



Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 26, 2017

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 49:14–15

1 Corinthians 4:1–5

Matthew 6:24–34

Next week:

Genesis 2:7–9; 3:1–7

Romans 5:12–19

Matthew 4:1–11

Psalm Today

Rest in God alone, my soul. (*Psalm 62*)

Today's presider is Fr. Michael Gazzingan.

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

Wednesday, March 1, 6:00 p.m.

Ash Wednesday Mass at STA

From Thomas Merton

Perhaps we still have a basically superstitious tendency to associate failure with dishonesty and guilt—failure being interpreted as “punishment.” Even if a man starts out with good intentions, if he fails we tend to think he was somehow “at fault.” If he was not guilty, he was at least “wrong.” And “being wrong” is something we have not yet learned to face with equanimity and understanding.... We do not manage to accept it with human compassion, humility, and identification. Thus we never see the one truth that would help us begin to solve our ethical and political problems: that we are *all* more or less wrong, that we are *all* at fault, *all* limited and obstructed by our mixed motives, our self-deception, our greed, our self-righteousness, and our tendency to aggressivity and hypocrisy. In our refusal to accept the partially good intentions of others and work with them...we are unconsciously proclaiming our own malice, our own intolerance, our own lack of realism, our own ethical and political quackery.

—*New Seeds of Contemplation*

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

Lenten morning retreat March 11:



Sr. Marilyn Wilson, BVM

“Return to me with all your heart. . . return to the God who made you, for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” (Joel 2:12-13)

During this beginning of Lent, how might we respond to the call to conversion and transformation, to active faith, to compassionate justice in this climate of fear, distrust, anxiety and seeming lack of hope? Let us explore together the Scriptural messages of hope, the current stories of strength and our own spiritual practices which lead us to be the Lenten “good news” leading to Resurrection.

Facilitated by Sr. Marilyn Wilson, BVM. Saturday, March 11, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm at Our Lady of the Rosary Hall, 3233 Cowper St., Palo Alto. Light refreshments provided. Sponsored by the Thomas Merton Center. All are welcome.

“Questions from a Ewe” contact info:

The 50 people who heard the presentation from “the Ewe” on Feb. 18 were treated to a compelling story of how one woman has used positive engagement to encourage priests and laity alike to look clearly at Church teachings and recognize when the emperor has no clothes. **Read her blog at: www.questionsfromaewe.blogspot.com**, and join the 50,000 unique readers from around the globe who are being encouraged and inspired to keep the Church from being stolen from believers by rigidity and sexism and patriarchy.

March means Membership in TMC:



Thomas Merton Center (TMC) membership materials will soon be sent or given to all current TMC members.

If you would like to become a member of TMC, a membership application form is available in the church vestibule.

The Thomas Merton Center is a membership-based nonprofit religious education organization required by its bylaws to register its membership annually. Membership fees are minimal—\$15 per individual or \$30 per family. Your choice to become a member helps to keep this Catholic, lay-led, progressive faith community active. Your membership shows your support for sustaining the Sunday 8:45 a.m. Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas church, the adult spiritual education programs, and educational opportunities at St. Elizabeth Seton School in Palo Alto. Please contact Kay Williams for more information: kaywill@pacbell.net, 650-270-4188.

TMC donation envelopes today:



Please use the envelope enclosed in this bulletin to make your monthly contribution to the support of the Thomas Merton Center. Your dollars make possible the sponsorship of the 8:45 Sunday Mass, monthly contributions to Seton School (\$1,000) and the Ecumenical Hunger Program (\$40), spiritual education talks, retreats, and the publication of this bulletin. Lay-led, self-sustaining, self-generating is TMC—thanks to all who contribute.

Help Downtown Streets Team Food Closet

Sandra Dhuey and Pat Keicher, STA parishioners who are the Friday managers at the Downtown Streets Food Closet, are in need of additional people who are willing to serve as substitutes when Friday staff members must be absent. Volunteers serve for 2 hour shifts (9-11, 11-1, 1-3). Substitutes are contacted by email or telephone by volunteers to ascertain their availability. If you are willing to join our ministry in this limited way, please contact Sandra: sdhuey@sbcglobal.net or (650) 326-6915.

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.]

During the flu season, please observe these restrictions during Mass: No holding hands during the Our Father, and no shaking hands at the Sign of Peace.

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.

If you need help planning a baptism or funeral, call or e-mail one of the Liturgy coordinators listed below. We will be happy to help you.

Board: Vicki Sullivan, vickisullivan@comcast.net, (650) 327-5339
Bulletin: Kay Williams (Feb. 26 & March. 5) kaywill@pacbell.net
Michelle Hogan (March. 12 & 19.) myhogan@comcast.net
Finance: Judy Creek, 493-5371, grannyjam2@gmail.com
Hospitality: Jim Davis, 328-2584
Liturgy: John Arnold, 325-1421, jasaoso@comcast.net
Sally Benson, 408-972-5843, sallymbenson@gmail.com
Membership: Kay Williams, 650-270-4188, kaywill@pacbell.net
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Adult Education: Jim Davis, 650-704-8002, Jim_Davis@pacbell.net
Mary Coady, 650-261-9155, coady_94025@yahoo.com

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Pope Francis to activists:

[By Michael O'Loughlin, national correspondent for *America Magazine*, 2/17/17]

In a letter written to a leaders of grassroots organizations and social movements meeting in California [last week], Pope Francis said Christians must resist the temptation to demonize others, protect the earth and fight against “the invisible tyranny of money that only guarantees the privileges of a few.”

Writing that the world is in the midst of an “historic turning point,” Francis said the “worsening crisis” presents both danger and opportunity, using language sure to recall tensions between some Catholic leaders and the fledgling Trump administration.

“The grave danger is to disown our neighbors. When we do so, we deny their humanity and our own humanity without realizing it; we deny ourselves, and we deny the most important Commandments of Jesus,” Francis wrote in the letter, which was dated Feb. 10 and published in Spanish.

Cardinal Peter Turkson, head of the Vatican’s department for Integral Human Development, read the pope’s letter on Feb. 16 to participants at the opening of the U. S. Regional World Meeting of Popular Movements meeting in Modesto, a new event based on similar international meetings previously held in Rome and in Bolivia. The California gathering includes participants from a dozen countries.

“I know that you have committed yourselves to fight for social justice, to defend our Sister Mother Earth and to stand alongside migrants. I want to reaffirm your choice,” the pope’s letter read.

In his letter, Francis condemned what he dubbed a global “hypocritical attitude” toward suffering and he called for more action to address a range of social ills.

“Sooner or later, the moral blindness of this indifference comes to light, like when a mirage dissipates,” he wrote. “The wounds are there, they are a reality. The unemployment is real, the violence is real, the corruption is real, the identity crisis is real, the gutting of democracies is real.”

Francis condemned leaders who rely on “fear, insecurity, quarrels, and even people’s justified indignation, in order to shift the responsibility for all these ills onto a ‘non-neighbor.’”

Though he wrote in the letter that he was not speaking about any particular leaders but of “a social and political process that flourishes in many parts of the world” that “poses a grave danger for humanity,” the letter, delivered in a border state with a large Hispanic population, is sure to suggest tensions between church lead-

ers and U.S. President Donald J. Trump.

Last year, the pope said political leaders who propose building border walls were not Christian, a statement interpreted by the Trump campaign as a slight against the candidate.

More recently, Catholic bishops in the United States have condemned several executive orders signed by Mr. Trump placing restrictions on immigration and refugee resettlement, including an executive order to move forward with plans to build a border wall.

Rather than looking to political leaders as models to solve the world’s various crises, the pope said in his letter that “Jesus teaches us a different path.”

“Do not classify others in order to see who is a neighbor and who is not,” he wrote. “You can become neighbor to whomever you meet in need, and you will do so if you have compassion in your heart.”

Francis also repeated his warning against describing terrorism as Islamic, another major theme of Mr. Trump’s campaign.

“Christian terrorism does not exist, Jewish terrorism does not exist, and Muslim terrorism does not exist. They do not exist,” Francis wrote.

“There are fundamentalist and violent individuals in all peoples and religions—and with intolerant generalizations they become stronger because they feed on hate and xenophobia,” he continued.

Mr. Trump repeatedly criticized his predecessor for refusing to label acts of terror committed by Muslims “radical Islamic terrorism,” a phrase he has used often since his election.

“By confronting terror with love, we work for peace,” the pope wrote.

Finally, the pope reiterated his plea for believers to defend creation against exploitation, issuing a subtle warning against those who deny challenges facing the environment.

The “ecological crisis is real,” the pope wrote, and though conceding that science “is not the only form of knowledge,” he said, “we also know what happens when we deny science and disregard the voice of Nature.”

Mr. Trump has called climate change a hoax and vowed to loosen federal regulations designed to protect the environment in order to support business.

For his part, the pope said the time to act to protect the environment is at hand.

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.

The super-rich are not like us:

[Bt Sam Adler-Bell, *Commonweal*, 2/8/17. Bell is a policy associate at the Century Foundation, a think tank in New York.]-

Americans have insufficient antipathy toward the extraordinarily rich.... We like them too much. Despite a short-lived blossoming of post-recession anger toward the “one percent,” and the efforts of anti-plutocratic politicians like Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, Americans persist in seeing extreme wealth as a virtue—a sign of integrity, intelligence, merit.... Donald Trump made his net worth a centerpiece of his campaign, the proof he was worthy of the office. His opponent, in turn, sought to portray him as not quite as wealthy as he claimed: a boastful con man, not a real billionaire....

The notion that being a billionaire itself might be disqualifying—a hindrance rather than an advantage when leading the country—never seemed to cross anyone’s mind. But it should have. The conventional wisdom that millionaires and billionaires are “out of touch” contains within it a capacious truth. Very rich people tend to be less empathetic, less altruistic, and more selfish than people of lesser means. Psychological studies confirm this. Their wealth instrumentalizes their relationships to others, even those they love. It isolates them from the vast majority of non-rich people and alienates them from our concerns, our lived experience, our suffering. ...

On the contrary, the instinct to forgive and (worse) identify with the very wealthy has extremely bad political effects. It gives us presidents like Donald Trump—and, let’s be frank, candidates like Hillary Clinton. It eases the passage of upward redistribution, normalizes the logic of austerity, and undermines the basis for mass working-class politics. The cruel irony is that it is precisely the working class’s superior capacity to empathize with others and to see ourselves in them—a tendency toward mutual care and concern born of necessity—that makes us so vulnerable to the war the rich have been waging (and winning) against us for ages. ...

The opaque means by which the wealthy preserve their luxury at our expense is the subject of Brooke Harrington’s new book *Capital without Borders: Wealth Managers and the One Percent*. The book addresses a challenging sociological question: Who are the agents engaged in the maintenance of wealth stratification and what are their methods? Harrington’s study points the finger at a little-understood class of professionals known euphemistically as “wealth managers.” Their role in exacerbating the ever-growing chasm of wealth inequality, Harrington believes, has been woefully underappreciated.

Her account of the social, cultural, and financial intricacies of this profession—about two-thirds of the book—is no small feat. Owing to the secrecy and discretion demanded by “ultra-high net worth” individuals, wealth managers are not predisposed to divulging the details of their work....

In overcoming these obstacles, Harrington displays an

admirable degree of sociological grit. In 2007, she enrolled in a certification program in Trust and Estate Planning (TEP) herself. Two years later, she graduated with honors. Her immersion afforded her a semi-insider’s perspective. She gained access to proprietary training materials and was welcomed into a professional society of wealth managers....

...Wealth managers become their clients’ most intimate confidants, entrusted with a family’s darkest secrets. ... [T]hey engage in a form of preemptive warfare against the forces of wealth depletion—whether that means tax authorities, creditors, courts, regulators, or even spendthrift relatives. Practitioners erect a globe-straddling architecture to house their client’s wealth that is simultaneously dynamic, impenetrable, and opaque. ...

The building blocks of these asset-holding structures are trusts, foundations, and corporations. Perhaps the most notorious of these is the trust—as in “trust fund”—a fiduciary arrangement in which a portion of private wealth is sequestered from an estate, allowing the beneficiary (often an heir) to enjoy the benefits of ownership without incurring its duties and liabilities. The mortar, however, is the “offshore financial center” (OFC). The textbook on which the TEP certification is based opens with twenty-eight pages dedicated to OFCs. States like the Cayman Islands, Cook Islands, British Virgin Islands, Jersey (not that Jersey), and Mauritius have organized their legal systems to accommodate the priorities of the global elite and their fiduciaries....

Wealth managers use “regulatory arbitrage” to “liberate” their clients from the rule of law. That is their job. To unencumber the wealthy from the legal and civic obligations that apply to the rest of us: the obligation to pay our taxes, to pay our debts, to pay our civil liabilities....

In the final third of *Capital without Borders*, Harrington helps dispel two of the most pernicious myths underlying America’s overly tolerant attitude toward the extremely rich: first, that they deserve to be so, and second, that the rest of us might one day be extremely rich too. The first falls when we understand that the vast majority of these high-net-worth individuals—including our president and his children—have benefited from dynastic wealth. ...In the next three decades, it’s estimated that between \$10 and \$41 trillion in private wealth will be inherited in the United States. Practically all of it will descend to a tiny fraction of the population. Eighty percent of us will inherit nothing at all.

The second myth is dispelled when we realize that, for much the same reason, the prospects that the non-rich will accumulate great or even significant wealth in their lifetimes are miniscule.... When the rate of return on capital (r) exceeds the rate of economic growth (g)—as has been the case for most of human history—wealth originating in the past inevitably grows faster than wealth stemming from work. The wealth you create from your labor (unless you’re Taylor Swift or LeBron James) simply cannot compete with wealth derived from inheritance. We’re screwed from the start.... #