



Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 17, 2019

Readings

This week:

Jeremiah 17:5–8

I Corinthians 15:12, 16–20

Luke 6:17, 20–26

Next week:

1 Samuel 26:2, 7–9, 12–13, 22–23

I Corinthians 15:45–49

Luke 6:27–38

Psalm

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord. (*Psalm 1*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. Xavier Lavagetto, O.P..

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

Monday, Feb. 18, 7:00 p.m. TMC Spiritual Education Committee, Thomas House

Saturday, Feb. 23, 3:00 p.m. Michael Higgins talk: Merton and King, (see pg 2)

From Thomas Merton

If a man has to be pleasing to me, comforting, reassuring, before I can love him, then I cannot truly love him. Not that love cannot console or reassure! But if I demand first to be reassured, I will never dare to begin loving. If a man has to be a Jew or a Christian before I can love him, then I cannot love him. If he has to be black or white before I can love him,, then I cannot love him. If he has to belong to my political party or social group before I can love him, if he has to wear any kind of uniform, then my love is no longer love because it is not free: it is dictated by something outside itself. It is dominated by an appetite other than love. I love not the person but his classification, and in that event I love him not as a person but as a thing. In this way I remain at the mercy of forces outside myself, and those who seem to me to be neighbors are indeed strangers; for I am, first of all, a stranger to myself.

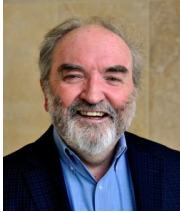
--*Seasons of Celebration*

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

Merton scholar Michael Higgins to speak February 23 in Menlo Park:



All are welcome on Saturday, February 23, at 3:00 pm to hear a talk by Prof. Michael W. Higgins entitled "Thomas Merton and Martin Luther King: Prophets for Today," at the Menlo Park Recreation Center at 700 Alma Street in Menlo Park.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the deaths of Merton and King in 1968, the TMC Spiritual Education Committee is bringing Professor Higgins from Connecticut to speak on Merton and Martin Luther King and what might have been had they had an in-person conversation, as they had hoped to do. Higgins says: "Both men understood the power of a vision electrified by words, a vision biblical and epic in its range and yet grounded in the real."

Higgins is Canadian-born and educated, a celebrated scholar, writer and gifted speaker. He is a leading biographer of Merton and of the Dutch priest-psychologist Henri Nouwen, a popular spiritual writer in the post-Vatican II years.

Donate your old shoes in February:

The STA Human Concerns Committee is collecting used and/or new shoes during the month of February.



You will find a collection box placed for your convenience in the vestibule of the church.

Your shoes will be taken to DSW (Designer Shoe Warehouse) and shipped at their expense to Soles4Souls warehouses for distribution to men, women and children in need around the world. In 2012, our parish contributed 597 pairs of shoes!

We encourage you to gather your unneeded gently-used shoes and find the donation box in the church vestibule.

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.]

Dorothy Day's spirituality and witness on Feb. 19:

All are invited to the Spirituality Tuesday Assembly on February 19 to hear from Fr. Kevin Joyce, Ph.D. on "Dorothy Day: Traditional Spirituality - Radical Witness," at the St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center, 1095 Channing Ave., Palo Alto, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Fr. Joyce will consider the witness of Day and the Catholic Worker Movement, an example of deep traditional spirituality united with dynamic social action. Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker movement, is considered by many to be the most influential American Catholic woman of the 20th Century. Her prophetic witness on behalf of the poor and marginalized was nourished by traditional Catholic spirituality. Fr. Joyce will explore how her radical activism flowed directly from ancient Catholic sources available to us all.

Fr. Kevin Joyce completed his Ph.D. in Spirituality at the Catholic University of America. He served for many years as pastor of large multi-cultural parishes, director of a diocesan spirituality center, and presently serves at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in San Jose.

This is Have-A-Heart Weekend:

This year, cash donations will be collected to provide for a variety of client needs that arise over the year at our local Opportunity Center, 33 Encina, north of Town and Country Shopping Center. NOTE: Collection boxes are also available in the vestibules if you prefer to shop yourself and donate underwear and socks.

Thanks to your generous donations in prior years, our parish has been able to provide sleeping bags, rain ponchos, thermal blankets, winter hats, men's and ladies underwear, warm socks and other similar items as needed. This is in addition to the Soles4Souls effort (separate boxes in each vestibule).

Human Concern Committee representatives will be available after each mass this weekend to receive cash donations. Checks should be made out to STA Parish with *HCC/Have A Heart* on the memo line.

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COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Our differences can make tomorrow better:

[by Sr. Joan Chittister, O.P.]

Differences are a big thing in the United States. And always have been. We love to say that human beings are all equal, all alike, all welcome, all free to participate in the purpose and fulfillment of life. And that's true — but not totally true. In fact, we have never, all of us, been anything close to that.

Whole populations have been excluded from American society and or citizenship at any given time in our history. Ask the Native Americans, African-Americans, or women. Ask Catholics whether they got a warm welcome here in the 19th century. Ask the Chinese who were allowed to build our transcontinental railroads but were not free to seek citizenship.

Ask Eastern Europeans how it felt to integrate into the United States. Ask the Japanese what they went through trying to be seen as Americans — even to this day. Ask Central Americans and other Hispanics who have picked our fruit and vegetables for decades now how American they feel yet. How welcome. How cared for — even if they were born here in a country with a birthright clause that it is now seeking to ignore.

No doubt about it: Differences are a big thing. They keep a society alive. They are a well of creativity, a signal of new possibilities. They are the resources that nourish a new future for us all. Which is exactly where [St.] Benedict's second principle of life comes in.

We are told, first, to be aware of the overarching presence of God in life. Then, the second principle of humility proceeds logically from the first: If God is the driving force in our life, then the will of that Loving God will, of course, be best for us, for everyone. If, that is, we do not try to substitute our will for the will of the Creator for creation.

But what exactly is the will of God for humankind? The answer comes back clear and simple through the Prophet Jeremiah: "I wish you well," says God, "and not woe."

God's will for creation, according to the second degree of humility in the Rule of Benedict, is the fullness of creation, all of creation. And if you really believe that the One God created us all, then you must realize that God's will for us is God's will for everyone: It is "well and not woe."

Then our current mantra "America first" topples over

with a thud heard round the world. Then we wonder why we never feel really secure now. Then we figure out that in order "to win, win, win," we must, of course, pit ourselves against the rest of the world. Which really means that America will never be great again. As in greatly peaceful, greatly caring, greatly trusting, greatly at peace in the world.

I can understand that for some it might feel like a stretch to use a spirituality of the sixth century as a mirror of the 21st. But the fact is that though history has changed in the interim, humanity has not.

The same emotions, assumptions, values and attitudes in one century simply keep appearing in situation after situation because they are endemic to human nature. They are the stuff of human growth — and of human deterioration, as well...

For instance, Alexander the Great set out to build the empire to end all empires and so did Hitler, but neither of them succeeded. Caesar fell out with his advisers and so did Churchill. People sent their sons to die in the French Revolution centuries ago, just as we did in ours. The Reformation churches struggled with how to honor the dogmas of the church and still renew it — and so have we.

The truth is that it's no stretch at all to compare how the human profile is still built on body and mind, matter and spirit, reason and feeling. Or as the Jewish character Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* puts it in his claims to be part of universal humanity in antisemitic Venice by saying,

Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? ...

If you prick us, do we not bleed?

If you tickle us, do we not laugh?

If you poison us, do we not die?

Are we not all the same? Indeed, on the second degree of humility — to want "well and not woe" for everyone — rests the indestructible bond of human relations. Heraclitus writes, "Character is fate." Are human dignity, the decency of respect, and delight in the things of creation not the real answer to human contentment, to world peace, to honorable and holy human relations?

From where I stand, that does not mean that we will have less. It does mean that we will wish for others what we need for ourselves and, with incontestable Christian character, join them in their right to have it.

[Joan Chittister is a Benedictine sister of Erie, PA.]

Why the Beatitudes are hard to believe:

[By Fr. Terrance Klein, *America*, 2/13/19]

Try to imagine, if only for a moment, being separated from your young child. If your politics will not permit you to empathize with those on our borders, then picture a different scenario. There are other reasons why children are suddenly taken from their parents.

As a parent, this is not something that you saw coming. You have not had time to prepare yourself or your child for what is happening. You have no idea how long the separation will last. You do not know for sure if you will ever see each other again. You have not been given any time to converse with your child, to say that is not what you intended, that there is nothing you can do to prevent it, that your child must not believe that you do this willingly or that you do not love your child.

What else could you do, save hold your young child as tightly as possible for as long as permitted, saying over and over, “I love you; it will be all right”?...

But don't most of us suspect that however confounding and unlike the world in which we live, the Beatitudes perfectly express the mission and the person of Jesus—and, consequently, of the faith and the community that he gave to us?

Read them at any stage of your life, in any conceivable circumstance of your life. Don't they ever remain both comforting and confounding? Comforting because they suffuse our lives with hope. Confounding because they do not correspond to the world in which we live. Don't all of us, at one level of consciousness or another, find ourselves saying or, perhaps, praying, “I sure hope that they are true.”

In confronting calamity, the Prophet Jeremiah cried out,

*Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings,
who seeks his strength in flesh,
whose heart turns away from the Lord (17:5).*

Then he quickly countered,

*Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose hope is the Lord (17:7).*

The person and mission of Jesus as expressed in the Beatitudes perfectly correspond to the stark division that Jeremiah draws in human life: There is a world and person, neither of which we can directly see but from which flow every blessing that this life can offer. If we choose what faith can perceive over what our eyes do indeed see, we will be blessed. If we will not raise our eyes, then we cut ourselves off from the very source of life, which is the very meaning of being cursed.

St. Paul preached to the church in Corinth:

[I]f Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain;

you are still in your sins.

Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all (1 Cor 15:16-19).

The credibility of both the person and the mission of Jesus rise and fall with our belief in his resurrection from the dead. In his triumph over death, Christ reveals a world beyond our own and the love that long has ruled therein.

Some people reduce Jesus of Nazareth to a long line of wise, human teachers. Certainly his Golden Rule—doing unto others as you would have them do unto you—transcends any creed. Even a non-believer finds it a credible, albeit challenging, course of action.

But if Jesus did not come among us to reveal a person and a world that we do not know, could not know without his life, death and resurrection, then neither the totality of his life nor the Beatitudes make any sense at all. Reread them. If this world is all there is, then the Beatitudes are not only nonsense; they are wantonly wicked.

The core of our faith is that we are loved by someone whom we cannot see. We cannot see God because we and our world are utterly enveloped in God's love. At present, we are like newborn infants who do not distinguish the goodness of the world from the face and the voice of the mother.

The heart of our faith, the person and preaching of Jesus, tells us that this world of longing and suffering is not what the God who loves us intended. We have been separated from the love of a parent by forces beyond our control, and if our loving parent has permitted this to happen it is not for any lack of love. The hope of our faith is that our parent will find us, reclaim us and lift us again into arms of love.

The tortured event, a beloved child cruelly sundered from a loving parent, is how our faith understands the human condition. We read sacred Scripture to remind ourselves of the world from which we came and to which we travel. We celebrate sacraments so that Christ can reach into history from both past and future, giving us tangible signs of his graciousness. We cling to our brothers and our sisters in the faith because the world darkens and we need them to remind us of the loving family from which we come.

Read the Beatitudes. Memorize them. They do not describe the world in which we live. They tell us how to live in this world so as to prepare for one yet to come. Belief in another world gives us the courage to resist and to renew this one. And always remember: Jesus preached the Beatitudes. He lived them and died for them. And in rising from the dead, Christ confirmed them. #