



17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 29, 2018

Readings

This week:

2 Kings 4:42–44

Ephesians 4:1–6

John 6:1–15

Next week:

Exodus 16:2–4, 12–15

Ephesians 4:17, 20–24

John 6:24–35

Psalm

The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs. (*Psalm 145*)

Today's presider is Rev. Franklin Epie.

Today

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

Wednesday, August 1, 7:30 p.m. STA Site Committee, Thomas House Library

From Thomas Merton

Let me say this before rain becomes a utility that they can plan and distribute for money. By “they” I mean the people who cannot understand that rain is a festival, who do not appreciate its gratuity, who think that what has no price has no value, that what cannot be sold is not real, so that the only way to make something actual is to place it on the market. The time will come when they will sell you even your rain. At the moment, it is still free, and I am in it. I celebrate its gratuity and its meaninglessness.

--Raids on the Unspeakable

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

Seton School backpack drive till Aug. 12.

Dear Friends of St. Elizabeth Seton School,
This year, we are again taking on a project to purchase backpacks and school supplies for the children at Seton School. Our goal is to purchase 50 backpacks (35 for elementary and 25 for middle school)-- in any color except red and blue (NO red or blue please, although designs are OK) from Costco, Target, etc.

There are two ways you can contribute:

Make a financial contribution and let us do the shopping. Checks to be made out to Saint Elizabeth Seton School, with "backpacks" on the memo line.

Donate backpacks and school supplies. If you choose this option, please indicate the grade level on the backpack, or school supplies.

Bring all items to St. Thomas Aquinas Church by Sunday, August 12. If you have additional questions, John Arnold is our coordinator and can be reached at jsaoso@comcast.net, or by phone at (650) 269-2950.

(People could "club together" to make a purchase. Backpacks can be pricey! Check with John Arnold for specific school supplies needed.)

These are our children, our future, and we can help to make a difference. Thank you for your support.

Save Sunday, Oct. 14, for Kate Hennessy talk:

The Merton Center Spiritual Education Committee is excited to announce that Kate Hennessy, Dorothy Day's youngest-of-nine grandchildren and author of a memoir about her grandmother, will be here to talk to us on Sunday, October 14, at 3:00 pm at the Menlo Park Recreation Center. We will have her book, *Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved By Beauty*, available for purchase in advance of October 14. Save the date!

Board: Gerard McGuire, gerardmc@aol.com, 650-814-2223
Bulletin: Kay Williams (July 29, Aug. 19 & 26) kaywill@pacbell.net
Michelle Hogan (Aug. 5 & 12) myhogan@comcast.net
Finance: Helena Wee, 650-323-7987, shhwee@sbcglobal.net
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

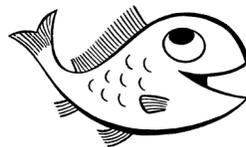
Bulletin submissions must be e-mailed by Thursday noon or phoned by Thursday, 9:00 pm, to:
Kay, kaywill@pacbell.net, (650)270-4188,
and Michelle, myhogan@comcast.net, (650) 493-8452.

TMC donation envelope enclosed 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.

Friday Fish Fest August 17 at Thomas House:



Shut your kitchen door and come on down to the Thomas House for a tasty fish and coleslaw supper at the STA Friday Fish Fest on August 17.

We start at 6:00 p.m. and finish by 8:00, and in between there is camaraderie, laughter, sharing, learning about folks whose faces may be familiar but whose stories are not. Sponsored by the STA Site Committee, the Fish Fest draws folks from all the STA Mass communities-- there are 6 distinct groups, each clustered around a particular daily or Sunday Mass. This is a chance to cross-pollinate! A post-prandial sing-along with guitarist Paul Prochaska will cap off the evening.

We ask for a \$5 donation for the meal, and \$2 each for a glass of wine or a beer. You are free to bring a dessert to share, but otherwise, the fare is simply fish and chips with coleslaw on the side.

RSVP is necessary, to be sure we have enough fish! Helen Baumann, hbbbaumann@aol.com, 650-327-9236.

Ecumenical Hunger Project needs helpers:

Every Wednesday at St. Francis of Assisi Parish at 1425 Bay Road in East Palo Alto, volunteers assist the Ecumenical Hunger Program (EHP) offering dinner to hungry people and families.

- 1) 2:30 p.m.**, set up and wash tables, put out forks and napkins, help prep food, begin the cooking.
- 2) 4:00 pm**, serve food onto plates then wrap with Saran wrap about 30 dinners for people to take home after their sit-down meal
- 3) 6:00-7:00 pm**, clean & organize the kitchen & dining hall.

Info: Email to: volunteers@ehpcare.org or call (650) 323-7781 or Terry at 650-714-2131.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Making sense of Russia:

[By Paul Baumann, Senior Writer at *Commonweal*, 7/23/18]

It is mildly surprising that most Republicans, following the shameless sycophancy of President Trump, now profess an admiration for Vladimir Putin, a dictator who assassinates his opponents and has invaded a neighboring country. This is, of course, a dramatic reversal from the fervent and occasionally paranoid anticommunism that was fundamental to the party's identity until...well, until the day before yesterday. But it is not shocking. For the past several decades it has been clear that the Republicans consider the Democrats, alleged advocates of military weakness and sexual permissiveness, a graver threat to American democracy than any foreign adversary. Demonizing "liberals" is an article of faith. That's why even never-Trump Republicans could not bring themselves to vote for Hillary Clinton. "Most Republicans," *New York* magazine's Jonathan Chait observes, "would rather win an election with Putin's help than lose one without it."

Republicans once dared to call it treason.

If Robert Mueller is allowed to finish his investigation, presumably we will learn to what extent the Trump campaign colluded with the Russians. Given their refusal to accept any criticism of the man on a white horse in the White House, most Trump supporters are unlikely to be persuaded by the facts as presented by Mueller (a decorated war hero and a Republican), or even to believe that such facts exist. In the meantime, the U.S. intelligence services warn that Russia continues to undermine Western democracies at every opportunity. Russia, it seems, has both a persecution complex and a grandiose belief in its own messianic role in world affairs.

"What Russia is no Westerner knows—only some Russians and some Poles do," the Nobel Prize-winning Polish poet Czesław Miłosz wrote to Thomas Merton in 1960. (Their correspondence has been collected in a book titled *Striving Toward Being*.) Miłosz

first came to prominence in the West in 1953 with the publication of *The Captive Mind*, his study of the intellectual seductions of totalitarianism. History, not evolution, economics, political science, or diplomacy, is the key to understanding a nation like Russia, Miłosz suggested to Merton. The Soviet Union's crimes against the Poles, Miłosz thought, gave his countrymen a unique understanding of the Russian temperament, if not the Russian soul. With remarkable prescience regarding the Trump-Putin romance, he wrote, "There is, in formation, a whole body of potential 'new men' in American universities and even in business circles: men without heads and without imagination, with three or four eyes and iron teeth, who are secretly in love with the concept of a vast managerial society. One day we are going to wake up and find America and Russia in bed together (forgive the unmonastic image) and realize that they were happily married all along. It is then that the rest of us are going to have to sort ourselves out and find out if there remains, for us, a little fresh air somewhere in the universe."

Trump is not much of a manager, but like Putin, he does seem to have iron teeth, teeth capable of chewing up clueless adversaries.

Writing at the height of the Cold War, Miłosz nevertheless insisted that the Soviet Union was but "one of the avatars" of an older, recognizable Russian civilization, one that exhibited "astonishing continuity under changing appearances." Russians, Miłosz wrote, understood themselves to be participants in the destiny of "Crucified Russia, as the Savior of mankind, as a chosen nation opening the paths to true Christianity through suffering." That is a myth Putin has vigorously embraced with his reestablishment of the Russian Orthodox Church and his denunciations of Western liberal "decadence." Historically, the myth of Russia's divine vocation, Miłosz warned, allowed Russians to shirk any sense of personal responsibility when serving the state. "A dream about collective purity achieved thanks to collective suffering is just a dream and in practice it leads to bestiality," he wrote. Miłosz witnessed "in 1945 the murders committed by Russian soldiers with a deep feeling of sin, but without any feeling of personal guilt whatever."

Trump himself is devoid of any sense of personal guilt, whether it comes to assaulting women, separating infants from their parents, or lying about everything. Perhaps that preternatural sense of immunity is another reason Trump is drawn to Putin. #

PRAY FOR US: Please remember in your prayers this week Denise Alongi, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Mary Connors, Mike Cummings, Ken Dias, Pat Dietrich, Dick Freeman, Fr. Thierry Geris, Deonna Gill, Emily Gill, Joanne Hasegawa, Fr. John Hester, Dean Judd, Hunter Kubit, Dick Jackman, 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 editors: Michelle Hogan, Kay Williams. See listing adjacent.]

Please join us after Mass in the Thomas House for coffee and donuts. We especially encourage newcomers or those passing through town to stop by for food and fellowship.

Tame the chaos with newsletters:

[By Jim McDermott, S.J., *America*, 7/24/18]

Imagine if you could map the internet as though it were a planet. (Okay, yes, in the current state of our lives internet-as-planet might not sound like the greatest idea—inflamed sore as celestial body. But ride with me for a second.)

On this virtual world, Facebook and Google become major continents. Sites like Netflix and Amazon number among its mightiest empires.

And in one tiny, out-of-the-way corner, overlooked by most, would sit a place of quiet riches, what writer Warren Ellis has deemed the Republic of Newsletters.

Once upon a time a newsletter was the spam you got from the businesses you used or the groups to which you belonged. It was the internet's version of the Sunday ad insert (but with tracking devices).

But today newsletters have become a place where you can find everything from deep cuts on current affairs from experts like tech ethicist Damien Williams or “lovely and/or meaningful things” from culture consumers like digital strategist Laura Olin, to spiritual reflections, like mini-retreats, from a Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., Joan Chittister, O.S.B. or Richard Rohr, O.F.M. It's like all the best speakers from your local bookstore or the 92nd Street Y, delivered every week to your inbox.

Even though blogs have fallen to the wayside in favor of the microblogging of social media, “People still yearn for that larger, expansive, more free-form writing (both as readers and writers),” Anne Helen Petersen, a senior culture writer at BuzzFeed, tells me in an email. “I blogged for a long time, and although I do a lot of writing for work, I missed the unfiltered writing style of a personal blog.” Today she writes a really interesting newsletter about her work in celebrity journalism and life in the Western United States.

At a time where we find our newsfeeds both deluged with information (much of it regurgitated from other sources) and “curated” by others, newsletters also offer the possibility of greater control. “In this age of the algorithm, all these different platforms are trying to dictate to people what they think they're going to be interested in,” says Wallace Mack, whose newsletter for the black culture podcast *The Nod* offers stories about everything from his experiences leaving home in rural South Carolina to people's strong feelings about Girl Scout cookies.

“With a newsletter, you can determine who you're subscribed to,” he says. “People are moving to a place where they want to be able to personalize their approach to the media they consume.”

I love newsletters for all of that—for the depth and

variety of the writing you can find in them, for the ability they offer to create a sort of channel of stories and news of your own.

But what most draws me to newsletters is the admittedly strange sense of a personal connection. We find ourselves today so completely surrounded by shouting and hysteria. Most days it feels like we are castaways on some awful mashup of *Lord of the Flies* and “Gilligan's Island.” (Fun fact: Gilligan is really nice until you give him a Wi-Fi connection.)

In the midst of all that, a good newsletter is like a message in a bottle, a voice that cuts through. Eric Eddings, co-host of *The Nod*, describes reading *New York Magazine* columnist Ann Friedman's weekly newsletter: “Even though it's a bunch of links, she describes them in such a way that you feel who she is coming through. And now I'm not just thinking how I might click on two of the articles and keep moving. I'm checking in with a friend.”

Some might read science fiction writer Paul Cornell's weekly newsletter to find out the details of his next book; what keeps me coming back are the moments he tells stories about being a dad to a young autistic son.

Likewise I look forward to Warren Ellis's Sunday letter *Orbital Operations* in part to hear about his latest projects, the talks he has given and the ideas he is chewing on. Usually there are a couple of thoughts in there about the past or the future that I am liable to cut myself on if I am not careful.

But what makes it my favorite read each week is that he writes with such humanity. “Hold on tight,” he often writes at the end. “Everything's gone nuts but it doesn't have to take you with it.” “Keep your head clear, keep shit at bay, turn off the poison feeds, work when you can, take five minutes a day to be where you are, and live your damn life your way and without apology.”

Or, my personal favorite: “Be careful out there, be kind, be prepared, be aware, be informed and be ready to press that little nerve in the side of someone's neck that kills them instantly. It's only wise and proper. See you next week, my little death badgers.”

Social media drew us in with promises that it could provide a greater sense of community, and it seems like it should have the capacity to do just that. Yet today much of the online world only erodes our feelings of empathy or connection. (How can you possibly hear anyone anyway over all the screaming?)

Meanwhile I have never met Ellis, I do not know anyone else who reads *Orbital Operations*, yet each week through his newsletter I feel like I am a part of a little community. We gather in this fragile clearing, delight in the tales of a beloved, insane uncle, and rest in the fact that as crazy as the world may currently be, we are not alone.

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