



16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 23, 2017

Readings

This week:

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

Romans 8:26-27

Matthew 13:24-43

Next week:

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

Romans 8:28-30

Matthew 13:44-52

Psalm

Lord, you are good and forgiving. (*Psalm 86*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. Xavier Lavagetto.

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

No meetings this week.

From Thomas Merton

Silence has many dimensions. It can be a regression and an escape, a loss of self, or it can be presence, awareness, unification, self-discovery. Negative silence blurs and confuses our identity, and we lapse into daydreams or diffuse anxieties. Positive silence pulls us together and makes us realize who we are, who we might be, and the distance between the two. Hence, positive silence implies a choice, and what Paul Tillich called the "courage to be."

—*Love and Living*

COMMUNITY NOTES

News Announcements Requests

St. Mary Magdalene's "yes" to Jesus:

Yesterday was the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene. Abridged from an article at globalsistersreport.org, July 17, 2017, by Maureen Hickey, a Sister of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and a nurse administrator of Presentation Health Care Center in Leominster, Massachusetts.

Was it a coincidence that this happened on the solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus? On June 3, 2016, Pope Francis raised the July 22 celebration of St. Mary Magdalene from a memorial to a liturgical feast. In a letter announcing the change, the Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Wisdom and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Arthur Roche, said that the decision means one "should reflect more deeply on the dignity of women, the New Evangelization, and the greatness of the mystery of Divine Mercy."

In a talk I gave about St. Mary Magdalene at Our Lady of the Lake parish in Leominster, Massachusetts, I raised the following questions:

Did Mary Magdalene ever realize the legacy she left to us—deep love and unquestioning faith in Christ?

Do we women of the church recognize the legacy we leave to those around us? Are we aware of the impact we



Sign up to bring a meal for Hotel de Zink:

Hotel de Zink is an emergency program that alternates locations through congregations in Palo Alto and surrounding neighborhoods. The program is hosted at a different church each month, where volunteers set up nightly beds and serve home-cooked meals for homeless adults who would otherwise be forced to sleep in cars or on the streets. Our St. Thomas Aquinas community will be taking food to the Hotel de Zink during the first two weeks of August. Ruth Chippendale will be outside after Mass to sign people up for a meal. Stop by and sign up for a meal; if you miss her, call her at (650) 856-6350.

have on others as we live out the Gospel message in witness to a loving God?

John was the only disciple standing with Our Blessed Mother at the foot of the cross, but Mary Magdalene and several other women stood there watching Jesus die. How helpless they must have felt in that painful and frightening time, unable to do anything for him.

As I was preparing to leave on retreat one year, I wondered: would I have remained at the foot of the cross watching Jesus suffer and die, or would I have fled? . . .

As my week unfolded, God showed me the answer.

In 38 years of being a registered nurse, I have been entrusted with the care of many people. During that retreat,

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COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

How people of faith can make a difference in the Health Care debates:

Abridged from an article by Jim Wallis, president of Sojourners, June 28, 2017, at <https://sojo.net>.

"This boils down to a choice, a fundamental choice and the choice is this: Do you take a trillion dollars and help the poor and vulnerable and the working class in this country and their health care, subsidized by the federal government, or do you take the trillions of dollars and return it to the wealthy in the country? That's really the fundamental choice here." I heard Matthew Dowd say that on *This Week with George Stephanopoulos* this past Sunday. I met Dowd recently. He is a former George W. Bush advisor, and told me he is a Catholic from my home town of Detroit. He is right. These are indeed about basic choices that are not just political, but moral. It's time

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Take a cue from God and rest:

Abridged from an article by Jonathan Ryan, an editor at Ave Marie Press, July 11, 2017, at www.uscatholic.org.

I should take them to Utah. Like all of my crazy ideas, this one popped into my head while I took my morning shower. As a divorced dad who lives six hours away from his kids, I'm constantly looking for new and creative ways to be in their lives.

. . . I've always found vacations to be restorative times that help me get perspective on my life and my work. Without them, I find myself getting caught in a rut and developing an unhealthy lifestyle. But it turns out I'm in the minority. Last July NPR ran a report about a study they did in conjunction with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. It stated that over 50% of Americans who work

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St. Mary Magdalene, continued:

I remembered patients I haven't thought of in years. Some of them went home to their families, others went home to God. I was blessed to be able to care for my own parents and other family members as they completed their life's journey. I have walked with many of my own religious sisters as they faced declining health and frightening diagnoses. I have sat with them in medical facilities or at home as they struggled to accept the reality of what was happening.

I was surprised to realize that, yes, I could stand at the foot of the cross. . . . Do you think you are capable of standing with Mary Magdalene at the foot of the cross? Perhaps you have given physical care to someone who was ill, cooked meals, or provided transportation to medical facilities. Maybe you supported a caregiver by shopping, housecleaning or yard work. Maybe you just shared the gift of your presence, prayed, or sent a card. You may find your answer is also yes.

. . . God has loved us into being, made in God's image. God will always chose and call us into deeper, loving relationship—all we have to do is say "yes." . . .

As Mary Magdalene's relationship with Jesus grew and deepened, she was able to serve him more fully, to be present to him at his most painful and vulnerable hours. We are also blessed with the graces to serve him more fully by serving others in many different ways, none of which are too small or unimportant.

Living the Gospel message of Christ brings out the best in all of us even in the most difficult situations. We give of ourselves out of the love given us by God—a love that is meant to be shared with others. Through our prayer, our quiet time, and the sacraments, our relationship with God deepens.

Mary Magdalene did not physically die for Christ, but she died to herself to become his faithful and devoted follower. . . . We have all done the same. We have put aside our own self-interests to serve as initiation rite and religious education instructors, as lectors, Eucharistic ministers. We volunteer at soup kitchens, food pantries, and we deliver holiday food baskets or donate money. We clean the church and engage in parish service activities. . . . Sometimes we are tired and go reluctantly, yet we return home grateful for the opportunity.

Out of the love God has for us:

We serve one another.

We are present to one another.

We die to self for one another.

We witness to the Gospel message for one another.

We build up the church for one another.

We leave a legacy of faith, hope and love for those who come after us.

St. Mary Magdalene, pray for us.

The Invitation:

- It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.
- It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive.
- It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shrivelled and closed from fear of further pain. I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it, or fade it, or fix it. I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own; if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, be realistic, remember the limitations of being human.
- It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself. If you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul. If you can be faithless and therefore trustworthy. I want to know if you can see Beauty even when it is not pretty every day. And if you can source your own life from its presence. I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still stand at the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, 'Yes.'

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up after a night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone and do what needs to be done to feed the children.

- It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and not shrink back.
- It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied. I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else falls away. I want to know if you can be alone with yourself and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.

—*Oriah Mountain Dreamer*

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Health care debates, continued:

to make some choices.

While a vote on the Senate health care bill has been delayed, the proposed legislation is still very much alive. And people of faith should be especially troubled by this serious life issue: Twenty-two million Americans would lose their health insurance under the bill, and 15 million will lose the Medicaid their health depends upon.

While the bill was drafted—behind closed doors with a small group of Republican men—to fulfill the Republican campaign promise of “repealing Obamacare,” it goes far beyond that. The most important takeaway is this:

The Senate bill, like the House bill, is a Trojan horse that uses the cover of repealing and replacing Obamacare to do two fundamental things: Give hundreds of billions of dollars in tax cuts that will primarily benefit the richest Americans, and end the Medicaid program as we know it.

Medicaid is an entitlement program that was passed during Lyndon B.

Johnson’s administration in 1965—five decades ago.

Today, it pays for health care services for several of society’s most vulnerable groups: poor people, disabled people, children, and elderly Americans in nursing homes.

Here are some of the key numbers. Medicaid covers 20% of all Americans, 49% of all births, 64% of all nursing home residents, 40% of all poor adults, 30% of all adults with disabilities, 39% of all children, 76% of all poor children, and 60% of all children with disabilities.

It’s jointly funded by the federal government and the states. For the last five decades, it has been funded as an entitlement like Social Security and Medicare. . . . That now will all change if the Republican health care bill passes both houses of Congress.

Senators could strip health insurance from the most vulnerable people and transfer funds to the richest people in this country.

. . . Right now, enough Republican senators oppose the Senate bill to delay the vote, so they’ll instead try to pass it before the long August recess. . . . Many of these senators are Catholic — like Susan Collins (R-Maine), Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), and Pat Toomey (R-Penn.). The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has spoken strongly against this bill, both before the CBO score came out and since its release. . . .

Over this congressional recess when senators are home and the critical weeks they are back in session during July, we have the opportunity and responsibility to speak up and speak out as people of faith, to other people of faith, including our political representatives of faith. . . .



Take a cue from God and rest, continued:

50 or more hours a week don’t take all or most of the vacation time they’ve earned. . . .?

Alexandra Corning, a professor of psychology at the University of Notre Dame, knows why we get tunnel vision when it comes to refusing to take a vacation. “My clients often arrive in therapy due to high levels of stress. They feel overwhelmed and, although they are able to identify general sources of stress, they often are not able to arrive at effective and healthy responses to their stressors,” she says. “A vacation from our daily lives provides us the opportunity to experience a different way of living and open our eyes to new possibilities.”

. . . Our disordered affection in America is our obsession with our work. It has become a true American idol, and we will sacrifice anything on its altar, including time with our families. . . . The Puritans believed work was the highest good and would keep the devil at bay. They claimed this position had biblical authority, but in reality it’s a picking and choosing of particular verses that suited their own worldview.

. . . [The] emphasis on rest is centered on Jesus’ words in Chapter 12 of the Gospel of Matthew that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. . . . God builds into the Jewish mindset the idea that rest and recreation are key to a holy life. When we rest, we’re invited into a deeper contemplation of God’s love and care for us. . . . With this thought in mind, I planned my road trip with my kids. I didn’t want to rush them from one site to another. Instead I wanted them to take the time to rest and breathe, to reconnect with these commandments.

At breakfast on the first day of the trip, we talked about taking a pilgrimage to worship God and appreciate God’s gifts. In Kansas we stopped at the Cathedral of the Plains and the wood-carved beauty of the Cathedral of the Madeleine in Salt Lake City. In each place we lit candles and offered up prayers. On Palm Sunday we went to Mass at a small parish in Moab and kept our palms on the dashboard of the car for the rest of the trip.

We reconnected as a family, driving for miles, singing absurd songs, and listening to ghost stories on podcasts. I watched as my youngest drew pictures and wrote about our experiences in her trip notebook. I smiled as my middle son shared his encyclopedic knowledge of the various places we visited, expanding the research he learned before we even got in the car. And I stood in awe as my eldest son climbed up small notches in a canyon wall.

. . . I’ll remember that trip because it helped me step outside of my own perspective to see God and the developing personalities of my children. With my reordered affection toward God and my kids, work resumes its proper place in my life. All because I took my vacation days.