



Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 24, 2019

Readings

This week:

1 Samuel 26:2, 7–9, 12–13, 22–23

I Corinthians 15:45–49

Luke 6:27–38

Next week:

Sirach 27:4–7

I Corinthians 15:54–58

Luke 6:39–45

Psalm

The Lord is kind and merciful. (*Psalm 103*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. Kevin Ballard, S.J.

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.

From Thomas Merton

The man who fears to be alone will never be anything but lonely, no matter how much he may surround himself with people. But the man who learns, in solitude and recollection, to be at peace with his own loneliness, and to prefer its reality to the illusion of merely natural companionship, comes to know the invisible companionship of God. Such a one is alone with God in all places, and he alone truly enjoys the companionship of other men, because he loves them in God, in whom their presence is not tiresome, and because of whom his own love for them can never know satiety.

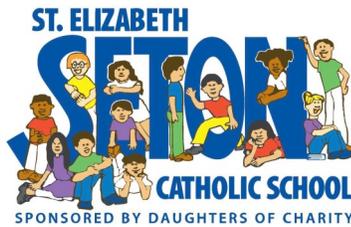
--No Man Is an Island

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

Save the date for Seton Golf May 6:

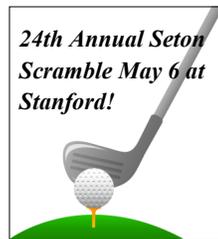


Play golf on the renowned Stanford Golf Course and support Seton School students at the 24th Annual Seton Scramble for Students on Monday, May 6th.

This golfing fundraiser empowers children of low-income families to reach their full potential through the monies raised by the golf registration fees.

In addition to the golf, there is food: Coupa Café catering, food, wine, beverages. Awards and a Silent & Live Auction cap off the day's golfing exertions.

Proceeds will directly support St. Elizabeth Seton School students. For more information: email Carmel Caligaris at ccaligaris@setonpaloalto.org. Register at: www.setonpaloalto.org.



Update from TMC Board:

At the January meeting of the TMC Board, the following topics were discussed or decided upon:

- The TMC Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, May 19, 2019.
- 2018 Financial Report showed a cash balance of approx. \$65,000, including bequests from Jane Bahr (in 2010) and Susan Thomas (in 2018).
- Decision was made to donate \$400 per month to STA parish--because parish income is falling and we use parish facilities.

PRAY FOR US: Please remember in your prayers this week Denise Alongi, Rudy Bahr, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, Kerry Carmody, George Chippendale, Mary Connors, Mike Cummings, Jim Davis, 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 editor Kay Williams at kaywill@pacbell.net.]

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.

International Thomas Merton Society 16th General Meeting at Santa Clara U. June 27-30:

This biennial meeting carries out the mission of the ITMS to promote an understanding and appreciation of the multifaceted character of Thomas Merton and encourages study and research to make better known the unique contribution he has made to the literature of spirituality and to American literature and religious life.

This year's conference theme is "O Peace, bless this mad place," a line from a poem by Merton. Keynote speakers include Rose Marie Berger, Fr. Cyprian Consiglio, O.S.B. Cam., Robert Ellsberg, Ron Hansen, and Richard Rodriguez, a panel on Dan Berrigan, and many concurrent sessions on topics such as Merton and Racism, Merton and the Ignatian Tradition, Merton and Peace, Merton and Ecology. Sr. Kathleen Deignan, who has led several retreats for TMC in the past, will participate in a workshop, as will Morgan Atkinson, the filmmaker who has shown two of his films on Merton at TMC events.

Registration for the 3-day conference is open now at: merton.org/2019. Registration fee is \$350 for ITMS members (TMC is a member) or \$400 for non-members and includes 3 days of meetings and meals. (There is no option for partial registration.) Several members of the TMC Spiritual Education Committee will be attending. Contact Anna Jaklitsch with questions: annajak14@yahoo.com or 650-327-0978.

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COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Give the Church back to the people:

[By Daniel P. Rhodes, *U.S. Catholic*, Feb. 2019]

The church faces some enormous challenges going forward....Declining membership, estrangement of young people, sagging cultural relevance, clergy shortages, growing financial crises due to lawsuits, and upkeep on aging facilities all threaten the church's viability.

...As is the case in so many areas around the country, Chicago's parishes are disappearing, and the church is scrambling to sell off its real estate in order to cover its debts. From Pittsburgh to New York, Baltimore to Detroit, decline is more the norm than the exception as parishes fold or are forced to merge.

At the same time, the country as a whole is currently experiencing an affordable housing crisis. Rents have been steeply increasing over the past eight years and evictions are on the rise, as is homelessness and housing instability. Two-and-a-half million children in the United States are homeless each year, and 43 percent of U.S. children are from low-income families that struggle to meet basic expenses.

...Given this context, how might the church move toward renewal? Begin with property.

Take for example the Archdiocese of Chicago. As one of the largest real estate owners in the city, the church has a ready solution to this crisis. The church could feasibly establish cooperative ownership companies with local residents aimed at redeveloping vacant or underused church properties as affordable housing units. Such an act of ecclesial enterprise would transform the situation for many of our vulnerable citizens, providing them with affordable and secure access to the basic necessity of housing. That would truly be good news to many.

Further, and as an added bonus, it has the potential to vivify the church in at least two ways: First, imagine the good will between the church and local communities such a solution could create. Now more than ever, people need to know that the church is in it for them and not merely for its own preservation.

Second, such an act of ecclesial friendship would not only rescue a significant number of Chicagoans suffering under the power of the privatized real estate market, transforming the civic structure of the city, it would also return scattered parishioners to these dying congregations by literally welcoming them home with housing. The church could renew and transform parishes by giving them to the parishioners, reconnecting thousands of people to the church at the most intimate and concrete place—where they live....

In some instances, the church might consider organizing a co-op, even continuing to hold shares itself in the new venture. Public funding is available for such projects. In other spaces, it may make more sense to develop the property for affordable rental units, where the church could set up a democratic co-op of tenants and stakeholders to distribute costs and govern lease arrangements. The key is that the people are incorporated into ownership and oversight of the place they live and thus reconceive it as their parish.

The agrarian contemplative Wendell Berry has suggested that people will not care for their habitat simply because they are supposed to or because they're paid to do so, even if those payments come in the form of sacred rewards. Instead, people care for things in which they have a direct interest, where that connection is dependable and permanent. That is to say, people care for things that belong to them as much as they belong to it.

I think it's much the same for a parish. Berry suggests that universal solutions will only be destructive. Instead, we need local thinking—parish thinking—thinking that begins in particular places and takes them seriously. Solutions must start on the ground instead of in the ephemeral corridors of finance or the high offices of asset management.

Renewal of the church is not going to come through a program for survival. That "those who seek to save their lives will lose them" is no less true for our ecclesial institutions than it is for individuals. Instead, renewal will come only by acting in the freedom the church has in Christ and through the power of the Spirit to embody something different, something actually new.

As the Dominican priest Herbert McCabe once said, "If Christianity is not the revolution, nothing else is."...[A]n approach to the current crisis that looks beyond stabilization or maintenance is not only possible—it's divinely encouraged.

... Local solutions are no less complicated than large ones much of the time. But surely those acting to make friends by means of unrighteous mammon can be just as shrewd (Luke 16:9) in such acts of ecclesial friendship as those who created complex instruments like derivatives, credit-default swaps, and subprime mortgages.

I have no doubt that this proposal will make few in the real estate office of our dioceses and archdioceses happy. But it is exactly here that we need to acknowledge the degree to which we've allowed the institution of private property to shape our church. Moreover, recent studies in the field of institutional economics indicate that alternative forms of property can actually be more conducive to growth and broader development. Who besides the church has both the call and ability to create, pilot, and witness to the possibilities of such alternative forms of

(Continued on page 4.)

Systemic malady has deep roots in clerical culture:

[Editorial, *National Catholic Reporter*, Feb. 20, 2019]

Reasons immediate and remote have merged to force a first meeting of its kind — the gathering in Rome in February of the heads of bishops' conferences around the world to discuss the global clergy sex abuse scandal.

John Carr, who directs the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University and who has spent most of his life working for bishops, had an apt characterization of the Feb. 21-24 event: It should have happened a long time ago, and it's a miracle it's happening.

Indeed, the scandal has been around a long time and, in hindsight, perhaps a progression can be detected as hierarchy and people moved through stages of denial to realization and accountability.

It has become clear during the past half-year that two occurrences caused the scandal to take hold of people's imagination in an entirely new way. The first was the revelation that the highly regarded former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick had acted inappropriately with seminarians and was credibly accused of sexually abusing a child. The second was graphic accounts of abuse in the Pennsylvania grand jury report, including details of episcopal cover-up.

These were old incidents newly revealed, but they served to finally raise awareness that this was not a problem isolated in a dark corner of the church or the problem of "a few bad apples," or even the result of misunderstanding and mistakes.

It was instead, and remains, a systemic malady with its roots deep in a clerical culture that valued secrecy, privilege and power over the welfare of child victims and their families.

Something has definitely changed since last summer. Theologian and lawyer Cathleen Kaveny of Boston College, during a panel discussion last November, said, "I think that this iteration of the crisis has marked a turning point in how Catholics, especially American Catholics, are perceiving the church. ... Many people now are not seeing the sex abuse crisis as an aberration within the system, but they're seeing it as something that runs throughout the system. That it is enabled by the system."

The disturbing question that follows, she said, is: "What would have to be true of the church and its culture for sex abuse like this not to be an aberration but to be something that's running through it?"

She went even deeper, saying we need "theological language" in discussing the scandal and a way "of reimagining our common life."

Such steps are for farther down the road. For the moment, it will be enough that the global church square

up with the truth.

No four-day meeting in Rome could deal adequately with decades of crime and cover-up, much yet to be revealed in parts of the globe.

Some concrete measures must be taken, however, if the church is to find the path to healing and credibility and if trust between hierarchy and the rest of the community is ever to be restored. Those measures must include a firm, clear, global definition of zero tolerance and what happens when a member of the clergy is accused. Leaders must define clearly, for the worldwide church, what happens should an accusation be found credible. They must also include a new mechanism that is continually examining bishops worldwide and then holding them accountable when they do not handle an accusation appropriately.

The U.S. delegation takes a lot of hard-earned experience to the Rome conference. They should also carry another of Carr's messages that would be affirmed by a lot of Catholics: "The patience of the people of God is exhausted with the episcopal and clerical culture that puts itself first." #

(Give the Church back....continued from page 3.)

property for the flourishing of persons and communities?

Given the new round of revelations of yet more clergy sex abuse and cover ups that have recently come to light, a call for changes to the structures of the church has come again to the fore. Some call for changes to the structures of power and authority, but what might it look like to move toward a new kind of institution, one not so structured on free-market privileged forms of property?

We will undoubtedly need to marshal a great degree of innovation. It would require us to develop new ways of thinking theologically about property. ...St. Thomas Aquinas taught that property must be subjected to the common good. ... Rethinking how we purpose our resources and who has access to those resources will be pivotal; there's no doubt we can be more creative than we have been.

Using physical capital, especially neglected physical capital, to build real, tangible relationships with those living in its communities, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, is exactly the kind of new vision we need.

... I think many of our people would be quite excited to actually put bricks and mortar on Pope Francis' call for a new evangelization. At worst it could be a failure, but the church is already failing, so we need not fear that. At best it could comprehensively rehabilitate our declining parishes while offering a truly inviting witness.

We have nothing to lose but many hundreds or even thousands of neighbors and friends to gain. It's time to give ourselves a renewed church, literally.

[Daniel P. Rhodes is the faculty coordinator of contextual education at the Institute of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University Chicago and editor-in-chief of *The Other Journal*.]