



12th Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 25, 2017

Readings

This week:

Jeremiah 20:10–13

Romans 5:12–15

Matthew 10:26–33

Next week:

2 Kings 4:8–11, 14–16a

Romans 6:3–4, 8–11

Matthew 10:37–42

Psalm

Lord, in your great love, answer me. (*Psalm 69*)

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

No TMC meetings this week.

From Thomas Merton

Silence is therefore important even in the life of faith and in our deepest encounter with God. We cannot always be talking, praying in words, cajoling, reasoning, or keeping up with a kind of devout background music. Much of our well-meant interior religious dialogue is, in fact, a smoke screen and an evasion. Much of it is simply self-reassurance and in the end it is little better than a form of self-justification. Instead of really meeting God in the nakedness of faith in which our innermost being is laid bare before him, we act out an inner ritual that has no function but to allay anxiety.

The purest faith has to be tested by silence in which we listen for the unexpected, in which we are open to what we do not yet know, and in which we slowly and gradually prepare for the day when we will reach out to a new level of being with God.

—"Creative Silence," in *Love and Living*

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

St. Vincent de Paul thank you:

Thank you, generous St. Thomas Aquinas parishioners, for your May donations (\$4,359) through our parish St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) Conference for people in need in Palo Alto.

In addition to buying food for our daily food bags, we were sometimes able to help with car registrations and repairs. Some people are still living in cars. We were able to pay emergency rents for 7 families in Palo Alto Housing. You also paid rent for a woman who was injured at work. She is waiting for Workman's Compensation to pay rent.

Vatican releases online questionnaire for youth:

For any of us who have 16- to 29-year-olds in our lives, this is a welcome and important opportunity. Pass it on to those young people and encourage them to fill out the questionnaire—even if they are not Catholics or practicing members of any faith group:

To involve young people in preparations for the Synod of Bishops on youth in 2018, the Vatican has released an online questionnaire to better understand the lives, attitudes and concerns of 16- to 29-year-olds around the world.

The questionnaire — available in English, Spanish, French and Italian — can be found on the synod's official site: youth.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/it.html and is open to any young person, regardless of faith or religious belief.

The general secretariat of the synod launched the website June 14 to share information about the October 2018 synod on "Young people, faith and vocational discernment" and to link to an online, anonymous survey asking young people about their lives and expectations. The answers to the questionnaire, along with contributions from bishops, bishops' conferences and other church bodies, "will provide the basis for the drafting of the 'instrumentum laboris,'" or working document for the assembly, synod officials said in January.

Read more at: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/vatican-releases-online-questionnaire-youth>.

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 in adjacent column.]

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—this is TMC. Thanks to all who contribute.

Multifaith monthly prayers: Peaceful Presence: July 11:

In the midst of difficult times, Multifaith Voices for Peace and Justice (of which our parish is a member) will host "Peaceful Presence," a monthly prayer service in the evening of the 11th of each month, offering a time of quiet multifaith prayer.

All are welcome: those of all faith traditions and of no defined faith, those who are suffering at the hands of their own government, those who need a pause in the midst of intensive work on behalf of others, and all who would like to pray with others for the well-being of all.

The prayer time will include elements from several religious traditions.

Tuesday, July 11, 7-7:30pm - University AME Zion Church, 3549 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

* To each and everyone of you who sweltered to put on *
* the first Fish n' Chips social on Friday, June 16, a *
* heartfelt appreciation and thanks for a wonderful and *
* happy evening. You afforded so many of us the gift to *
* simply sit, relax and socialize after our hot busy days. *
* A delightful success. Hope this won't be too labor *
* intensive. *
* Thanks, Edna Jamati *

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.

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COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

A brave new world:

[By Alice Camille, in *U.S. Catholic*, April, 2017]

Life is more than we bargain for. The election results last November proved that, in an hour of frank astonishment for every side of the social debate. Behold, all things are new and all bets are off! It's a brave new world. Even the most discerning among us has no idea what's next on the horizon.

One might say this was the keenest lesson learned last year, the loudest message communicated by the election results. Old things have passed away, and new things have come to take their place. And God bless America, a land in which the reinvention of society is our oldest and hardest legacy.

All things are new. Don't presume more of the same. This is always true, of course; but to coin a phrase from *Animal Farm*, it seems more true than usual these days. We might wonder: Did the world feel novel and unfamiliar to St. Paul when he staggered out of his lifelong Pharisaical certitude about what God wants and how religion works and into the bold light of Christ?

We hear again and again in Luke's narrative of the Acts of the Apostles, as well as in Paul's personal correspondence, how his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus rendered Paul not marvelously all-seeing but quite blind at first. It's one of the most intriguing aspects of his conversion story. Don't we expect that stepping into the light of Christ will enable us to see plainly, if not more lucidly, than ever before? Rather than instantly becoming the wise, mystically perceptive apostle we consider him today, Paul met Jesus and was plunged into a season of doubt, confusion, and stumbling in the dark....

Newness, however we define it, doesn't always come wrapped as a gift and tied up with a neat bow. Newness can lead to chaos, anxiety, the sense that control is slipping away or that change is leaving us stranded on the dry dock of history. Every time I'm obliged to upgrade my technology, the ensuing dismay feels like a death. I used to know which key to hit to get the desired results. Now that key isn't there. Maybe the function I wish to engage doesn't exist anymore, period. Maybe there's no way to connect my desire to its fulfillment, and I have to learn to want something else. This can be a disorienting experience.

St. Paul fell off a ledge when he met Jesus and plunged into the abyss. Paul went from a life of total control to theological and moral chaos. As a Pharisee, he'd enjoyed the knowledge that satisfying hundreds of minute traditional laws and rituals guaranteed him

the favor of God and a virtuous life. In addition, he earned the esteem of his fellow citizens, who revered Pharisees as walking saints. Pharisees were dedicated to observing the law of God perfectly. They were professional moral perfectionists. They showed the rest of us how it's done, a service for which they were highly respected and lavishly treated.

Encountering the risen Lord, Paul's visions of God and how to live were completely shattered. No wonder the light of this new revelation temporarily blinded him. No wonder Paul disappears from the story for a time, even after he recovers his physical sight—spending three years, according to his own account in Galatians, in Arabia, a reference that is remarkably unspecific.

What Paul did during his hiatus is a mystery. Did he go back to school, so to speak, as a Christian, learning how to think about God all over again? Did he sit in silent humility, pondering the crucial event that eclipsed his former arrogant assurance about how things work? Did he, in his obscurity, try out new ways of teaching or preaching the gospel that had come to him? Did it just take him that long to catch his breath?

Embracing newness as a mandate for spiritual growth isn't a Pauline principle alone. New moons and new years were long celebrated in ancient religions of the region. Many Hebrew psalmists urge the singing of a "new song" before the Lord, suggesting God is as uninterested in hearing "the same old song" from faithless Israelites as we are disgusted by family members who continue to promise and fail to deliver on new behaviors.

While the pessimistic speaker in Ecclesiastes insists, "there is nothing new under the sun" (1:9), prophets heartily disagree. Mortals may add little that's fresh to history, yet God generates a constant fountain of hopes unknown till now: "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19). God has a promise in store that eclipses all earlier ones: "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31). ...

This tradition of surpassing traditions is not lost on Jesus, who expects newness from his disciples. He tells Nicodemus that no one enters the kingdom without being "born from above" (John 3:3)—the origin of the term "born-again." It's a radical idea, to start over from scratch, to learn how to talk and walk and think and behave as if re-parented "from above." ...What he offers is simply too expansive to be contained by the constraints of old-think.

When Jesus is teaching, all who listen know they're

[Camille, continued on Page 4.]

A basic income: can it liberate the poor?

[By Kevin Clarke, *U. S. Catholic*, 4/17]

In a nation so contorted at times by its Calvinistic impulses, public assistance has come to be seen not as a hand-up to struggling families but as a paternalistic mechanism for “takers” and “abusers” that contributes to so-called cycles of poverty. The basic income guarantee (BIG) challenges that impulse by proposing every citizen receives an income to meet their most basic needs.

Increasingly even modest assistance to the poor has been challenged—healthcare, for example, is seen not as a human right but as a market commodity deliverable not on the primacy of need but the ability to pay. What if the problem of how public assistance is offered is not that it promotes dependency but that it is so parsimonious—and provided with so many confusing strings attached—that it merely maintains the misery? What if public aid could be truly liberating instead of incapacitating?

The idea behind BIG is blindingly simple, if problematic for many. It proposes that the nation’s poor people know what is best for them and their families, and they know what they need to survive and even how to begin to prosper. Get the poverty bureaucracy out of the way and just give them the money they need, and both anti-poverty aid recipients and the society supporting them would be eminently better off.

It may seem hopelessly idealistic, but proponents of BIG believe that meeting the most basic needs of recipients and alleviating the worry of where their next meal is going to come from will help them construct a future for themselves that eventually benefits the wider society. The idea has been tried out in the real world. (The United States maintains a modest variant of the idea with its Earned Income Tax Credit.) The success of programs such as Brazil’s *Bolsa Familia* suggests that meeting basic income needs offers a resolution to the problem of long-term poverty and the practical challenge of delivering social assistance.

In North America an experiment is underway in Oakland, California. Affluent supporters of the idea in California’s Silicon Valley already understand how disruptive future technologies will be to the U.S. labor force. They believe that BIG could be part of the answer to a future of looming unemployment in low-skilled job sectors.

A pilot project is also being undertaken in Ontario, Canada. Upfront costs will be high. Under the current assistance regime a single parent with two children in Ontario receives a little more than \$12,228 (CAD) annually. Under BIG that amount could climb to \$29,427. The aid recipient would be free without penalty to produce additional income for his or her family, begin training for a new profession, or continue with

their education.

Though some church leaders may individually endorse the idea, the church itself rarely gets into the particulars of anti-poverty programs. The church does say, however, that the provision of adequate healthcare, sustenance, and shelter are not negotiable options but the minimum requirements of a morally well-ordered society. That societal commandment is best understood as part of the church’s preferential option for the poor. The church believes that God’s children have the natural right to a life free from hunger and homelessness and that they are likewise gifted with human dignity. That means that as human needs are addressed personal autonomy should be preserved, even promoted as much as possible.

It is hard to imagine a program of poverty mitigation that is as well directed toward those ends than a basic income. It frees the poor not only from need but also the gnawing, exhausting anxiety of poverty and the tyranny of a perplexing social apparatus that has been constructed around poverty alleviation. It may free the rest of society too from unnecessary spending and, best of all, the ceaseless moralizing of those who are blind to the ways their own good fortune or circumstance has allowed them a too distant view of poverty. #

[Kevin Clarke is a writer living in New York.]

[Camille, continued from Page 3.]

hearing someone who speaks with new authority. He’s not at all like other rabbis who quote time-honored teachings but do not touch the pain of their present generation—or tired moralists today who keep insisting our 21st-century realities fit into cramped medieval understandings. Jesus does not come to reinforce old patterns but to provide “good news.” He brings a new commandment that summarizes and surpasses all the rest.

So how else can Paul experience the collision of his life with Christ-life except as a boundary-shattering event? We are baptized into Christ’s death in order to attain newness of life, Paul tells communities behind and ahead of him in every letter. Christ calls us to be new people, a new creation, putting on a new self, incorporating a new heart.

It can feel scary to step away from who we’ve been and what we’ve been sure of and to embark on an unknown road. And it should. It’s a risk. Leaving Galilee and heading to Jerusalem with Jesus is a risk. Allowing Jesus to dissolve our sure opinions and carefully plotted moral code is every bit as frightening as it sounds. We may have to walk blindly for a time, in the dark valley of the shadow of death, suffering the loss of formulaic answers.

Welcome to kingdom come, where the old things must be surrendered, and what’s up ahead is all terribly, radiantly new. #

[Alice Camille is the author of *Working Toward Sainthood* (Twenty-Third Publications) and other titles available at www.alicecamille.com.]