



Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 21, 2018

Readings

This week:

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

Corinthians 7:29-31

Mark 1:14-20

Next week:

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

1 Corinthians 7:32-35

Mark 1:21-28

Psalm

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. (*Psalm 95*)

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

The basic sin, for Christianity, is rejecting others in order to choose oneself, deciding *against* others and deciding *for* oneself. The idea that you can choose yourself, approve yourself, and then offer yourself (fully 'chosen' and 'approved') to God, applies the assertion of yourself over against God. From this root of error comes all the sour leafage and fruitage of a life of self-examination, interminable problems and unending decisions, always making right choices, walking on the razor edge of an impossible subtle ethic (with an equally subtle psychology to take care of the unconscious). All this implies the frenzied conviction that one can be his own light and his own justification, and that God is there for a purpose: to issue the stamp of confirmation upon my own rightness. In such a religion, the Cross becomes meaningless, except as the (blasphemous) certification that because you suffer, because you are misunderstood, you are justified twice over—you are a martyr. . . . This is the exact opposite of everything Jesus ever did or taught.

—*Conjectures 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

Edith Stein talk on January 23:

The focus of the January 23 Spirituality Tuesday Assembly is *Edith Stein: How a German, Jewish Philosopher Became a Catholic Saint*, with Professor J. Wilhelmsson. This is an amazing conversion story of a young Jewish girl to the Catholic faith. What events in her early life led to her conversion and acceptance into the Catholic Church in 1922? What contributions did she make, as a philosopher and early feminist, that had a direct connection to the Theology of the Body of Pope John Paul II? Prof. Wilhelmsson teaches philosophy at San Jose State University. He made Edith Stein the focal point of his research because John Paul II mentioned her in his work. Professor Wilhelmsson will bring copies of his book, *The Transposition of Edith Stein*. Don't miss this interesting evening!

A year of outreach and solidarity:

The Sisters of Mercy in Burlingame invite you to a year of special gatherings of Outreach and Solidarity with our neighbors who are suffering hate crimes, discrimination, and fear of deportation. During this year-long program we highlight the sacredness of each member of the human family in our global village. The program has a threefold focus: 1. Education about Islam. Join us for talks by Imam Hafiz M.K. Siddiqi, Ph.D., who has taught Introduction to Islam for non-Muslims and Muslim students at the Graduate Theological Union, Ohlone, Chabot, and Mission colleges. 2. Prayer for peace in our global village. 3. Relationship building: Let's talk and listen. There is a calendar of program dates at <http://www.mercy-center.org>.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity continues:

This year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity continues through Thursday. The theme this year is *Your Right Hand, O Lord, Glorious in Power* (Exodus 15:6). According to Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute, "Throughout the Biblical narrative of salvation, an unmistakable motif is the unrelenting determination of the Lord to form a people whom He could call His own. The formation of such a people, united in a sacred covenant with God, is integral to the Lord's plan of salvation and to the glorification of His name. The prophets repeatedly remind Israel that their covenant demanded that relationships among its various social groups should be characterized by justice, compassion and mercy. Reconciliation often demands repentance, reparation and healing of memories." —usccb.org

Relationship building: Let's talk and listen:

There is a great need in our country today for respectful exchange among various groups, in order to appreciate why those holding different views from ourselves see things the way they do! Our relationship building will be based on Living Room Conversations (see livingroomconversations.org for more information), a structured approach for facilitating open conversations among people of different views and backgrounds, that enables people to feel safe in sharing and to listen to different views with open minds and hearts. Please join us at Mercy Center Burlingame, 2300 Adeline Drive, Sundays from 1:00 to 2:30 pm, and discover the joy and hope that comes from experiencing connection. We will meet today, and the next gathering is February 4. See www.mercy-center.org for more details.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

A new reformation:

By Fr. Richard Rohr, from The Emerging Church: Beyond Fight or Flight.

I believe that what some refer to as the "emerging church" is a movement of the Holy Spirit. Movements are the energy-building stages of things, before they become monuments, museums, or machines. In the last sixty years, several significant events have taken place, both within and alongside the various Christian churches, to foster this movement. Spiritual globalization is allowing churches worldwide to profit from these break-

throughs at approximately the same time, which of itself is *a new kind of reformation!* No one is directing, controlling, or limiting this movement. We are all just trying to listen together. It is happening almost in spite of all of us—which tells me the Spirit must be guiding it.

I will identify briefly some of the historical developments that I see propelling this movement:

1. Our awareness is broadening, recognizing that Jesus was clearly teaching nonviolence, simplicity of lifestyle, peacemaking, love of creation, and letting go of ego, both

Commentary

I attended the TMC Mass last Sunday, January 14th. The celebrant was Fr. Lawrence Percell. The part of the liturgy normally reserved for the homily was replaced by a plea and video for ADA support by the pastor. A homily was eventually given by Fr. Percell before the final prayer. Except for this very thoughtful homily, the entire Mass, for me, was a total spiritual loss. A recovering Catholic, I was once more wondering if I was in the right place. It is amazing to me that, given the international racial strife triggered by a disturbed president this past week, some comment on it was not made by the pastor. This could have been done briefly but powerfully before campaigning for funds. Thanks to Fr. Percell, who addressed the issue quite tastefully and effectively, including thoughtful reference to Pope Francis's urgings for inclusiveness in practicing our faith.

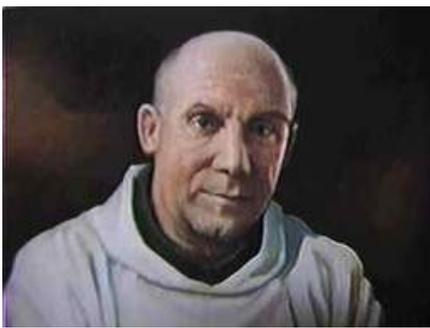
I am reminded of a relevant statement by the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., whose birthday was just celebrated: "It may well be that we will have to repent in this generation—not merely for the vitriolic words of the bad people and the violent actions of the bad people—but for the appalling silence and indifference of the good people who sit around and say 'Wait on time.' Somewhere we must come to see that social progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated individuals."

Thank you, Fr. Percell!

—Henry P. Organ

Thomas Merton conference reprise:

Twelve members of the Thomas Merton community—Mary Connors, Bob Foley, Eleanor Hansen, Michelle Hogan, Anna Jaklitsch, Barbara Kent, Rosana Madrigal, Patricia Markee, Gerard McGuire, Kathy Morrow, Mary O'Connor, and Judi Swope—traveled to Mercy Center in Burlingame last weekend for a conference on Thomas Merton: A Prophet for Our Times with Brother Don Bisson. The two days were packed with information, and below are some of my notes. Hopefully, others who were there will share some of their insights from the weekend in future bulletins.



A major gift to us from Thomas Merton is to remind us to always allow God to be mystery, and God becomes more mysterious in each phase of our

life. In his own journey, Merton delved into Sufism, Hildegard, Julian of Norwich, Judaism, and Asian spiritualities long before doing so became popular in the West. The journey, he said, is not about cultivating my

A new reformation, continued:

for individuals and groups. More and more Christians are now acknowledging Jesus' radical social critique to the systems of domination, money, and power. In the past, most of Jesus' practical teaching was ignored by Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians. The establishment chose instead to concentrate on private sinfulness and personal salvation and, as Brian McLaren says, an "evacuation plan" into the next world.

2. There is a common-sense and growing recognition that Jesus was clearly concerned about the specific healing and transformation of real persons and human society "on earth as it is in heaven." The Church, more than Jesus, is historically focused on doctrinal belief and moral stances, which ask almost nothing of us in terms of real change. They just define groups—often in an oppositional way.

3. We are *recovering* the older and essential contemplative tradition, starting with Thomas Merton in the 1950s, now spreading to numerous denominations, like a "treasure hidden in the field" (Matthew 13:44). Some Emerging Church leaders have yet to grasp the centrality of contemplative and inner wisdom.

4. Critical biblical scholarship is occurring on a broad ecumenical level, especially honest historical and anthropological scholarship about Jesus as a Jew in the culture of his time. This leads us far beyond the liberal reductionism and the conservative fundamentalism that divide so many churches. We now see the liberal/conservative divide as a bogus and finally unhelpful framing of the issues.

spiritual life, but about coming to recognize God's total love for me. It doesn't make sense for me to plot how I'm going to "achieve" God. And it is not helpful to hear that "God loves me" if I am in deep pain, but rather that I must know that "God is within me," going through the pain with me. Whatever happens to me also happens to God.

The contemplative journey is an exercise of letting go of the false self, a humbling process, because it is the only self we know. The spiritual journey is not a success story; it is a series of humiliations of the false self that become more and more profound. These make room inside us for the Holy Spirit to come and heal us. Every now and then God lifts a corner of the veil and enters into our awareness through various channels, as if to say "here I am; where are you?; come and join me!"

Three conditions with which all humans struggle as they leave the false self and move during a lifetime to the true self, Merton said, are *illusion* (not knowing where to look for happiness), *concupiscence* (seeking it in limited and impossible places), and *weakness of will* (the inability to

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Merton, continued:

pursue effectively the true source of happiness, even when we know where to look). The root of all sin is the separate sense of self. The deliberate dismantling of the false self and the death of the ego is the narrow gate that leads to life. We become in some sense real incarnations of Christ in baptism, but the full development of baptism normally takes a full lifetime.

Merton speaks of six principles that make up the spiritual journey:

1. Sanctity is nothing more than becoming ourselves. The spiritual life is about chiseling off the mud, to expose the gold underneath. Unveil yourself, don't create yourself. The spiritual journey is re-membering yourself.
2. Effort and difficulty are adversaries to spiritual development. Raw energy, even hatred and anger, invokes change, but you need to channel that energy toward change.
3. Accept vulnerability.
4. Accept where you are in life. It doesn't matter if you're 40 or 80. Fate is the thing you do not choose. Destiny is your response, your choices.
5. Learn to befriend your emotions by enriching your experience.
6. Reject the tendency to organize life rigidly; trust its rhythm and let go.

Finally, Merton spoke of the need for dialogue, the need for listening to each other, even if the "other" doesn't share your views. Merton reminds us that there is hope, no matter how bad things seem, and that you're not powerless.

Finally, Bisson said that Contemplative Communities of Action—partnerships to engage the meaningful—are happening, not in our parishes but all around the world. Spiritual groups are: 1. Gathering together. 2. Praying together. 3. Studying an issue that brings them to action—immigration, etc. This is study for discernment—how are we called to move out into the world? 4. Moving toward collective action. 5. Foundation for all this is religious experience. It's not about getting together to complain, but to pray and study and move to action! And Bisson left us with a final question: What would you desire to bring forth from this weekend?

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, Dick Jackman, François Jamati, Michael Kiriti, Hunter Kubit, Fr. Lavagetto's mother, 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.

Make 2018 another year of mercy:

Abridged from an article by Kevin Clarke, at uscatholic.com. This article also appears in the January 2018 issue of U.S. Catholic.

Rosa Maria Hernandez is a 10-year-old girl from Laredo, Texas. She has cerebral palsy and was on the verge of being deported to a nation she has never known. Her ordeal suggests the whole country should consider a collective New Year's resolution for 2018: Let's be more merciful this year.

Rosa Maria's parents brought her from Mexico as an infant in the hope that she would receive better treatment for the serious medical problems she has experienced since birth. Rosa Maria received speech and occupational therapy that helped her experience a better childhood. But in October 2017 a medical emergency forced her to cross paths with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents on her way to surgery at a local hospital. As she recovered she was held at an immigrant children's detention facility. Later she was released to her parents.

The family's plight makes a poor showing before the rest of the world and a scenario that the U.S. State Department might deplore if it were unfolding in a different nation. But this is the America of the Trump administration's war on the undocumented. . . . If the intended message to other would-be migrants is that the United States will show no mercy to undocumented people, Rosa Maria's story should do the trick. It is a terrible message to send. Already too fearful to step forward to report crimes, now many undocumented people may avoid critically needed medical care.

. . . Rosa and her peers, the so-called Dreamers, young people brought into the United States without documentation, do not really represent a burden to be assumed, but an investment to be realized. Ninety-one percent of the young people registered under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program are employed; 98% are bilingual, and 72% are pursuing a degree in higher education. Those numbers suggest that it may be an act not of mercy but of enlightened self-interest to formalize their presence within U.S. borders.

. . . Rosa Maria's story asks us to take a personal look at how impersonal policies affect and hurt real people with real lives. Our faith demands that we take that closer look. . . .

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