



Pentecost Sunday

May 20, 2018

Readings

This week:

Acts 2:1-11

1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

John 20:19-23

Next week:

Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40

Romans 8:14-17

Matthew 28:16-20

Psalm

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth. (*Psalm 104*)

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, May 21, 7:00 pm

Spiritual Education, Thomas House

From Thomas Merton

This matter of "salvation" is, when seen intuitively, a very simple thing. But when we analyze it, it turns into a complex tangle of paradoxes. We become ourselves by dying to ourselves. We gain only what we give up, and if we give up everything we gain everything. We cannot find ourselves within ourselves, but only in others, yet at the same time before we can go out to others we must first find ourselves. We must forget ourselves in order to truly become conscious of who we are. The best way to love ourselves is to love others, yet we cannot love others unless we love ourselves since it is written, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." . . . As for this "finding" of God, we cannot even look for Him unless we have already found Him, and we cannot find Him unless he has first found us. We cannot begin to seek Him without a special gift of His grace, yet if we wait for grace to move us, before beginning to seek Him, we will probably never begin. The only effective answer to the problem of salvation must therefore be to reach out to embrace both extremes of a contradiction at the same time. Hence that answer must be supernatural.

—*No Man is an Island*

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

Join us on the altar for Pentecost 2019:

Today at the end of the Pentecost Mass, it is our custom to introduce the many people who make this weekly liturgy and our other community activities possible. Community is an important part of our faith experience—giving of some part of our time and care by helping and supporting each other. If you don't come forward today, consider joining us in the next year. Most assignments are usually only once a month. We always need greeters, flower arrangers, and bread bakers. If you are interested in doing one of these jobs or in being a sacristan, a Eucharistic minister or a lector, or just want to take the collected food donations to the food closet once a month, we will welcome you and we will train you. Please let John or Sally know of your interest. For John Arnold, call (650) 325-1421 or e-mail jsaoso@comcast.net; for Sally Benson, call (408) 972-5843 or e-mail svpal.org.

Garden grooming on June 9:

Save Saturday morning, June 9, from 9:30 till noon (or any portion thereof) to get your hands dirty in the St. Thomas Aquinas church garden beds. Vicki Sullivan will be leading the troops to refresh the flowers and shrubs that surround our church. There will be compost and mulch supplied, dead-heading, planting azaleas and hydrangeas rescued from the Easter altar, and general grooming. Please come help!



If you have a specific intention for the 8:45 Mass that you have sent to the parish, please let Sally and John know about it as well, so we can include it in our prayer intentions. Sally is at red5@svpal.org and John is at jsaoso@comcast.net.

TMC Annual Meeting is today:

TMC members will be attending the Annual Meeting and brunch of the Thomas Merton Center this morning, beginning at 11:00 am, at the home of Bob and Judy Foley, 1927 Emerson. We will share our vision for the TMC community as we move forward; we will seek guidance on issues for action by TMC in 2018-2019; and we will review the past year's accomplishments in the TMC community. If you're not a member, consider joining us next year: contact membership chair Kay Williams at kay-will@pacbell.net.

Send a Seton student to summer camp:

CYO Camp is a Catholic community set among 216 acres of coastal redwoods where children of all religious backgrounds participate in youth-centered programming. CYO Camp is a magical place where children ages 8-17 gain self-confidence, discover the wonders of nature, and enjoy being young. Activities include swimming, canoeing, hiking, archery, arts & crafts, outdoor liturgies, basketball, talent shows, and campfires. Programs are designed to give campers the opportunity to develop self-confidence while making new friends and taking on new challenges.



Can you help send a St. Elizabeth Seton student to CYO Camp? The total cost for one child for a week is \$825, but any contribution, big or small, will make a difference. If you can help, send checks payable to CYO Camp Scholarships with "St. Elizabeth Seton School students" on the memo line. Mail to Nancy Gutierrez, Catholic Charities, 990 Eddy Street, San Francisco 94109.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Who is the cause of society's polarization? All of us:

Abridged from an article by Fr. Matt Malone, SJ, April 20, 2018, at americamagazine.org. This article also appeared in the April 30 issue, under the headline "Asking the Right Question."

I am writing this from Saint Louis University, where I am taking part in a lecture series. . . . My topic is Pope Francis, U.S. politics and polarization, a subject I am often called upon to discuss. I think in five years I have taken part in at least a dozen panels, all of which were asking, "What are the causes of polarization?"

Yet in contemporary politics, the question is not "What is the cause of polarization?" The question is "Who is the cause

Asylum seekers face increasing obstacles, which some see as deliberate:

Abridged from an article by Maria Benevento, an NCR Bertelsen intern, published at ncronline.org, April 26, 2018.

The stakes could hardly be higher for immigrants who seek asylum in the US out of fear of being tortured, killed or otherwise persecuted if they are forced to return to their home countries. But attorneys, religious leaders and advocates report increasing obstacles in the already difficult process of applying for protection, obstacles some say are intentionally created by the Trump administration in an effort to use border security, immigration detention and the court system to restrict this form of legal immigration. . . . “The country has a right to have an orderly process for people who cross the borders,” El Paso Bishop Mark Seitz told NCR. “But what we’re doing is everything in our power to turn them away before we’ve even heard their story.”

. . . Immigrants who express a credible fear of persecution in their home countries are legally required to be admitted to the US while they apply for asylum. The US helped write international asylum law governing when nations must admit asylum seekers and has recently expected smaller and economically weaker countries to take in huge numbers of Syrian refugees, said Seitz. Meanwhile, when people arrive at US borders from countries that have some of the highest homicide rates in the world and are controlled by “narco-trafficking” gangs who act with impunity, “we somehow are applying a different standard when they ask for asylum and claim that they’re fleeing for their lives,” Seitz said.

Applying for asylum has never been easy. . . . However, recent moves by the Trump administration to increase border security and detention and make the court system harder to navigate successfully are making things even more difficult. “This is legal immigration,” emphasized Dylan Corbett, director of the Hope Border Institute. “They want to stop legal immigration, and unfortunately they’re having some success.”

. . . Department of Homeland Security officials say they separate families not as a matter of policy or a form of deterrence, but when they are unable to verify family relationships or when parents are being criminally prosecuted. However, the American Civil Liberties Union announced March 9 that it was filing a lawsuit to end the widespread if unofficial practice of family separation.

. . . The church will continue to speak out about immigrants’ rights, Seitz added. “It’s not a matter of the church getting involved in politics, it’s the church doing what the church has always done . . . and understanding that since human rights are not given by the government, but are given by the creator, then it’s the church’s responsibility to speak.”

What is grace?:

By Jacob Kohlhaas, assistant professor of moral theology at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa. This article also appears in the March 2018 issue of U.S. Catholic.

Religious education has taught generations of Catholics that grace is a free gift of God’s favor. It is received through the sacraments and makes our salvation possible. Unfortunately, this popular conception of grace is sometimes misconstrued, presenting grace as a commodity rather than a reality experienced in our lives. From this view, “receiving grace” through the sacraments may be interpreted as getting more grace, as if sacraments were transactions imparting a quantifiable spiritual good.

These transactional descriptions of grace tend to portray sin and grace as competing entities on the spiritual side of our existence. The souls of holy persons are filled by grace, these depictions suggest, while the souls of unrepentant sinners are so stained by sin that grace can find no home. For those of us caught somewhere in the middle, venial sins diminish and sacraments increase our souls’ stores of grace.

. . . Fr. Thomas O’Meara describes this way of thinking as “grace as the electric company.” Sacraments give us grace (the lights come on), we sin and lose grace (the lights go out), and sacramental confession and absolution cleanse sin and restore grace (the lights come on again). This framework was particularly influential before Vatican II and continues to persist in the minds of many Catholics. Fr. James Keenan, writing about the anxieties of his own Catholic childhood, reveals the limits of this transactional model. According to the electric company model of grace, if a person neglects to confess a significant sin, its stain remains and grace cannot refill the soul. . . . However, beyond the personal spiritual anxiety this transactional view can induce, it also problematically distorts the Catholic sacramental system. Sacraments, as it turns out, do not convey certain quantities of grace on the soul so much as they enliven us to the very conditions of our existence. While grace is a free gift from God, Fr. Michael Himes reminds us, God has nothing other to give nor wants anything other to give than the gift of God’s self. This gift is most profoundly realized in Christ’s incarnation and is repeated and made new in every sacramental moment.

Because God is love, grace is a gift of love that invites us into relationship with God, the source of our existence. When we speak of loving more or less, we don’t refer to quantities but to the quality and strength of our relationships. Sacraments, then, are not transactions of a spiritual commodity but relational encounters in which the God who created us out of love, for love, and in order to love us offers us the divine gift of self-giving love: grace.

...Polarization, continued:

of polarization?” And the answer is: You are. You are the cause of polarization. And I am. Together, we are the causes of polarization. Unless we are willing to admit that, then the situation will only get worse. For polarization is not something that is happening to us but something we are causing. And the temptation to think that you or I are not complicit in it and that the fault lies entirely with someone else is actually what polarization is. After all, what does polarization require? Two poles. By that I do not mean two people or groups of people who disagree with each other. That is actually what democracy requires. What polarization requires is two people or two groups of people who disagree, each of whom believes that the other is entirely at fault and is politically, philosophically and perhaps even morally irredeemable. This is the fault line of our contemporary politics, the result of our choices.

How many of us have stopped reading opinions with which we disagree? How many of us have stopped watching news channels that feature opinions with which we disagree? How many of us complain about the content in our social media feeds while somehow forgetting that we actually chose to follow every one of those people? How many of us, deep down in places we don't like to talk about, take some pleasure in the adrenaline rush that comes from clicking “like” and thereby instantly creating an us and a them?

The 2016 presidential election was one of the closest in U.S. history. It was weeks, in fact, before we learned the final tallies. It was that close. Yet consider this: 65% of Americans live in a congressional district that favored either Mr. Trump or Mrs. Clinton by 20 points or more. We do not even live near people with whom we disagree. That is the result of our choices, yours and mine, and those of our elected representatives.

Pope Francis sees this clearly for what it is. The phenomena involved in polarization reflect a deeper spiritual crisis in modernity, within you and within me. That is why this is the most important thing that Pope Francis has ever said about politics: “I am a sinner.” The first question he was asked in his very first interview was “Who is Jorge Mario Bergoglio?” To which the pope replied: “I am a sinner.” I suggest that this is where we should start the reform of our politics, by recognizing our

Please remember in your prayers this week: Denise Alongi, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Sr. Fran Ciluaga, Mary Connors, Ken Dias, Fr. Thierry Geris, Deonna Gill, Emily Gill, Joanne Hasegawa, Dick Jackman, 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.

Blessing of liturgical ministers:

Lord God,
In your loving kindness
You sent your Son to be our shepherd and guide.
Continue to send liturgical ministers
To assist in this divine worship.
Bless our brothers and sisters,
Who have responded to the needs of our community
And who wish to commit themselves to your service.
Grant that their ministry may be fruitful
And our worship pleasing in your sight.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

individual complicity in the sin of polarization, by what we have done and by what we have failed to do, and by asking for the grace to change.

I appreciate that this may not be what we want to hear. But this is our best hope. As long as you believe that the problem is someone else, then there is nothing you can do about it, and you will continue to feel helpless and at the mercy of forces beyond your control. But if we are all able to acknowledge how we are a part of the problem, then we can begin to imagine how we might be part of the solution.

We can begin the conversation by focusing on what we all have in common rather on our differences, a move that is itself subversive of polarization.

What is the issue at its heart? Pope Francis told us when he addressed the U.S. Congress: “The contemporary world, with its open wounds which affect so many of our brothers and sisters, demands that we confront every form of polarization.... We know that in the attempt to be freed of the enemy without, we can be tempted to feed the enemy within. To imitate the hatred and violence of tyrants and murderers is the best way to take their place.” “The enemy within” is nothing more than our age-old nemesis: fear. We are afraid. All of us. And that's good news too, because it means that we all have something else in common and an additional means of relating anew to each other, by the grace of God. To do that we simply need to do what God, through the risen Christ, is always urging us to do anyway: “Be not afraid.”

Board: Vicki Sullivan, vickisullivan@comcast.net, 327-5339

Bulletin: Michelle Hogan (April 20 and 27; June 3), 468-3386

Kay Williams (June 10), 679-9015

Finance: Helena Wee, 520-7556

Hospitality: Jim Davis, 328-2584

Liturgy: John Arnold, 325-1421, jsaoso@comcast.net;

Sally Benson, (408) 972-5843, red5@svpal.org

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Spiritual Education: Mary Coady, 261-9155, Jim Davis, 328-2584

Fr. Gene Boyle's Pentecost homily, 2006:

They were standing together with him talking about the kingdom of God. And suddenly, as they were watching, his feet left the ground, he was lifted up and a cloud took him from sight. They strained their eyes but they could not see him anymore.

He was off. He was gone. He flew out of the world leaving it seemingly as it had been before. When they went home after his dramatic exit, there were the usual police checks by the Roman occupational forces on the Temple road, there were the ignorant and the wise, the destitute and the homeless, the pickpockets and the prostitutes and the endless political intrigues. But he was off. Nobody ever left this world so thoroughly. He did not leave as much as a bone or a tooth in this world. Nothing at all.

Before he went, he told them that it would be best for them if he go away. "If I do not go," he said, "you would never be able to receive the Spirit yourselves; you would never be able to acknowledge that Spirit in you. You would always remain looking up. You would not take up any responsibility, you would just gape at me."

And that is what they were doing, even after he was lost to their sight in the clouds. They remained staring up with open mouths and watering eyes.

Angels had to come down to tell them to quit looking up, to move on, to get out of the place, to do what he had told them to do.

And dazed, they stumbled back to Jerusalem, now and then taking a quick look over their shoulders to check once more.

They went to an upper room in the house of a friend; they locked the door; they closed the shutters; they slammed the bolt and put a table against the door. They tried to pray. Now and then somebody would check what was happening outside. Was the end near or nearer?

But nothing was happening outside; everything went on as usual, the good and the bad, just as before.

And then, on the tenth day, it happened. Heaven opened, a storm was heard, fire appeared, and he came back to them. His Spirit descended into them and they were filled with his power and enthusiasm.

The table was pushed away from the door and the door was opened and they started. What did they start to do? Exactly what he did. They started to save the world. They were not trying to save themselves but the world; they were not interested in their salvation so much; they were interested in the salvation of all humankind.

They did not set out to judge the world, as most church leaders are fond of doing. They were like Jesus, who said: "I did not come to judge the world, or to condemn it; I came to rescue it."

They did not start a political party; they started to do something much more fundamental; they started to try to introduce a new set of values and principles. They tried to get at the root causes of the pain and turmoil of the world.

It is there that Jesus and his disciples found their field of struggle, a struggle that continues to this day, combating the evil, the greed, the hubris, the complacency, the thick skins and fat bellies, the bribery and dishonesty, unchecked lust, profiteering and all those other things that despoil so many children of our time of the bare necessities of life.

Too many Christians have a vertical approach to their relation with Christ, have a tendency to want to abide with their Lord in heaven. They remain staring up open-mouthed, sanctuary dwellers, immersed in sterile ritual observance.

But Jesus wants us to look straight out and engage the world in which we live. Before he left he said: "Now it is up to you; go and preach, work, and change this, your world, into the Kingdom of God."

Be baptized in the belief that God the Father gave you life. *Be baptized* in the belief that Jesus Christ revealed what you can do. *Be baptized* in the belief that you yourself received his Spirit.

As Christians we must be immersed in the world with Jesus, enveloped with his Spirit, changing ourselves, changing the world, changing its values, making it more and more into what we strive to do at this Eucharist: eating and sharing together in love and peace. With his Spirit, you can do anything. You can do it, we can do it. Let's do it!

From the start, Christianity has been rooted in the paradoxical claim that a human being executed as a criminal is the source of God's life-giving and transforming Spirit. From the start, this "good news" has been regarded as foolishness to the wise of the world. Christianity has never been able to prove its claims except by appeal to the experiences and convictions of those already convinced. The only real validation for the claim that Christ is what the creed claims him to be, that is, light from light, true God from true God, is to be found in the quality of life demonstrated by those who make this confession.

Only if Christians and Christian communities illustrate lives transformed according to the pattern of faithful obedience and loving service found in Jesus does their claim to live by the Spirit of Jesus have any validity. The claims of the gospel cannot be demonstrated logically. They cannot be proved historically. They can be validated only existentially by the witness of authentic Christian discipleship.

The more the church has sought to ground itself in something other than the transforming work of the Spirit, the more it has sought to buttress its claims by philosophy or history, the more it has sought to defend itself against its cultured despisers by means of sophisticated apology, the more also it has missed the point of its existence, which is not to take a place within worldly wisdom but to bear witness to the reality of a God who transforms suffering and death with the power of new life.

Pentecost Sunday, May 20, 2018
8:45 Mass Liturgy Ministries

Sacristans: Prepare the sanctuary and altar for Mass; clean the sacred vessels after Mass; care for altar linens. Procure, maintain, and organize all other needs for the liturgy. Invite members of the community to set the altar and to bring up the gifts during the Offertory procession.

Floral Committee: Provide and maintain floral arrangements for each liturgy in keeping with the liturgical day and season.

Greeters: Welcome everyone to each liturgy with a warm smile and a greeting; hand out bulletins and other programs. They are the welcoming face of the 8:45 community, looking out especially for newcomers and visitors. This group expands at Christmas and Easter to include Ushers, as needed.

Commentators: Call us to worship each Sunday, asking us to reflect on the message of the Word that day as we begin our celebration of the liturgy. They remind us at liturgy's end of important events coming up and invite us to join the community after Mass for coffee, donuts, and conversation.

Musicians/Singers: Select the songs in keeping with the readings and theme of each liturgy. Rehearse and provide the music that enlivens the liturgy and that inspires and lifts the spirit, leading the assembly to participate fully in the movements of the liturgy.

Lectors: Pray and prepare at home to proclaim the Word of God to the assembly. In solemn procession with our presiders, they bring the Word into our community and proclaim it with reverence, clarity, and meaning. They close the Liturgy of the Word by leading the community in the Prayers of the Faithful.

Offertory Ministers: Collect and present the gifts received from our lives and our work at the altar during the Offertory procession. These gifts provide food for the hungry and financial resources to sustain and increase the work of the church.

Communion Bread Bakers: Using a liturgical recipe, create and bring the home-baked, unleavened bread that will become the Eucharist we receive, preparing it fresh each Sunday morning.

Communion Ministers for Liturgy: These members of the 8:45 community are called and trained to serve with reverence the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation to their community.

Communion Ministers for the Homebound: Communion ministers who bring spiritual comfort and companionship to those whom they visit at home, in hospitals, or in nursing homes. They pray together and share the gift of Eucharist.

Bulletin Editors: Write and publish the Thomas Merton Community bulletin each week to inform and connect us as a spiritual community by providing news of community events and general articles of interest from the Catholic and Christian press.

“Pew Sweepers”: Clean the pews after each liturgy, collecting bulletins and other items left behind so that the church is clutter-free and ready for worshippers attending the next Mass.

Hospitality Group: These members of the 8:45 Mass community work in teams of two each week to provide refreshments after Mass and a time and place to renew and strengthen our connection as a faith community, while also welcoming newcomers.

8:45 Liturgy Committee: A team of laypersons from the 8:45 Mass community who plan, organize, and coordinate the liturgy each Sunday, on special feast days, and for other liturgical services. They train our liturgical ministers, invite and schedule our presiders, order liturgical supplies, and see to a myriad of behind-the-scenes details. Their goal is to present liturgies that are marked by substantive content, good ritual, and uplifting music.

St. Thomas Aquinas Site Committee: This group of persons worship at St. Thomas Aquinas Church and are committed to the maintenance of its physical site (including the Thomas House next door) and enhancing of the worship environment.