wolff teaches English and creative writing at Stanford University. His first short story collection is *In the*

*Garden of the North American Martyrs*, and his book *This Boy's Life* became a feature film starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert De Niro, and Ellen Barkin.



The event will be at St. Elizabeth Seton School, 1095 Channing Avenue, beginning at 6:30 with a welcoming wine reception, and ending at about 8:30 pm.

Tickets are \$35 for adults and \$20 for students and Seton alums. Purchase tickets on-line at [www.setonpaloalto.org](http://www.setonpaloalto.org) or [brownpapertickets.org](http://brownpapertickets.org). Contact Carmel Caligaris for answers: (650) 326-1258 or [carmelcaligaris@setonpaloalto.org](mailto:carmelcaligaris@setonpaloalto.org).

# COMMUNITY FORUM

*Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns*

## ***A chance for better liturgical language:***

*By Jessie Bazan, September 11, 2017, at [uscatholic.org](http://uscatholic.org). Jessie Bazan, M.Div., serves as Outreach Coordinator for Saint John's Abbey Vocations and Youth Formation Minister at Pax Christi Catholic Community in Minnesota.*

In her poem, "Mysteries, Yes," Mary Oliver begins, "Truly, we live with mysteries too marvelous to be understood." How grass nourishes animals, how gravity holds down rocks, how a single touch can spark a forever connection, she writes, is all mystery. If I could take a little liberty with the great poet's work, I would add *God* to her list. Our triune God is the ultimate mystery of the Christian faith. Who is this God who was in being before time itself? Who can be both fully divine and fully human at the same time? Whose Spirit transcends the bounds of heaven and earth to guide the church yesterday, today, and all the days to come?

Our mysterious God is big beyond measure. The lan-

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## ***Saint Francis of Assisi's feast is October 4:***

*Abridged from an article by Robert Ellsberg, author of The Franciscan Saints, at [www.franciscanmedia.org](http://www.franciscanmedia.org).*

Francis of Assisi was a poor little man who astounded and inspired the Church by taking the gospel literally—not in a narrow fundamentalist sense, but by actually following all that Jesus said and did, joyfully, without limit, and without a sense of self-importance.

Serious illness brought the young Francis to see the emptiness of his frolicking life as leader of Assisi's youth. Prayer—lengthy and difficult—led him to a self-emptying like that of Christ, climaxed by embracing a leper he met on the road. It symbolized his complete obedience to what he had heard in prayer: "Francis! Everything you have loved and desired in the flesh it is your duty to despise and hate, if you wish to know my will. And when you have begun this, all that now seems sweet and lovely to you will become intolerable and bitter, but

continued on page 4

## ***We need to rally around the forgotten Americans of Puerto Rico:***

*Abridged from an editorial, September 25, 2017, at america-magazine.org.*

The island of Puerto Rico, home to 3.4 million citizens of the United States, remains almost entirely without electricity and telecommunications and is coping with severe shortages of food and drinkable water almost a week after being hit by Hurricane Maria. But that communications blackout is no excuse for the island's virtual absence from news coverage over the past weekend, when mainland newspapers and television were more focused on



football and the latest incendiary tweets by President Trump.

The miseries wrought by Hurricane Maria are not dissipating soon. It is expected to take months to restore power, and on Monday The New York Times reported that the hurricane has wiped out crops on the island. "There is no more agriculture in Puerto Rico," said one farmer. "And there won't be any for a year or longer." If this kind of devastation happened on the mainland, the congressional delegation from the affected states would be all over cable-news channels, making sure all of us were aware of the needs of their constituents and pressuring the president and the Senate and House leadership to take immediate action—perhaps by using the leverage of their votes on important pieces of legislation. But Puerto Rico has no representation in Congress.

And if Hurricane Harvey had done as much damage to Houston as Hurricane Maria has done to Puerto Rico, a week after landfall there would still be round-the-clock news coverage. But few major news organizations ordinarily have a full-time presence on the island, and reports from local journalists have been hampered by a continued lack of cellphone and wi-fi service.

Over the weekend, it became distressingly apparent that many U.S. voters need to be reminded that the residents of Puerto Rico are full American citizens. That means they are entitled to the same response from the federal government as the citizens of New York or Kansas would be if they were visited by a natural disaster on the scale of Hurricane Maria. Although the United States has long benefited from the geographical reach they provide, its strategic "possessions," including Puerto Rico, Guam and other territories, have been taken for granted and denied full political representation. Hurricane Maria is a reminder that this two-tiered system of American citizenship is neither democratic nor tenable.

## ***Who are we? Hate and love in America:***

*Abridged from an article by Jim Wallis, September 14, 2017, at sojo.net.*

I was on a plane last week with a resident of Houston who could hardly convey the devastation he saw in his city. More than 50 inches of rain and unprecedented flooding killed 66 Houstonians, displaced 30,000 people, and devastated 100,000 homes (only 10% insured for flooding), costing the city almost \$200 billion in damages. Seventeen thousand people had to be rescued. But in an article this week at HuffPost, Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner and Dr. David Anderson observe:

Yet, the power of God's unconditional love was undeniably evident as people of diverse races and backgrounds risked their lives to save, comfort, and shelter one another. No citizen, who voluntarily used his or her own boat, first asked the race or religion of the person they rescued. Blacks, Whites, Latinos, Asians, Jews, Muslims, Christians, and people of every social background, endangered their lives without a moment's hesitation, to rescue whoever needed to be saved.

These African-American church leaders pointedly ask, "Does America have to be hit in the gut with a catastrophic disaster like 9/11, Hurricane Sandy, Hurricane Harvey, or, more recently Hurricane Irma, for love to unconditionally surpass hate?"

The remarkably human and loving response to imperiled neighbors in Houston stands in stark contrast against the hateful racial ugliness that paraded through the streets of Charlottesville earlier in the month as angry white supremacists—KKK, Neo Nazis, "alt-right" members—marched publicly and proudly without sheets shouting anti-black and anti-Semitic assaults, and ultimately led to the death of Heather Heyer.

... I read a story about a top mixed-martial arts heavy-weight fighter—Derrick Lewis, who is black—rescuing a white couple in spite of the fact that the husband insisted on bringing his Confederate flag with him. The way Lewis tells it:

I picked up one guy and his family, his wife—he just kept apologizing to me, because all he really had was his clothes, and he wanted to take his Confederate flag," Lewis said. "He wanted to take that with him, and he just apologized and said, 'Man, I'll sit in the back of your truck, man. I don't want to have my flag inside of your truck like this.' I said, 'Man, I'm not worried about that.' ... His wife kept hitting him and saying, 'You should have just left it.'

The rescue and recovery efforts revealed the love that is possible between us as human beings—even across the racial lines that are dividing our nation in such volatile ways. It showed how neighbors can help each other when they are all in danger.

... If we say we believe that love can overcome hate, we need to *show* that we believe it by what we are willing to say and do. ...

## *A chance for better liturgical language, continued:*

guage we use to talk about God should reflect God's great depth. This weekend, Pope Francis gave local bishops conferences greater say over the language used during Mass in an apostolic letter issued *motu proprio* (on his own initiative) titled "Magnum Principium." The work of translating liturgical texts will shift from Rome to local conferences. I hope the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops will consider putting forth a Mass text with language that better reflects God's deep mystery. I feel frustrated when I hear God referred to as "He" over and over in Roman Catholic liturgies. As a woman who believes I am made in the image of God, I struggle to connect with lines like "... for the praise and glory of *his* name, for our good and the good of all *his* holy Church." During Mass this weekend, I counted more than 20 uses of masculine language for God. This does not include the times "men" is used to describe humanity. I did not hear any feminine language.

I am not advocating for ridding all masculine images of God from the Mass. Jesus Christ in his humanity was a man. (He was also Word Made Flesh, Light of the World, etc.) Additionally, many people like thinking of God as "Father." It is a title found throughout Scripture and often said while making the sign of the cross. People experience God in countless ways. I hope any forthcoming liturgical translation recognizes this, too. In Scripture alone, God is described as a woman giving birth (Deuteronomy 32:18), a comforting mother (Isaiah 66:13), and even as a mother hen (Matthew 23:37). God is called "Creator" in Genesis. The psalmists name God as "light" (27:1), "helper" (30:10), and "exceeding joy" (43:4). The list goes on and on. Mystery sparks creativity. Our mysterious God is endlessly knowable, and thus, endlessly nameable. I think liturgy, as the work of the people, should reflect the diversity of our images of God.

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Please remember in your prayers this week: Denise Alongi, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Mary Connors, Ken Dias, Fr. Thierry Geris, Deonna Gill, Emily Gill, Joanne Hasegawa, Dick Jackman, François Jamati, Michael Kiriti, Hunter Kubit, Fr. Lavagetto's mother, Deacon Ysidro and Dolores Madrigal, Mary Rose McGuire, Maureen Mooney, Hayden Pastorini, Paul Prochaska, Anne Rush, Priya Smith, Bernice Sullivan, Jean Vistica, Dolores Walsh, Kay Williams, and T.J. Wooten.

## *Francis of Assisi, continued:*

all that you used to avoid will turn itself to great sweetness and exceeding joy."

From the cross in the neglected field-chapel of San Damiano, Christ told him, "Francis, go out and build up my house, for it is nearly falling down." Francis became the totally poor and humble workman. He must have suspected a deeper meaning to "build up my house." But he would have been content to be for the rest of his life the poor "nothing" man actually putting brick on brick in abandoned chapels. He gave up all his possessions, piling even his clothes before his earthly father—who was demanding restitution for Francis' "gifts" to the poor—so that he would be totally free to say, "Our Fa-



ther in heaven." He was, for a time, considered to be a religious fanatic, begging from door to door when he could not get money for his work, evoking sadness or disgust to the hearts of his former friends, ridicule from the unthinking.

But genuineness will tell. A few people began to realize that this man was actually trying to be Christian. He really believed what Jesus said: "Announce the kingdom! Possess no gold or silver or copper in your purses, no traveling bag, no sandals, no staff" (Luke 9:1-3).

... Francis was torn between a life devoted entirely to prayer and a life of active preaching of the Good News. He decided in favor of the latter, but always returned to solitude when he could. He wanted to be a missionary in Syria or in Africa, but was prevented by shipwreck and illness in both cases. He did try to convert the sultan of Egypt during the Fifth Crusade.

During the last years of his relatively short life (he died at 44), Francis was half blind and seriously ill. Two years before his death he received the stigmata, the real and painful wounds of Christ, in his hands, feet and side. Francis of Assisi was poor only that he might be Christ-like. He recognized creation as another manifestation of the beauty of God. In 1979, he was named patron of ecology. He did great penance—apologizing to "Brother Body" later in life—that he might be totally disciplined for the will of God. Francis' poverty had a sister, Humility, by which he meant total dependence on the good God. But all this was, as it were, preliminary to the heart of his spirituality: living the gospel life, summed up in the charity of Jesus and perfectly expressed in the Eucharist.