



The Transfiguration of the Lord

August 6, 2017

Readings

This week:

Daniel 7:9–10, 13–14

2 Peter 1:16–19

Matthew 17:1–9

Next week:

1 Kings 19:9a, 11–13a

Romans 9:1–5

Matthew 14:22–33

Psalm

The Lord is king, the Most High over all the earth. (*Psalm 97*)

Today

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

No TMC meetings this week. (Regular TMC Board meeting will not be held on Aug. 10.)

From Thomas Merton

In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness. The whole illusion of a separate holy existence is a dream. Not that I question the reality of my vocation, or of my monastic life: but the conception of "separation from the world" that we have in the monastery too easily presents itself as a complete illusion: the illusion that by making vows we become a different species of being, pseudo-angels, "spiritual men," men of interior life...

Certainly these traditional values are very real, but their reality is not of an order outside everyday existence in a contingent world, nor does it entitle one to despise the secular...the world of the bomb...of race hatred...of technology...of mass media, big business, revolution... We take a different attitude to all these things, for we belong to God. Yet so does everybody else belong to God

—*Confessions of a Guilty Bystander*

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

Friday Fish Fest rocks—Aug 18:



All are welcome to the STA Friday Fish Fest on Friday, August 18, at 6:00 pm at the Thomas House (adjacent to St.

Thomas Aquinas Church) at 745 Waverley St., Palo Alto. Come prepared to enjoy fish and chips, tasty Asian coleslaw, beer and wine in an informal setting, getting to know STA Mass attendees and others from Our Lady of the Rosary and St. Albert's (nametags make it easy to strike up a conversation). Sponsored by the STA Site Committee, a \$5 donation would be appreciated but not required. You are welcome to bring a dish or dessert to share. RSVP to Helen Baumann, 650-327-9236, hbbaumann@aol.com. Helpers welcome—let Helen know.

School supplies for kids:

The Ecumenical Hunger Program serves many people in East Palo Alto. They need new shoes and other school supplies for children in that community, many of whom are students at St Elizabeth Seton school. You may contact EHP at 650-323-7781 or website at ehpcare.org for information and donation details.

Interested in Bible study?

Are you interested in enhancing your spiritual life, or learning more about your faith, or walking closer to God? Would you be interested in joining a small group of your friends for an interactive Bible study?

I've spoken to a few people, here at Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish, that are interested in starting a weekly Bible study. It would be open to those in the community who would like to study more, share more, or understand more, about God's written Word.

If you are interested, or have suggestions for a Bible study, please email Neale Wade: neale.wade@outlook.com.

So. Palo Alto Food Closet needs help:

Volunteers are needed for South Palo Alto Food Closet. There is a great need for the fourth Monday of the month from 12-2 pm and for the fifth Monday of the month for both 10-12 and 12-2 time slots. Please contact Jane Bernstein at 814-5478, janieb23@gmail.com.

PRAY FOR US: Please remember in your prayers this week Denise Alongi, George Bouche, 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.]

Nun officiates at wedding with Vatican okay:

When no priests were available, the bishop of the Quebec Diocese of Rouyn-Noranda sought and received Vatican permission for a local nun to officiate at a recent wedding.

While the story has been portrayed around the world as a sign that Pope Francis is changing the role of women in the church, Bishop Dorylas Moreau said the wedding was carried out according to a long-established provision of canon law. It allows an exception for a layperson to be permitted to officiate at a wedding when a bishop, priest or deacon is unavailable. That layperson can be a man or a woman....

The bishop said he has only 16 priests for 35 parishes in a diocese that covers nearly 9,300 square miles of rugged territory. The diocese has more than 75 nuns, but no deacons, although three are currently in formation.

This priest shortage, especially acute in the summer, led the bishop to make a request through the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments for permission to have Sr. Pierrette Thiffault of the Sisters of Providence conduct the wedding. Approval was received in May.

On July 22, Thiffault conducted the wedding of a couple identified only as David and Cindy at a Catholic parish in Lorrainville, Quebec, about 300 miles northwest of Ottawa. The church was not far from the parish in Moffett, where Thiffault is a pastoral worker.

She had known David since he was a high school student through her role as a catechist. The couple was unavailable for an interview.

"It was a new experience for me," Thiffault said in French. She described the experience as "precious" for her, for the couple and for the people in the parish.

"It was good for the diocese," she said. "It was also an experiment for the Catholic Church." Thiffault called her involvement a "work of evangelization," because she met with the couple several times to help prepare them for marriage. If another need arises, she would be happy to officiate again, she said.

"I imagine the authorization will not be given only for one marriage," she said. "If I can help, I will accept."

[Deborah Gyaopong is Ottawa correspondent for Canadian Catholic News.]

Board: Vicki Sullivan, vickisullivan@comcast.net, (650) 327-5339
Bulletin: Kay Williams (Aug. 6 & 27) kaywill@pacbell.net
Michelle Hogan (Aug. 13 & 20) myhogan@comcast.net
Finance: Helena Wee, 650-323-7987, shhwee@aol.com
Hospitality: Jim Davis, 328-2584
Liturgy: John Arnold, 325-1421, jsaoso@comcast.net
Sally Benson, 408-972-5843, sallymbenson@gmail.com
Membership: Kay Williams, 650-270-4188, kaywill@pacbell.net
Needs Net: Roberta Kehret, 650-494-1488, robkehr@yahoo.com
Adult Education: Jim Davis, 650-704-8002, Jim_Davis@pacbell.net
Mary Coady, 650-261-9155, coady_94025@yahoo.com
SpeakOut: Diana Diamond, 650-323-4787, dianaldiamond@gmail.com

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

When religion is prophetic:

[By E. J. Dionne, 7/31/17, *Washington Post*]

The votes from Republican Senators Susan Collins, John McCain and Lisa Murkowski to stop their party's repeal-Obamacare juggernaut were demonstrations of genuine courage.

The appearance of this virtue in a dark time is not necessarily miraculous, but I couldn't help noticing the striking intervention in this debate by 7,150 American nuns who called the Senate GOP's core proposal "the most harmful legislation for American families in our lifetimes."

In a letter organized by the Catholic social justice lobby NETWORK, the nuns cited Pope Francis — "health is not a consumer good, but a universal right, so access to health services cannot be a privilege" — and noted matter-of-factly: "To cut Medicaid and take health care from millions of people is not a pro-life stance."

Their plea was a reminder, particularly to more secular liberals, that religious witness in politics is not confined to the political right, that Christianity has long had a lot to say about economic and social inequities, and that pushing prophets inspired by faith out of the public square would be harmful to progressives as well as conservatives.

In speaking out as they did, the socially minded nuns — who do the work of justice and mercy every day in hospitals, clinics, homeless shelters and schools — made clear that depriving millions of Americans of health coverage truly is a moral outrage. But while the most conservative among the faithful might not appreciate it, the sisters also did a service to believers of all stripes by demolishing stereotypes about what it means to be religious.

This is important because religion and the political standing of believers are badly harmed by the reality that so many Americans associate faith exclusively with the conservative movement. Large numbers of young people are abandoning organized religion (and particularly Christianity) altogether. A key reason: They see it as deeply hostile to causes they embrace, notably the rights of gays and lesbians.

Harvard University's Robert Putnam and Notre Dame's David Campbell, the authors of "American Grace," their definitive 2010 study of data on American religious attitudes, concluded that young Americans "have been alienated from organized religion by its increasingly conservative politics." A PRRI survey in 2014 found that among millennials who no longer identify with their childhood religion, nearly a third said that "negative teachings about, or treatment of, gay and

lesbian people" were either somewhat or very important to their disaffiliation.

It's true that some, particularly but not exclusively on the left, criticize religion and those devoted to it on principle. They believe, devoutly you might say, that faith in God is irrational and destructive. They see religion as promoting passivity, conformity and, in extreme cases, violence.

The popularity of the late Christopher Hitchens' book "god is not great" — Hitchens did not capitalize "God" on purpose — speaks to the strength of this view among a sizable group of Americans.

But studies by PRRI and the Pew Research Center suggest that at least some who have moved away from formal religious affiliation do not see belief itself as a bad thing and remain spiritually engaged. They are turned off by the worldly, not the otherworldly, aspects of religion.

Alexis de Tocqueville, that shrewd 19th-century student of American life, noted in "Democracy in America" that religion was stronger and faced less hostility in the United States than in Europe precisely because faith on our shores was far less associated with propping up political power and ideological interests.

"Unbelievers in Europe attack Christians more as political than religious enemies," Tocqueville wrote. "They hate the faith as the opinion of a party much more than as a mistaken belief, and they reject the clergy less because they are representatives of God than because they are the friends of authority." Religious apologists for President Trump should take note.

A critic could fairly observe that the argument I offer here is naturally congenial to me as a liberal. Nonetheless, my conservative brethren who worry about religion's decline should consider that a rampant secularism may be less to blame than a narrowing of the scope of faith-based public engagement. Pope Francis' insistence that the church be associated more with justice and mercy than with cultural warfare can thus be seen as precisely the right antidote for what ails organized religion.

The sisters are right that claims to compassion and love are hollow when they are severed from society's obligations to the most vulnerable. They also make clear that faith is something more than a cog in the status quo's political machine.

[E.J. Dionne's email address is ejdionne@washpost.com.
Twitter: @EJDionne.]

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.

Shone like the sun:

[By Melissa Musick Nussbaum, *Celebration Publications*, Aug 2014, Revised 2017]

One New Year's Eve, around the turn of the century, my husband and I sat at a dinner party. Our fathers were all dead or dying, and the talk turned to their war-time experiences. Every single one of us was a child of a father who had served in World War II. We were the "baby boomers" whose births came in waves when our fathers returned home from war. Most of them, we discovered that evening, had been part of the Pacific campaign, slated to take part in the planned invasion of mainland Japan. We had all been raised on this story that 1 million American soldiers were expected to die in the invasion. The fighting, they had been told, would be house to house. Our fathers, and so their unborn children, were saved by the atom bomb.

The host said his father had never been able to forgive the Japanese for the atrocities he witnessed as a Navy medic treating newly released prisoners of war. I can only guess how the conversation goes for the now-grown children of the shopkeepers and teachers and farmers who lived in or near Hiroshima, Japan. Can their parents forgive the atrocities they witnessed? Endured?

I wonder if any of the crewmen on the *Enola Gay* were Catholic. I look at the list of names and try to guess: Paul W. Tibbets Jr., Robert A. Lewis, Thomas Ferebee, Theodore Van Kirk, William S. Parsons, Jacob Beser, Morris R. Jeppson, George R. Caron, Wyatt E. Duzenbury, Joe S. Stiborik, Robert H. Shumard and Richard H. Nelson. I focus on Joe Stiborik. I figure him for Czech or Polish, Roman rite.

In 1945, as now, the Feast of the Transfiguration fell on August 6, the same day this crew dropped its payload, an atomic bomb nicknamed "Little Boy," over Hiroshima. Did Joe go to Mass that morning? Did he receive a dispensation to miss Mass? Did he know, or remember, the story of the Transfiguration? Did he think about the light as bright as the sun and the cloud that overshadowed the scene on the high mountain 2,000 years before? Did he think about that when a flash (described by Caron, the photographer on board, as "the fire of a thousand suns") and then a cloud covered the target below him and spread out, carrying death?

The synoptic Gospel writers tell us that Jesus' face "shone like the sun." He was not shined upon. The light came from within him.

And not just Jesus' face. Matthew says, "His clothes became dazzling white." Just as at Hiroshima, the light was followed by a cloud.

But the cloud that "overshadowed" those disciples present at the Transfiguration — Peter, James and John — is described as "bright." They hear a voice speak from the cloud. "They fell to the ground," Matthew writes, "and were overcome by fear."

Jesus comes to them as they lie cowering on the ground. He touches them and tells them to get up and not to fear.

In the account of eyewitnesses to the bombing of Hiroshima, those who can get up find nothing but fear. Where are my children? My wife? My home? In a city of some 350,000, more than half will die, either in the bombing or as a result of the bombing. Isao Kita was the chief meteorologist for the Hiroshima weather bureau. He recorded his memories in 1986 for the Hiroshima Peace memorial. He remembers the light, the cloud, the fire and the rain. It rained for hours, people say, but the fires did not go out. It rained as the dying walked about, their skin sloughing off in sheets. The fires could not be quenched and the dying could not be saved. Kito recalled:

After I noticed the flash, white clouds spread over the blue sky. Then came the heat wave. ... It was very very hot. ... It was as if I was looking directly into a kitchen oven. I couldn't bear the heat for a long time. Then I heard the cracking sound. ... I heard the groaning sound. At the same time, the window glass was blown off and the building shook from the bomb blast. ... When I looked down on the town from the top of that hill, I could see that the city was completely lost. The city turned into a yellow sand. It turned yellow, the color of the yellow desert.

The smoke was so thick that it covered the entire town. After about five minutes, fire broke out here and there. The fire gradually grew bigger and there [was] smoke everywhere and so we could no longer see towards the town. ... From Koi, looking towards Hiroshima Station, you could see the black rain falling. ... The rain fell quite heavy over a period of several hours. It was a black and sticky rain. ... When it fell on trees and leaves, it stayed and turned everything black. When it fell on people's clothing, the clothing turned black. It also stuck on people's hands and feet. And it couldn't be washed off. It couldn't be washed off.

[Melissa Musick Nussbaum is a regular columnist for *Celebration*. She lives in Colorado Springs, Colo.: mmnussbaum@comcast.net.]

Visioning a world free of nuclear weapons:

Open Letter to: the Human Family and to the Family of
the United Religions Initiative

From: Voices For a World Free of Nuclear Weapons
Cooperation Circle*

in commemoration of August 6, 2017

72nd Anniversary of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima

(*a small group of diplomats, senior governmental officials, lawyers, clergy, scientists and others (see roster below) who meet each month to address the world's nuclear threat)

This summer, two events of nuclear significance happened. First, North Korea successfully launched an intercontinental ballistic missile that demonstrated greater reach and sophistication, signaling that, soon, it will have the capacity to drop nuclear weapons on the United States, Japan, South Korea, China and Russia. Second, at the United Nations, 122 nations of the world voted "never under any circumstances to develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devises."

On the one hand, the expansion of the nuclear threat to the world, awakening the apocalyptic vision of Earth's demise as a livable planet! On the other hand, the majority of nations of this world, proclaiming that the solution to this world's nuclear problem is the elimination of the weapons. These two approaches are captured in the brief comments by the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley. She said, "There is nothing I want more for my family than a world free of nuclear weapons. But we have to be realistic." When all is said and done, is planet Earth going to be a mass grave dug by "realists," or is Earth going to be a Garden of Eden tilled by parents who figure out how to destroy the final threat?

The hands of Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump now rest atop most of the world's nuclear arsenal. But the hands of Kim Jong Un are also raised. Other hands in other countries, as well, are poised atop extermination buttons waiting to unleash a chain reaction of self-destruction in the name of security.

When that time comes, babies won't matter, religion won't matter, families won't matter, beauty, ingenuity and historic perspective won't matter. Nothing will be sacred. Darkness will cover the Earth just as a few finger prints will cover a few buttons.

What time is it right now? A few of us URI people who regularly watch the escalation of the nuclear threat, think that the world is at precarious moment now. Therefore, we are reaching out to any human being who might care and to our URI family exhorting each URI individual and cooperation circle to raise your voice. "Speak now or forever hold your peace," is an

often repeated phrase and it critically applies to this moment.

To fortify you with thought and soul, please go to www.thenuclearprayer.org to read our Call to Conscience statement and view our Nuclear Prayer video. Please don't wait until you are well versed on the NPT or the CTBT or First Strike or all of the other specialized issues, before raising your voice. What the world needs now is to hear from the people of faiths and tribes and humanitarian efforts about the life or death issue concerning planet Earth and its nuclear threat. Voice your concern to a friend, a relative, a politician, a religious leader, a neighbor. Move the needle before some hand pushes a button! Good people of URI, speak! And speak to us because we can amplify your voice. Just send your email to bswing@uri.org. Thank you for your consideration.

Members of the Voices for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons Cooperation Circle

Mary Lou Anderson, international peace activist and business owner; **Peter Carpenter**, businessman and nonprofit leader; **Ambassador James E. Goodby**, former Ambassador to Finland, served as Vice Chairman of the U.S. Delegation to the Strategic Nuclear Arms Negotiations with the U.S.S.R. Bipartisan Security Group Expert; **Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr.** former senior-level diplomat, Executive Chairman of the Board of Lightbridge; **Jonathan Granoff**, President, Global Security Institute; **Mussie Hailu** (Ethiopia), URI Regional Director for Africa and Representative at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Chair of the Interfaith Peace-building Initiative CC in Addis Ababa; **Professor David T. Ives**, International Steering Committee member, Middle Powers Initiative; Executive Director of the Albert Schweitzer Institute, Quinnipiac University, Connecticut; **Dr. Abraham Karickam** (India), URI South Zone Coordinator for India; **The Honorable Secretary William J. Perry**, former Secretary of Defense under President Bill Clinton; Senior Fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution; **Hiro Sakurai**, Soka Gokkai International representative to the United Nations; **The Honorable Secretary George P. Shultz**, former Secretary of State and Chairman of the President's Economic Policy Advisory Board under President Ronald Reagan; **Rev. Tyler Wigg Stevenson**, Board of Directors, Global Security Institute; Founder and Director, Two Futures Projects; **The Rt. Rev. William E. Swing**, President and Founder, United Religions Initiative; retired Episcopal Bishop of California; **Dr. William F. Vendley**, Secretary General of Religions for Peace; **Monica Willard**, URI Representative at the United Nations

About United Religions Initiative

URI is a global grassroots interfaith network that cultivates peace and justice by engaging people to bridge religious and cultural differences and work together for the good of their communities and the world. Voices for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons CC is one of 871 member groups and organizations, called Cooperation Circles, that engage in community action such as conflict resolution and reconciliation, environmental sustainability, education, women's and youth programs, and advocacy for human rights. URI's network spans over 100 countries.