



Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

November 26, 2017

Readings

This week:

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17
1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28
Matthew 25:31-46

Next week:

Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:33-37

Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. (*Psalm 23*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. Jack Izzo.

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

Saturday, December 2, 9:00-12:00

Retreat with Fr. Kevin Ballard at St. Albert Hospitality Center (see article on next page)

From Thomas Merton

There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence to which the idealist fighting for peace by nonviolent methods most easily succumbs: activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence. More than that, it is cooperation in violence. The frenzy of the activist neutralizes one's work for peace. It destroys one's inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of one's work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful

—*Peacemaking: Day by Day*

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

Adopt-a-Family is back:

Again this Sunday we will have more tags available after Mass for our Adopt-a-Family Christmas program. We have tags for specific gifts and gift certificates for members of Seton School families. You can pick up a tag or two for a \$40 gift to help make someone's Christmas special. This is not connected with the tree we usually have in the back of church. Thanks for you generosity.

—Barbara Kent

Workshop on Thomas Merton:

Brother Don Bisson, FMS, will be leading a conference on *Thomas Merton: A Prophet for Our Times* on January 13-14 at Mercy Center in Burlingame. Bisson, a Marist



brother based in New York, has graduate degrees in liturgy, spirituality, and transpersonal psychology, and a D. Min. from the Pacific School of Religion in the area of Spiritual Direction and Jungian Psychology, and he is widely respected as a commentator and workshop leader on the interrelationship of spirituality and psychology. He will study Thomas

Merton's writings, messages, and prophetic vision for our times.

You can register at www.mercy-center.org or by calling (650) 340-7474. Registration deadline is January 6, 2018. Cost is \$195 for overnight guests or \$120 for commuters. Bisson is also leading two other retreats at Mercy Center: *Men's Issues in Spiritual Direction*, on Saturday, January 6, and *Dreamworks as Spiritual Practice* on Sunday, January 7.

Stamp out hunger:

During the month of November, we ask you to be especially generous in your giving to our food collection program. Since most of the people we help are homeless, we ask for foods that are portable and highly nutritious: hearty soups or chili in flip-top cans, Vienna sausage, boxes of crackers packed in 'small stacks,' fruit cups, granola bars, juice pouches, and small bottles of water.

Request from the Dietrichs:

As many of you know, Pat is home after a stay at Webster House Medical Center after a fall. Pat and Fred have expressed how much they would like an occasional home-cooked meal. If you can help out with this request, you can call the Dietrichs to make arrangements at (650) 856-2048.

Fr. Ballard leads morning retreat on Saturday:

The TMC Spiritual Education Committee is sponsoring a



morning retreat with Fr. Kevin Ballard, SJ, on Saturday, December 2, 9:00 am-12:00 noon, at St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center.

Fr. Ballard will lead us in a consideration of Pope Francis's encyclical, *The Joy of the Gospel*, with the emphasis on "joy." So come prepared for a

few short hours of joyous prayer, laughter, and community.

Coffee and morning wake-up snacks will be provided.

There is no fee for this event, but donations are always gratefully received.

This is the last Sunday of the month, so the bulletin includes an envelope for your monthly donation to the Thomas Merton Center. We rely on your support to keep this Mass and our programs going!

Kenya Help craft sale on December 10:

Kenya Help will be back one more time with Kenyan crafts. We have some new items, as well as old favorites. If you missed something at our last event, join us after Mass, in the bride's room in the Thomas House, on Sunday, December 10. We and all of our Kenyan friends so appreciate the support given by the Merton Community over the years. Thank you!

—Margo McAuliffe

Politics and religion talk:

On November 28, 7:00 to 8:30 pm at St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center, Dan Baer will explore the intersection of politics and religion, what is meant by each, and the ways in which one influences the other. Dan currently serves as Department Chair of Religious Studies at Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory in San Francisco. He earned an MA in Systematic Theology from Saint Louis University in 2003.

Dan always gives a thought-provoking, and sometimes controversial presentation. Expect numerous anecdotes and historical examples to bring the exploration of these fundamental dimensions of human experience to life. He is an excellent speaker and we are happy to have him join us again this year. By the way, he is also parishioners Ted and Becky Baer's son.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Prayer as both gift and task:

Abridged from an article by Susan Rose Francois, a member of the Congregation Leadership Team for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, at ncronline.org. She was a Bernardin scholar at Catholic Theological Union and has ministered as a justice educator and advocate.

Prayer is getting a bit of a bum rap these days, at least when it is tagged on to the end of the platitude most often employed in the face of senseless disaster and heart-wrenching tragedy—"thoughts and prayers." In the wake of the avalanche of natural and human-caused disasters over the past few weeks, the U.S. news and social media have been filled with "thoughts and prayers" for the victims of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Juan, Maria and Nate. Thoughts and prayers in response to the devastation wreaked by fires in the Columbia River Gorge and now Sonoma and Napa counties. Thoughts and prayers for the innocent lives lost in Las Vegas to gun violence.

...Some elected officials and political appointees offer thoughts and prayers for lives uprooted by a seemingly unprecedented season of hurricanes, and then, in the next stroke of the pen, revoke clean energy policies which seek to reduce the human-induced factors contributing to climate change and extreme weather. Then there are the thoughts and prayers for Puerto Rico, without corresponding efforts to reduce the debilitating lingering effects of racism and colonialism that severely limit relief and rebuilding efforts for these American citizens.

...Thoughts and prayers have been entered into the Congressional record more than 4,000 times since 1995, which adds up to approximately one offering of thoughts and prayers for each work day in Congress.

Clearly, thoughts and prayers are not enough in response to times such as these, but I hope (and pray!) this does not lead us to dismiss the transformative power of prayer. You see, I firmly believe that offering thoughts and prayers is a natural and honest response to tragedy, grounded in our vulnerability as a human community. It gives us an opportunity to pause, reflect and tap into some power beyond ourselves. Sharing our thoughts and prayers with people of good will, no matter their faith or

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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.

How to own up to white privilege:

Abridged from an article by Kevin P. Considine, at us-catholic.org. Considine is an assistant professor of theology at Calumet College of St. Joseph in Indiana.

My high school was predominantly white, as was my teenage circle of friends. Within this context, the term *white privilege* had no meaning; economic class was the most common social difference I noticed.

During this time, I understood racism only as personal prejudice and hatred toward someone with a different skin color. One guy in my group of friends, for example, was racist in this way. When I drove him home one night after a party, he let loose a tirade against African Americans, and I immediately smacked him across the face. I told him, "You gotta stop that stuff, you're better than that." My violent reaction may have shocked him, but I felt that he had to learn. He was ignorant.

Years later, after graduating college and moving to the West Coast, I worked for a nonprofit agency that provided counseling and youth development services to underprivileged youth and families. One day I held the door for an older African American man and greeted him by saying, "How're you doing, man?" He stopped in his tracks, visibly upset, and replied, "What did you just say?" The smile fell from my face. I stuttered an apology, but I was confused as to why he was upset.

With my greeting, I thought I was blending in with the relaxed style of the West Coast. What I failed to understand was that my greeting had been an insult. The term *man*, which I thought everyone used was a derogatory term in this encounter. I realized years later that it was too close to *boy*, *uncle*, and worse forms of address to which countless black men have been subjected for centuries by whites. My white ignorance led to unintended harm. I had to learn. I was ignorant.

These are two small examples of white racism. Both are ignorant and both are dehumanizing. This was part of my journey into realizing that white racism and white privilege are not always blatant. But they always are there.

In the aftermath of Charlottesville and as the pressure rises to finally dismantle confederate monuments, I think it is helpful to remember that although the neo-Nazis and white nationalists are dangerous and wrong, they themselves are not the root of our nation's problem. Rather they are the most blatant symptoms of a much deeper infection, just like bloody diarrhea is not the primary cause of an ill person's sickness, but merely a symptom. In this case, the violence in Charlottesville is but a symp-

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Prayer as both gift and task, continued:

creed, draws us together and counters the isolating effects of violence and suffering.

. . . Thoughts and prayers are good, but they are not enough. If our intention is merely to send good energy into the world, that is not necessarily a bad thing. But I also have to ask myself, if that is all that I am intending, am I letting myself off the hook? Am I simply waiting, hands open, for the gift of God's peace, without being willing to get my hands dirty and take up the tasks that are mine to do, in light of my prayer and in response to God's love? Does transformation only take place out there, outside of myself, or am I also praying that I will be transformed?

These are big questions, without simple answers. Part of the challenge is our understanding of and relationship with God. This is especially true in the messy bits of human life, those most vulnerable and powerless moments when the existence of a puppet-master God, waiting for us to say just the right words in prayer, would be very helpful indeed.

. . . When my mother passed away, I could no longer pray. This was a dry time for me spiritually, and yet also a deeply transformative one. Simply put, I was very angry at God. I found solace in the Psalms, especially the ones with a lot of detailed and juicy complaining and questioning, the angrier the better. One day, a wise priest friend of mine helped me to realize that anger is a very intimate emotion. It sounds strange to read these words aloud, but in my sheer anger with God, I grew closer to the source of everything that is good. This was pure gift, and it moved me to action.

The five-second conclusion of this story is that in the months after we buried Mom, I found myself drawn even more to the work of justice and peace. I sought to alleviate suffering in my little corner of the world. I made connections with others who burned with the same desire. Before I knew it, I began to explore the crazy idea that I might have a religious vocation.

What is it they say about being careful what you pray for? Here I was praying for an end to suffering, and I found myself called to do whatever I could to do just that. God is present through it all, the moments of sunshine and light as well as the times of heartbreak and sorrow. Perhaps the questions we need to ask ourselves honestly are these: Are we present to God and others through the heartbreak and sorrow? We can simply shrug our shoulders and offer our thoughts and prayers, or we can dig in and roll up our sleeves, doing that which is ours to do. We can pray to be transformed, so that our prayer leads to action, while our action leads us to pray.

How to own up to white privilege, continued:

tom of the deeper infection of an ideology of white supremacy, rooted in the "original sins" of our nation—genocide, chattel slavery, and violent conquest. In this case, "white supremacy" does not refer merely to the KKK and others of their ilk. Rather, it's the social observation, made for centuries by figures such as Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Kelly Brown-Douglas, that it is white Anglo-Saxons who have raised their culture to the pinnacle of defining what is beautiful, good, true, holy, and socially accepted. For me, it took many years to begin to understand the breadth and depth of racial injustice and suffering in this nation. Racism is more structural than personal and white privilege is a social fact, albeit distributed in varying degrees. Obviously, "race" has no biological basis. But that doesn't mean it doesn't matter. It matters much more than I used to think it did. Being born into a white social location confers advantages that are not offered in the same way, if at all, to those born in a different racialized location.

. . . I have listened to an overwhelming number of personal stories by African American colleagues attesting to the realities of police brutality, daily racist encounters with coworkers, and the lack of access to decent jobs, safe and affordable housing, decent healthcare, or even a grocery store that sells fruits and vegetables. This experience contrasts radically with my understanding of God as pure life and positivity; God is the One who possesses and wields the creative power of life, redemption, and recreation of all humanity.

. . . My contrast experiences with racism and white privilege are uncomfortable, strange, and even painful. Especially as I realize that both my former friend's explicit personal racism and my own white ignorance were cut from the same cloth. To paraphrase one of Dr. King's insights, the largest obstacle to racial justice is not necessarily the white nationalist or the Ku Klux Klanner but rather the well-meaning white person who remains uncommitted and indifferent in the face of injustice. Or willfully ignorant and unwilling to learn. Kind of like me.

. . . Privilege cannot be fully renounced. It is conferred through an invisible social contract that is larger than my own ability to renounce, even though I desire to do so. Instead, I ask for God's guidance in ways to subvert and reorient privilege so that it may benefit others who have not been conferred such privileges. . . . And, as a member of Christ's wounded and resilient body, I am emboldened to build community to resist evil and work for justice, healing, and a "beloved community."