



Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 5, 2017

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 58:7–10

1 Corinthians 2:1–5

Matthew 5:13–16

Next week:

Sirach 15:15–20

1 Corinthians 2:6–10

Matthew 5:17–37

Psalm Today

The just man is a light in darkness to the upright. (*Psalm 112*)

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, 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

Thursday, February 9, 7:30 p.m. TMC Board meeting, Thomas House library

From Thomas Merton

Perhaps the most insidious temptation to be avoided is one which is characteristic of the power structure itself: this fetishism of immediate visible results. Modern society understands “possibilities” and “results” in terms of a superficial and quantitative idea of efficacy. One of the missions of Christian nonviolence is to restore a different standard of practical judgment in social conflicts. This means that the Christian humility of nonviolent action must establish itself in the minds and memories of modern man not only as *conceivable* and *possible*, but as a *desirable alternative* to what he now considers the only realistic possibility: namely, political technique backed by force. Here the human dignity of nonviolence must manifest itself clearly in terms of a freedom and a nobility which are able to resist political manipulation and brute force and show them up as arbitrary, barbarous, and irrational. This will be not easy. The temptation to get publicity and quick results by spectacular tricks or by forms of protest that are merely odd and provocative but whose human meaning is not clear may defeat this purpose.

—*Passion for Peace: The Social Essays*

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

New TMC bookkeeper Helena Wee:

Helena Wee has graciously agreed to become the new TMC Bookkeeper (replacing Judy Creek). She has started paying the bills but for a couple of months, Judy will continue making the deposits. Then Helena will be doing the whole job. Judy is very appreciative of her taking over the job. Her cell number is 650-520-7556 and email address is: shhwee@comcast.net.

Slavery in our backyard:

Do you know that modern slavery occurs here in the Bay Area, right in our backyards? The St. Simon Social Justice and Outreach group invite you to an evening with a speaker from Freedom House, a shelter for trafficked victims, on February 8, 2017 at 7:00 pm in the Simon Room at St. Simon Parish, 1860 Grant Rd, Los Altos, CA 94024. Make a difference in the world, no matter how small, by educating yourself on this problem.

Suspend the refugee executive order now:

Our brothers and sisters who have been forced to flee their homes around the world are crying out in despair, seeking help, safety, peace and love. Refugees, particularly those fleeing the conflict in Syria, have experienced horrors we can't even imagine. Now is not the time to close our doors, but rather it is the time to open our arms.

Pope Francis says that "All those who flee their own country because of war, violence and persecution have the right to find an appropriate welcome and adequate protection in countries that describe themselves (as) civilized."

Let us take this message to heart and welcome all who are fleeing persecution. Join Catholic Relief Services and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in making heard the voices of refugees waiting to find shelter within our borders. Let our new president and Congress know that we support the needs of refugees. We trust our government to protect us while also welcoming refugees. Jesus called each of us to meet and welcome him "in the stranger." Let us follow his call.

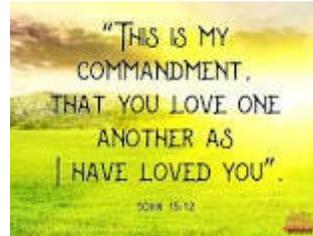
Catholics Confront Global Poverty is an initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services. As the official voice of the Catholic Church in the U.S., we call on Catholics and our nation to defend the lives and dignity of people living in poverty worldwide, through advocacy and action.

Go to www.crs.org for guidance on demanding that our legislators suspend the refugee executive order now.

"Encounter Christ" small prayer group:

When people meet the real Jesus in Scripture, lives change, hearts heal, and the grace and power of our baptism is unleashed to make us "ambassadors for Christ." (2 Corinthians 5:20)

There are two great questions for a Christian:



How can the community formed by the earthly Jesus carry on without his physical presence?

And what can the church of the 21st century learn from

the earliest Christian communities?

This happens by means of a personal and communal relationship with the risen Jesus as the Good Shepherd. *Encounter Christ* small groups of 6-10 people are a very easy and successful way of bringing individual members of our community together with Jesus and together with each other. Helen Baumann and Vicki Sullivan want to lead you in a 6-week Lenten journey of being challenged by the Sunday gospel.

This is not meant to be bible study or a theological/intellectual exercise; it is meant to be a means of getting to know Christ better and for forming spiritual friendships.

If you are interested in learning more or in signing up to join a group, Helen Baumann and Vicki Sullivan will be available after Mass today in the Thomas House to provide information and encourage sign ups.

PRAY FOR US: Please remember in your prayers this week Denise Alongi, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Sr. Fran Ciluaga, Mary Connors, Mike Cummings, Ken Dias, 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 below.]

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Let America Be America Again:

[This famous poem by Langston Hughes seems especially appropriate in this 2017 Black History Month. TMC member Richard Placone suggested it be shared here.]

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—
Let it be that great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

*Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?*

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek—
And finding only the same old stupid plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

I am the young man, full of strength and hope,
Tangled in that ancient endless chain
Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!
Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!
Of work the men! Of take the pay!
Of owning everything for one's own greed!

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.
I am the worker sold to the machine.
I am the Negro, servant to you all.
I am the people, humble, hungry, mean—
Hungry yet today despite the dream.
Beaten yet today—O, Pioneers!
I am the man who never got ahead,
The poorest worker bartered through the years.

Yet I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream
In the Old World while still a serf of kings,
Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,
That even yet its mighty daring sings
In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned
That's made America the land it has become.

O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas
In search of what I meant to be my home—
For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,
And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,
And torn from Black Africa's strand I came
To build a "homeland of the free."

The free?

Who said the free? Not me?
Surely not me? The millions on relief today?
The millions shot down when we strike?
The millions who have nothing for our pay?
For all the dreams we've dreamed
And all the songs we've sung
And all the hopes we've held
And all the flags we've hung,
The millions who have nothing for our pay—
Except the dream that's almost dead today.

O, let America be America again—
The land that never has been yet—
And yet must be—the land where every man is free.
The land that's mine—the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's,
ME—

Who made America,
Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose—
The steel of freedom does not stain.
From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,
We must take back our land again,
America!

O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath
America will be!

Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,
We, the people, must redeem
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.
The mountains and the endless plain—
All, all the stretch of these great green states—
And make America again!

Langston Hughes (1902-1967) was a prominent figure in the Harlem Renaissance, an African American artistic movement that flowered in the early twentieth century. As a writer and social activist, his work often explored the everyday experiences of African Americans. He wrote "Let America Be America Again" in 1935.

Bulletin submissions must be e-mailed by Thursday noon or phoned by Thursday, 9:00 pm. Kay, kaywill@pacbell.net,(650) 270-4188. Michelle, myhogan@comcast.net, (650) 493-8452.

Fr. James Martin: *Why I advocate for refugees:*

[In www.americamagazine.com/2017/01/31/. This essay originally appeared on Father James Martin's public Facebook page.]

Some people have asked me, in person and on social media, why I've been posting so much about migrants and refugees these days, beyond the fact that it is so much in the news. Here are several reasons:

First, because some of the actions of the new administration are so clearly antithetical to Christian values that I cannot stay silent. I'm not a political person, but I am a Christian, and I feel compelled to speak out on this issue. On all life issues, to be sure, but especially on this one, for a reason I'll soon explain.

Second, because the Gospels are so patently, almost absurdly, clear about the Christian requirement to care for the stranger. Jesus could not possibly be any clearer. In the Gospel of Matthew, for example, Jesus says that we should treat the stranger as if he were him. "I was a stranger and you did not welcome me," he says to those who are unwilling to do so.

"I was a stranger and you did not welcome me."

This saying comes when he is speaking about how we will all be judged at the end of time. By the way, the passage is sometimes referred to as the "Judgment of Nations." He's not speaking simply about individuals, but, yes, about nations.

Third, because there is still so much misunderstanding about migrants and refugees. Here are just a few truths that people seem to be forgetting or ignoring: Immigrants are far less likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans. The vast majority of Syrian refugees are women and children. The overwhelming majority of refugees who come from "terror prone" countries are doing so because they're fleeing terror, not promoting it. Finally, the Syrian people desperate to escape their country are in imminent danger of death.

Fourth, I want to correct some widespread misunderstandings about the Gospel. Some of the commentary from otherwise thoughtful Christians has been stunning. To me, it's tantamount to saying, "Jesus never said that we should care for all the poor. Just people in our own family, right?"

For example, Jesus doesn't say help the stranger only if there's no risk to you. Or help the stranger only if it's convenient. Or help the stranger only if he or she is the same religion that you are.

Jesus doesn't say help the stranger only if there's no risk

to you.

Think of Jesus's Parable of the Good Samaritan, from the Gospel of Luke.

A Jewish man is lying by the side of the road after having been beaten on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho. Two men—a priest and a Levite—pass him by. That is, two people from his own religious group. They are probably frightened: that road, still in existence today, was notoriously dangerous, with robbers lying in wait for travelers. So they passed by the stranger.

Finally, another man stops, a Samaritan (the opponents of the Jews at the time). At risk to himself, the man stops. He doesn't say, "Oh, it might be dangerous." Or maybe he does—but he helps him anyway. And he not only helps the man, he binds up his wounds and takes the man to an inn and pays for his stay.

That's one of the points of the story: He helps him anyway. Moreover, the Jewish man finds that his salvation came from the one whom he had considered an enemy.

How could Jesus be any clearer about the need to care for the stranger?

But there's a final reason that I feel moved to advocate for refugees: because of my love for them. From 1992 to 1994, I worked with East African refugees in Nairobi, Kenya, during my time with the Jesuit Refugee Service. During those two years, I came to know many refugees, from Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, Uganda, Ethiopia and many other countries. Our ministry in Kenya was to help the refugees who had settled in Nairobi start small businesses to support themselves. (I speak at length about this in my book *This Our Exile*.)

They were, without a doubt, the most hardworking, prayerful, hopeful, joyful and honest people I've ever met. And they had seen so much suffering and misery. One woman had seen her entire family killed before her eyes. Another man had to make his way to Nairobi through the bush, with wild animals in pursuit. Another had her house burned down just when she was starting to eke out a living.

They had to deal with things that most of us would find unimaginable: prejudice, starvation, torture, murder, genocide. And yet they were filled with hope. And humor.

I count them, still, as among my friends.

So I feel that I know something about this issue, and when I see how they are being vilified and mistreated, I am, like Jesus often was, moved with pity. There's no way that I could keep silent. #