



Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 19, 2017

Readings

This week:

Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Matthew 5:38-48

Next week:

Isaiah 49:14-15

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Matthew 6:24-34

Psalm

The Lord is kind and merciful. (*Psalm 103*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. 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. 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

Monday, February 20, 7:00 pm

Spiritual Education, Thomas House

From Thomas Merton

Contemplation is essentially a listening in silence, an expectancy. . . . In other words, the true contemplative is not the one who prepares his mind for a particular message that he wants or expects to hear, but who remains empty because he knows that he can never expect or anticipate the word that will transform his darkness into light. He does not even anticipate a special kind of transformation. He does not demand light instead of darkness. He waits on the Word of God in silence, and when he is "answered," it is not so much by a word that bursts into his silence. It is by his silence itself suddenly, inexplicably revealing itself to him as a word of great power, full of the voice of God.

—*Choosing to Love the World*

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 FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

More friendly hands needed:

Heart and Home Collaborative women's night shelter at University Lutheran church will be open only until end of February. The staff is requesting our help with small tasks and, sharing a meal and conversation with the ladies any evening we are available. Can you join us even for an hour? Contact Terry for further info: (650) 714-2131.

Lenten prayer groups being formed:

Helen Baumann and Vicki Sullivan are starting small prayer groups of 6-10 people to meet before our Mass during Lent and "break open" the scripture readings for that day. If you are interested in learning more or in signing up, Helen at hbbbaumann@aol.com or Vicki at vickisullivan@comcast.net, or see them after Mass.

Retreat opportunity March 11:

Save Saturday morning, March 11, for a spiritual enrichment Lenten retreat morning (9:00 am to 1:00 pm) at OLR Hall with Sr. Marilyn Wilson, a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM).



During Lent (which starts March 1), Sr. Marilyn will help us 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. We will 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. Sponsored by the Thomas Merton Center. All are welcome. More later!

COMMUNITY NOTES

News Announcements Requests

Religion does not have a monopoly on faith:

Krista Tippett is creator and host of the public radio program and podcast "On Being" and the author of Becoming Wise: An Inquiry Into the Mystery and Art of Living. Abridged from www.americamagazine.org.

Over the past 20 years, I have asked Christians and atheists, poets and physicists, authors and activists to speak on air about something that ultimately defies each and every one of our words. This radio adventure began in the mid-1990s, when I emerged from divinity school to find a media and political landscape in which the conversation about faith had been handed to a few strident, polarizing voices. I longed to create a conversational space that could honor the intellectual as well as the spiritual content of this aspect of human existence.

... One of my favorite definitions of faith emerged from an interview with a Jesuit priest—the Vatican astronomer George Coyne, who quoted the author Anne Lamott:

"The opposite of faith is not doubt. The opposite of faith is certainty." I have thrown this line into more than a few erudite discussions, and it delightfully shakes things up.

... Faith is evolutionary in every culture and in any life. So here are three things I perceive about the state of faith's evolution in our world and in American culture right now.

The new nonreligious may be the greatest hope for the revitalization of religion.

The phrase "spiritual but not religious," now common social parlance, is just the tip of an iceberg that has al-

Just the facts:

Abridged from an article by Stephen Schneck, Director of the Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies at Catholic University, January 18, 2017. From uscatholic.org, with the subtitle Catholics should remember what's really at stake over the next four years.

... The idea of the church putting cards in our pews is an interesting one to revisit as Trump assumes the presidency and the GOP has control of both houses of Congress. What might these Trump cards warn about? Some of Trump's proposed policies—and some circulated in GOP circles on Capitol Hill—are contrary to the moral teachings of the church. Many others are at odds with policy positions long advocated by the church in the United States. ... However, a comprehensive list of Trump and GOP policies worrisome from a Catholic perspective would need an encyclopedia-sized harangue, not a card. So how about a card that simply listed a string of cold, hard numbers? ...

14.3%—the percentage of Americans who lived in poverty in 2015. That percentage is about 45 million people. In 2010, the height of the Great Recession, 15.1% of Americans lived in poverty. Progress was made under Obama, but the rate is still much too high in comparison with other advanced nations. Under Bill Clinton the poverty rate had declined to 11.3%. It rose steadily through the Bush presidency. Catholic teaching states that all public policies should be assessed for what they do to raise up the poorest, most vulnerable, and marginalized

Just the facts, continued:

populations among us.

4.7%—the unemployment rate for the United States in December, the last full month under Obama. At the height of the recession, in October 2009, unemployment was a horrendous 10%. The Obama administration rightfully prides itself on the longest job creation streak in American history since that low, with 82 months of job creation for a total of about 16 million new private sector jobs. In Catholic teachings, work is an inherent component of human dignity. . . .The unemployment numbers will rise under Trump.

1,354—the number of anti-religious hate crimes tallied by the FBI in 2015. About half of these were anti-Jewish. Just under a quarter were anti-Muslim. The FBI has not yet released numbers from 2016 but indications are that anti-religious hate crimes spiked during the presidential campaign and spiked again after the election. In Catholic teaching, religious liberty is a fundamental right and anti-religious bigotry is an intrinsic evil. Currying white nationalist support and proposing policies such as a national Muslim registry as he has, what will happen to the number of anti-religious hate crimes under Trump? Prediction: The number will rise.

6,870—the number of million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions for the United States in 2014. Greenhouse gas emissions are the principal driver behind global warming and climate change. Care for the environment is a moral issue for Catholics, and Pope Francis has decried the moral failure behind global warming. . . .Trump has warned he may cancel [the Paris climate] agreement. Burning more coal, pumping more oil, and generally emphasizing fossil fuel in his energy plan, what will happen to greenhouse gas emissions and global warming under Trump? Prediction: Greenhouse gas emissions will rise by millions of metric tons in the United States.

11.9%—the percentage of Americans without health care coverage in 2015. That's about 28.5 million Americans. From a Catholic perspective, that's a shamefully high number; the church teaches that health care is a fundamental right for every human person. Moreover, those without health care in the United States are predominantly low-income working families and individuals earning too much to qualify for Medicaid but unable to meet the cost of insurance premiums. . . .For all of its faults, Obamacare provides health care to nearly 22 million Americans. Trump and the GOP campaigned on ending Obamacare and steps have already begun for its repeal. Congress and the incoming president cannot yet agree on a replacement. Prediction: The percentage of Americans without health care coverage will rise over the next four years.

So, six objective numbers should be printed on a simple
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...A monopoly on faith, continued:

ready moved on. We are among the first people in human history who do not broadly inherit religious identity as a given, a matter of kin and tribe, like hair color and hometown. And this is not leading to the decline of spiritual life but to its transformation. One might even use the loaded word "reformation." . . .

Masses of airtime and print space have been given over to the phenomenon of the "nones"—the awkwardly named, fastest-growing segment of spiritual identification comprising something like 15% of the American population as a whole and a full third of people under 30. I do not find it surprising that young people born in the 1980s and '90s have distanced themselves from the notion of religious declaration, coming of age as they did in that era, in which strident religious voices became toxic forces in American culture.

More to the point: The growing universe of the nones is one of the most spiritually vibrant and provocative spaces in modern life. It is not a world in which spiritual life is absent. It is a world that resists religious excesses and shallows. Large swaths of this universe are wild with ethical passion and delving, openly theological curiosity, and they are expressing this in unexpected places and unexpected ways. There are churches and synagogues full of nones. They are also filling up undergraduate classes on the New Testament and St. Augustine. . . . I see seekers in this realm pointing Christianity back to its own untamable, countercultural, service-oriented heart. . . .The line between sacred and secular does not quite make sense to any of them, even though none of them are religious in any traditional form. But they are animated by Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of creating "the beloved community." They are giving themselves over to this, with great intention and humility, as a calling that is spiritual and not merely social and political.

There is a new conversation and interplay between religion and science in human life, and it has wondering (not debating) at its heart.

. . .Einstein saw a capacity for wonder, a reverence for mystery, at the heart of the best of science and religion and the arts. And as this century opened, physicists, cosmologists and astronomers were no longer pushing mystery out but welcoming it back in. Physics came to the edge of what it thought to be final frontiers and discovered, among other premise-toppling things, that the expansion of the universe is not slowing down but speeding up. . . .Meanwhile, quantum physics, whose tenets Einstein compared to voodoo, has given us cell phones and personal computers, technologies of the everyday by which we populate online versions of outer space. . . .Our online lives take us down the rabbit hole, like Alice. We

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. . . A monopoly on faith, continued:

wake up in the morning and walk through the back of the closet into Narnia. The further we delve into artificial intelligence and the mapping of our own brains, the more fabulous our own consciousness appears.

I am strangely comforted when I hear from cosmologists that human beings are the most complex creatures we know of in the universe, still, by far. Black holes are in their way explicable; the simplest living being is not. I lean a bit more confidently into the experience that life is so endlessly perplexing. I love that word, *perplexing*. In this sense, spiritual life is a reasonable, reality-based pursuit. It can have mystical entry points and destinations, to be sure. But it is in the end about befriending reality, the common human experience of mystery included. . . .

The connection points I hear to monasticism and contemplation, nearly everywhere in the emerging spiritual landscape, are beyond intriguing.

The desert fathers and mothers, the visionaries like St. Benedict and St. Francis and Julian of Norwich and St. Ignatius Loyola—they all found their voice at a distance from a church they experienced to have grown externally domesticated and inwardly cold, out of touch with its own spiritual core. I see their ecumenical, humanist, transnational analogs among the nones. There is a growing ecumenical constellation of communities called the new monasticism with deep roots in evangelical Christianity—a loose network around the United States in which single people and couples and families explore new forms of intentional community and service to the world around. And there are technologists “hacking” the Rule of St. Benedict to build open, networked communities beyond the grip of the internet giants.

Meanwhile, even as many Western monastic communities in their traditional forms are growing smaller, their spaces for prayer and retreat are bursting at the seams with modern people retreating for rest and silence and centering and prayer, which they take back with them into families and workplaces and communities and schools. As the noisy world seems to be pulling us apart, many people in and beyond the boundaries of tradition are experiencing their need for contemplative practices that were for centuries pursued by professional religious classes and too often missing from the lives of ordinary believers.

In so many ways, I see the new dynamics of spiritual life in our time as gifts to the wisdom of the ages, even as they unsettle the foundations of faith as we have known it. This is a dialectic by which faith, in order to survive, has the chance to live more profoundly into its own deepest sense than it ever could before. I have no idea what religion will look like a century from now, but this evolution of faith will change us all.

Prayer of accompaniment:

This prayer by Dianna Ortiz, OSU, taken from Education for Justice's Prayer Service on Pope Francis's Message for the 2016 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, stirs us into action to help the millions of refugees around the world today. ©2017, Education for Justice, a project of Center of Concern.

God of Mercy and Consolation,
You call us to walk with our migrant sisters and brothers
As they journey from lands drenched
With poverty and the blood of war,
To lands teeming with freedom,
New opportunities, and renewed trust.
Move us to respond to the Gospel call
Of receiving and integrating, in the best possible way,



The growing numbers of migrants and refugees arriving

On our shores and across our borders.

Grant us a creative wisdom to find the right balance
Between the moral responsibility to protect the rights of citizens

And to ensure assistance, acceptance, and the dignity of migrants.

Guide us in our work with others
As we discover dignified solutions to the migration crisis
That will affect all societies and peoples.

Inspire us to invest our energies, time, and resources
In the pastoral and social needs of our migrant sisters and brothers.

Bring warmth to all migrants,
Replace their weariness with a resilience
To resist the temptation of despair
and the urge to be robbed of hope and joy.

Fuel in the hearts of world leaders a desire to implement policies
That allow for safe migration, just migrant working conditions,
And an end to detention of asylum seekers, while protecting national safety.

Finally, we ask that the Gospel of Mercy continue to trouble our consciences,
Preventing us from growing immune to the suffering of others.”
Amen.

Just the facts, continued:

white card and placed in Catholic pews after the inauguration. Ideally, each number would be followed by an empty box, where churchgoers could write in Trump's score on for these categories as his presidency unfolds over the years ahead. . . .

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