



Third Sunday of Advent

December 17, 2017

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 61:1–2a, 10–11

1 Thessalonians 5:16–24

John 1:6–8, 19–28

Next week:

2 Samuel 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16

Romans 16:25–27

Luke 1:26–38

Psalm

My soul shalt exult in my God. (*Psalm 61*)

Today

Today's presider is Rev. 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, Waverley and Homer Streets, Palo Alto. Members of the Thomas Merton community participate in planning 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, there are return envelopes in the bulletin on the last Sunday of each month for your convenience (donations by check or cash are welcome). The donation basket is in the back of church after Mass or available by the coffeepot after Mass—or you can use the envelope to mail your donation. **Please do not put your TMC envelope in the collection baskets passed during Mass (these are for parish contributions only).**

Calendar

Monday, December 19, 7:00 pm.

TMC Spiritual Education Committee, Thomas House

Sunday, December 24, 6:00 pm

Christmas Eve Mass (no 8:45 am Mass today)

From Thomas Merton

The certainty of Christian hope lies beyond passion and beyond knowledge. Therefore, we must sometimes expect our hope to come in conflict with darkness, desperation and ignorance. Therefore, too, we must remember that Christian optimism is not a perpetual sense of euphoria, an indefectible comfort in whose experience neither anguish nor tragedy can possibly exist.

We must not strive to maintain a climate of optimism by the mere suppression of tragic realities. Christian optimism lies in a hope of victory that transcends all tragedy: a victory in which we pass beyond tragedy to glory with Christ crucified and risen.

—*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 NOTES

News Announcements Requests

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses:

The 2017 calendar has the 4th Sunday of Advent on December 24. **The 8:45 am December 24 Mass will not be held. The Christmas Eve Mass will start at 6:00 p.m. on December 24 here at STA.** You are encouraged to attend Mass in the morning at one of the other STA parish Masses: 7:30 am, 10:30 am, 12:00 noon.

On Christmas Day, there will be no 8:45 a.m. Mass at STA. There will be Mass at 7:30, 10:30, and noon.

Merton Conference with Don Bisson at Mercy Center in January:

A conference titled "Thomas Merton: A Prophet for Our Times" with Brother Don Bisson, FMS, is now accepting registrations for January 13-14, 2018, at Mercy Center, 2300 Adeline Drive, Burlingame.

The conference will study Thomas Merton's writings, messages, and prophetic vision for our times.

We are living in a time of political chaos and a regression on many of the issues of the 1960s. By staying with Merton's own words, we will be challenged, in this new generation, to face racism, violence, political shadows, and war.

Come and create a spiritual community, to engage our world in the light of wisdom.



Don Bisson, FMS is a spiritual director, trainer, and supervisor of directors, who is widely respected as a commentator and workshop leader on the interrelationship of spirituality and psychology. A Marist brother based in New York, he 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.

For more information, go to www.donbisson.org. Register on the website at www.mercy-center.org or by calling 650-340-7474. Registration deadline is January 6, 2018. The program begins Saturday, January 13 at 9:30 a.m. and concludes Sunday with lunch. Cost: \$195/\$120 commuter.

Help our friends in need:

During the month of December, 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. Put your offerings in the basket behind the last pew as you enter the church.

Altar flowers are welcome:

Help create the beautiful Christmas altar with a contribution of flowers: potted poinsettias, azaleas, or cyclamen are all welcome, especially in white. Either bring your chosen specimen to the church next Friday, December 22, at 9:00 a.m., or leave a check in the basket at the rear of the church today, made out to TMC, with "Christmas flowers" in the memo line. The 8:45 Mass Liturgy team will buy the flowers, augmenting those provided by the parish. And if you can join in the decorating activity itself, please join the team in the church here at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, December 22. You will be kept busy for a couple of hours (or for whatever time you can give)!

Kenya Help thanks:

Kenya Help wishes to thank the members of the Merton Center for their enthusiastic support of our craft event on December 10.

Your donations for crafts were enough to send 3 students to St. Francis Secondary School for Girls (built with donations to Kenya Help) for a whole year. This includes tuition, room and board!

Many of you make individual donations as well. In fact, our TMC friends are among our major supporters.

Margo still has some crafts available for shopping in her garage! If you need a last minute item that's sure to please, call her at 650 322-0821. She'll find a time for you to browse through the remaining treasures.

Please join us after Mass in the Thomas House for coffee and donuts. We especially encourage newcomers or those passing through town to stop by for food and fellowship.

PRAY FOR US: Please remember in your prayers this week Denise Alongi, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Mary Connors, Mike Cummings, Wayne Cummings, Ken Dias, Pat Dietrich, Fr. Thierry Geris, Deonna Gill, Emily Gill, Joanne Hasegawa, Fr. John Hester, Dean Judd, Hunter Kubit, Dick Jackman, Edna and François Jamati, Alicia Kot, Fr. Bill Leininger, Andre and Alyssa Lippard, 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. [Add or subtract names by e-mailing Bulletin editors: Michelle Hogan, Kay Williams. See listings adjacent.]

Board: Vicki Sullivan, vickisullivan@comcast.net, (650) 327-5339

Bulletin: Kay Williams (Dec. 17 & 31) kaywill@pacbell.net

Michelle Hogan (Dec. 24) myhogan@comcast.net

Finance: Helena Wee, 650-323-7987, shhwee@aol.com

Hospitality: Jim Davis, 328-2584

Liturgy: John Arnold, 325-1421, jsaoso@comcast.net

Sally Benson, 408-972-5843, sallymbenson@gmail.com

Membership: Kay Williams, 650-270-4188, kaywill@pacbell.net

Needs Net: Roberta Kehret, 650-494-1488, robkehr@yahoo.com

Adult Education: Jim Davis, 650-704-8002, Jim_Davis@pacbell.net

Mary Coady, 650-261-9155, coady_94025@yahoo.com

SpeakOut: Diana Diamond, 650-323-4787, dianaldiamond@gmail.com

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Pope urges us to go to Mass on Sunday:

[By Carol Glatz, *Catholic News Service*, Dec. 13, 2017]

Just like a plant needs sun and nourishment to survive, every Christian needs the light of Sunday and the sustenance of the Eucharist to truly live, Pope Francis said.

"How can we carry out the Gospel without drawing the energy needed to do it, one Sunday after another, from the limitless source of the Eucharist," he said Dec. 13 during his weekly general audience.

"We don't go to Mass to give something to God, but to receive from him that which we truly need," the pope said. Sunday Mass is the time and place Christians receive the grace and strength to remain faithful to his word, follow his commandment to love others and be credible witnesses in the world.

The pope continued his series of audience talks on the Mass in the Vatican's Paul VI hall, which was decorated with a large Christmas tree and a life-sized Nativity scene. A number of people in the audience hall handed the pope -- who turns 81 Dec. 17 -- Christmas cards, notes and a chocolate cake.

In his catechesis, the pope responded to the question of why it is so important to go to Mass on Sundays and why it is not enough just to live a moral life, loving others.

Sunday Mass is not simply an obligation, he said. "We Christians need to take part in Sunday Mass because only with the grace of Jesus, with his presence alive in us and among us, can we put into practice his commandment and, in this way, be his credible witnesses."

"Just like a plant needs the sun and nourishment to live, every Christian needs the Sunday Eucharist to truly live," he said in summarized remarks to Arabic speakers.

"What kind of Sunday is it for a Christian if an encounter with the Lord is missing?" he asked in his main talk.

Unfortunately, in many secularized countries, the Christian meaning of the day has been lost and is no longer "illuminated by the Eucharist" or lived as a joyous feast in communion with other parishioners and in solidarity with others, he said. Also often missing is the importance of Sunday as a day of rest, which is a sign of the dignity of living as children of God, not slaves, he said.

"Without Christ, we are condemned to be dominated by the fatigue of daily life with all its worries and the fear of tomorrow. The Sunday encounter with the Lord gives us the strength to live today with confidence and courage and to move forward with hope," he said. □

What to watch at Christmas?

[By John Anderson, *America Magazine*, Dec. 13, 2017]

Christmas is a time for reflection. And that includes reflection on what we are watching at Christmas... What do we really want from a Christmas movie? The obvious answer would be Christmas spirit...movies can trigger a rush of holiday recall, even sense memory. Which may be why we gravitate to the same films each year, the ones that awaken our dormant holiday emotions and help us relive, perhaps, the better Christmases of our lives.

[T]he holiday is ultimately about coming together. And the act of watching a film can be, in and of itself, a way of communing with our fellow celebrants, the ones we know are out there watching too.

They are certainly always watching "It's a Wonderful life," which has become the Old King Wenceslas of classic films... [A] possible old-movie alternative is "The Shop Around the Corner," also starring James Stewart... The script is wonderful, the direction is deft, the actors are endearing, and there is a Christmas Eve denouement that hits the spot.

There is no shortage of musicals that play well at Christmas, some of which we don't necessarily think of as Yuletide fare—"Meet Me in St. Louis," for instance, whence sprang "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." The one that gets the most airplay at this time of year is, of course, "White Christmas," which...contains some of the lamest music ever composed by Irving Berlin...

But the one that grows on me more and more with each passing year is 1993's "The Nutcracker" (a.k.a. "George Balanchine's The Nutcracker"), which got a lot of mileage back in the day because of the participation of Macaulay Culkin, whose 1990 megahit "Home Alone" is also thought of as a Christmas movie. ...At the risk of playing it safe...the 1951 Alastair Sim version of "A Christmas Carol," sometimes known as "Scrooge," has never been topped...About a half-century after Sim delivered his indelible nightmare before Christmas...Will Ferrell made what is arguably the only real holiday classic of the last 30 years: "Elf," a movie so endearingly silly and gleefully human it should be watched by everyone...

The director Jon Favreau makes great use of New York, which has been—from 1947's "Miracle on 34th Street" to 1960's "The Apartment" (yes) to 1988's "Scrooged"—the nexus of Christmas movie-making. And we say "almost" because of the glaring, brilliant, cannot-be-denied Midwestern exception: "A Christmas Story" (1984), the very thought of which brings happiness...Set on the brink of World War II, the film stars Peter Billingsley, Melinda Dillon and Darren McGavin in what may well be his greatest role and was based on the radio memoirist Jean Shepherd's recollections of growing up in northern Indiana... □

[John Anderson is a television critic for *The Wall Street Journal* and a contributor to *The New York Times*.]

Advent Wreath Prayer (3rd Sunday of Advent)



Loving God, we rejoice today as we light the third candle of our Advent wreath. We know that Jesus your Son is drawing near! Thank you for sending him to save us and to lead us back to you. As we wait for his coming at Christmas, we ask you to help us to live in the way that Jesus taught us. Help us to be kind to everyone, to think of the needs of others, and to help them in whatever ways we can. Take away our sadness and fill us with hope. We trust in your mercy and love. Amen.

How patriarchy licenses abuse:

[By Jamie Manson, NCR, Dec. 12, 2017]

In mid-November,...the New Yorker Radio Hour presented a series of interviews on the fallout from the unrelenting flood of sordid tales of sexual misconduct and assault by men.

In one interview, feminist author and activist bell hooks was asked about the roots of this male aggression and violence. She told New Yorker editor David Remnick that, though she had read a lot of commentaries since the first revelations about Weinstein, hardly any commentator had used the word "patriarchy" to explain the root cause of all of this bad behavior.

"We want to act like this is individual male psychopathology," hooks said, rather than admit that this behavior has been normalized for men by a patriarchal system.

Lately it feels like every day another a man vanishes from the limelight, as if taken by a plague. But in these cases, the pestilence was of their own making. And, as hooks points out, patriarchy created the conditions under which it could breed.

Patriarchy is any system in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it. In a patriarchal structure, powerful men dominate women, children, nature and other men. Frequently, one of the key ways that men predominate over women is by fixating on and controlling female sexuality....

The entertainment industry's patriarchal system enabled obscene levels of sexual misconduct, gross abuses of power, and conspiracies of silence. If it feels like we've seen this movie before, we have. Remember "Spotlight"? The patriarchal structure that led to this moment in Hollywood is remarkably similar to the system at the root of the prolonged sex abuse crisis in the Roman Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church may not have invented patriarchy, but it has certainly sanctified it. The patriarchal system that allowed famous actors, producers and newsmen to move about like gods is not much different from the patriarchy that has for centuries told priests that they are divine, exceptional men, set apart to rule over a lowly and lost laity. ...

True to the patriarchal system, in both the church and entertainment industry scandals, the majority of victims were women and minors. In the church's crisis, of course, the

bulk of victims were children, but there are also untold cases of priests' committing acts of sexual assault and impropriety with adult women.

Whether the crimes take place in Hollywood or the newsroom or the church, abusers who thrive within a patriarchal environment seem to fit a very similar psychological profile.

In her recent article, "The Power of Preying," Dr. Alexandra Katechakis explains why men target women in the workplace. She could just as well have been writing about sexually abusive priests.

"These men have ample opportunity to groom the innocent by garnering their trust and seducing them with false promises," she writes. "They bank on the likelihood that their victims' terror of exposure will keep them from exposing their perpetrator."...

Katechakis says that these acts are an "erotic form of hatred" that is born out of feelings of sexual inadequacy, of shame and of entitlement.

"For who else but a man who feels profoundly (if unconsciously) inadequate would find nonconsensual, non-connective acts arousing, and would indulge in them?" she asks.

Katechakis believes that most male perpetrators suffered "grave verbal, emotional, or physical abuse as children."...Tragically, these damaged men find a haven in patriarchal systems where they have unparalleled access to women and children to act out their eroticized rage, often with little accountability. And, should a victim speak out, these predators can count on the protection of their fellow patriachs.

Given how much sex abuse is fueled by shame, it is no wonder that it was rampant inside the Catholic Church, where sexual morality, from the time of Augustine, is founded on the notion that sexual desire is sinful and irredeemable...If we think Hollywood is tough, try reckoning with Catholic and evangelical theologies that insist that God has ordered the universe so that men are always destined to be the leaders and authorities.

...[P]atriarchal systems are a breeding ground for sexual assault and misconduct. . .[S]exual abuse will only be eradicated from the church if we continue to challenge its patriarchy, the real root of the problem.

[Jamie L. Manson is NCR books editor. She received her Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School, where she studied Catholic theology and sexual ethics.]