



Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 31, 2019

Readings

This week:

Joshua 5:9a, 10–12

2 Corinthians 5:17–21

Luke 15:1–3, 11–32

Next week:

Isaiah 43:16–21

Philippians 3:8–14

John 8:1–11

Psalm

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord. (*Psalm 34*)

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 coffee pot 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, April 3, 7:30 pm

STA Site Committee, Thomas House Library

Saturday, April 6, 9 am—12 noon

Lenten Morning of Reflection at SAGH (page 2)

From Thomas Merton

My successes are not my own. The way to them was prepared by others. The fruit of my labors is not my own, for I am preparing the way for the achievements of another. Nor are my failures my own. They may spring from the failure of another, but they are also compensated for by another's achievement. Therefore, the meaning of my life is not to be looked for merely in the sum total of my own achievements. It is seen only in the complete integration of my achievements and failures with the achievements and failures of my own generation, my own society and time.

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

Share Lent with a reflective community April 6:

Lenten Morning of Reflection with Sr. Marilyn Wilson, BVM, Saturday, April 6, 9:00 am - 12:00 noon, at St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center, 1095 Channing Ave., Palo Alto



Sr. Marilyn Wilson is an educator, spiritual director and retreat facilitator. She believes that in order to deepen our spiritual lives we must find time for reflection and solitude. Sharing with companions on this journey often helps. On

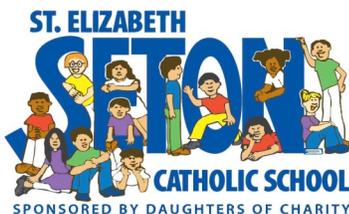
April 6, she will guide us in an informal structure of prayer and contemplation, opening spiritual space as we approach Easter.

Sr. Marilyn has an MTS in Theology from the Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley, CA and a certificate in Spiritual Direction from Mercy Center. (MA English Communications)

In addition to her spiritual companionship, Sr. Marilyn is an active member of the Catholic Network to End Human Trafficking—Diocese of San Jose (CHEHT) and No Traffick Ahead (NTA), for which she provides presentations and educational materials around the issue of ending human trafficking. As a peace and justice advocate for women and children, she is particularly interested in addressing violence against women and children in any form.

All are welcome. Breakfast refreshments (coffee, bagels, fruit) will be served.

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.

Seton School empowers children of low-income families to reach their full potential—helped by the monies raised from 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. Early Bird Registration Deadline is April 12!

March means TMC Membership renewal:



Thomas Merton Center (TMC) membership materials have been sent or given to all current TMC members.

This Vatican II –inspired lay community has been in existence since 1995 and welcomes all who are interested in being part of an independent intentional faith community at home in the Catholic Church.



If you would like to become a member of TMC, a membership application form is available in the church vestibule (in St. Catherine's Corner, outside the restroom).

The Thomas Merton Center is a membership-based non-profit religious education organization required by its bylaws to register its membership annually. Membership fees are minimal—\$15 per individual or \$30 per family. Your choice to become a member helps to keep this Catholic, lay-led, progressive faith community active.

Your membership shows your support for sustaining the Sunday 8:45 a.m. Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas church, the adult spiritual education programs, and educational opportunities at St. Elizabeth Seton School in Palo Alto.

Please contact Kay Williams for more information: kaywill@pacbell.net, 650-270-4188.

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.

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COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Praying hands are begging hands:

[By Dani Clark, *National Catholic Reporter*, 3/19/19]

When we were little, my sister and I would take turns putting my mother's ivory-colored slip on our heads. To us, the polyester undergarment was like Mary's veil, but also like the Bionic Woman's blonde locks, which we didn't have.

Either way, it felt glorious to wear that slip like a wig. Tucking the elastic of the waistband behind my ears and pressing my two palms together in the middle of my chest in prayer, I would ask, "Do I look like Mary?" I would get annoyed when my sister pulled the slip off my head to present her version and ask the same question. Wisely, my mother never adjudicated.

Later, I remember the strict instructions of an elderly Salesian nun who prepped my second-grade class for Communion. She put her hands together near the clunky silver cross on her chest, showing us how we would walk up the aisle. The praying hands were part of the show, the physical proof that we were holy and perfect, good enough to welcome the Lord, and definitely not what we would become one day, that is, hormonal and prone to lying like everyone else.

Praying hands are everywhere. In yoga classes and in most religions, but maybe — and yes, I am biased here — maybe especially in Catholicism. Think of all those pleading hands in centuries-old paintings and statues and the way we all still kneel after Communion, heads down and hands clasped, reckoning with our faulty selves.

Are we just mimicking each other? In our Catholic milieu, are praying hands just a habit picked up after so many years of going to Mass? A learned gesture, after seeing so many holy cards and visions of saintliness, especially of the supplicant Marian variety? Or is it something deeper, something that Christians inherited from their pagan forbearers, something universally human?

I can still see the colorful images of St. Catherine of Siena in the thin paperback glossary of saints book they gave us in religion class. Her hands are clasped. Years later, I stared at the marble statue covering her bones in the Church of Santa Maria Minerva in Rome. The effigy lies in peace, hands together on her chest. A goddess in repose.

In Italian, the word *pregare* means to pray, but also "to beg." The Italians — I'm married to one, so I know — like to put their hands in the praying position, move them back and forth, and say, *ti prego* or, "I beg you" when they want you to do something, or better, when with a shrewd look in their eye they are trying to explain something and want you to believe it. As if to say: "Now please, won't you believe me?"

Yes, praying hands are begging hands, they are conciliatory. And they are nonviolent because they prove your inability to fight back. They prove your vulnera-

bility. I find that beautiful — and useful. Maybe because putting your hands together doesn't require much, not a sinless soul or even a mustard seed of faith.

I find myself these days putting my hands together at odd moments. Like when someone on the bus is talking too loud and I need patience. Or when I suddenly realize that this sky, this sun and that person are here with me now on this Earth in a moment that will never come again. Or when I read about children who are hurting in far-off lands, or someone is executed, or another friend now has cancer. Lord, have mercy on us all.

I touch right palm to left palm and hold them together. I notice how this brings peace to my body. How it brings me into a realm of prayer that I wouldn't possess the key to, had I decided to force pious thoughts through my brain. With my hands clasped — and sometimes that clasping is fierce — I close my eyes. I feel my heart beating through my palms and fingertips, the two sides of my body meeting, as if the Spirit were saying, "Let her be whole again." None of this happens with words in my head. And yet it is an awareness. One that says control and power are illusions, and maybe you will never learn, but that is OK, because you cannot control that either.

But most of all, putting my hands together, I am putting everything else aside. I am paying attention, turning on a listening ear inside the cavity of my chest, where I sincerely hope God dwells, despite everything I know about myself.

"Attention taken to its highest degree is the same thing as prayer," the philosopher Simone Weil wrote and was followed years later by the late poet Mary Oliver who wrote almost the same thing, "Attention is the beginning of devotion." Our hands together are one good place to start. It's comforting to know we aren't the first humans to figure this out, and we won't be the last.

[Dani Clark is a member of the Community of Sant'Egidio and works in communications at an international development organization. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband and son.]

PRAY FOR US: Please remember in your prayers this week Denise Alongi, Rudy Bahr, 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, and T. J. Wooten. [Add or subtract names by e-mailing editor Kay Williams, kaywill@pacbell.net.]

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

We need more than Barr's letter:

[Editorial, *National Catholic Reporter*, 3/25/19]

Special Counsel Robert Mueller has completed his investigation and, according to a summary sent to Congress and released to the public by Attorney General William Barr, the final report addresses two large issues. It found no evidence that President Donald Trump or anyone associated with his campaign knowingly conspired with Russian agents to affect the 2016 election. On the related issue of obstruction of justice, the report is more ambivalent stating that "while this report does not conclude that the President committed a crime, it also does not exonerate him." The attorney general announced that the Department of Justice would not pursue any prosecution of the president on obstruction charges.

All Americans should breathe a sigh of relief for two reasons. First, the rule of law has been vindicated. The resources spent on this probe, the attention paid to it by the media and the public, all were worth it because no one, not even a president, is above the law and free from oversight. For the past several months, some Trump supporters and Fox News analysts have questioned Mueller's integrity, while Democrats have defended Mueller and the probe. There should be no role reversal in light of this report: One of the things that should distinguish a healthy democracy from a sick one is whether it is governed by laws or by men. Democrats should not mimic the behavior of Republicans by now vilifying Mueller.

Nor should anyone minimize the severity of allegations of obstruction of justice. In recent months, Republicans have spoken of obstruction and perjury as "process crimes," the kind of thing that is not truly serious or out of the ordinary, something every investigation would entail. This is patently false, especially when the man charged with faithfully executing the laws of the country is the person charged with obstruction. Congress and the public needs to see what evidence Mueller found that left him so non-committal and which led the attorney general to not pursue prosecution. That decision is within Barr's discretion to be sure, but voters do not have to prove anything "beyond a reasonable doubt" in deciding whether to re-elect Trump or not.

Second, while the report says nothing about the president's often despicable politics, the absence of evidence of collusion at least shows that our president is not a traitor. Democrats as well as Republicans should celebrate this admittedly low-bar finding because the constitutional crisis that a contrary finding might have provoked would be too ugly to even contemplate. If Democrats wish to hurl Trump out of office, they will need to do it the old-fashioned way, at the ballot box. Lest

anyone forget, Trump, while not a traitor in the strict sense, still betrays on an almost daily basis the values that many of us cherish and the norms upon which our democracy depends. Democrats have plenty of issues upon which to run in 2020.

Questions remain and we hope the attorney general will publish the entire report. We understand the traditional concern about publishing grand jury proceedings —the evidentiary standard there is much lower than at trial. But, as we saw in Pennsylvania, where grand jury proceedings were used to unearth details about clergy sex abuse, sometimes the public's right to know outweighs that traditional concern.

We also do not know what has been referred to other jurisdictions. One of the difficulties in understanding the behavior of the president's closest aides is why they lied about their contacts with Russian nationals. And, why was Trump himself so obsequious toward Russian President Vladimir Putin at the infamous press conference in Helsinki last year? There is something about this relationship that still smells fishy. We now know it was not collusion during the election. Was it something else? Mueller has already passed off some financial investigations to the prosecutors in the southern district of New York, where more white collar crimes, especially those involving financial misconduct, are examined and tried than any other federal jurisdiction.

Constitutional crises are dreadful things to experience. Watergate was not the only reason the American people increasingly evidenced little trust in our national institutions, but it was a big reason. Our nation fought a great and terrible Civil War when its most severe constitutional crisis proved insoluble by ordinary democratic means. Trump is the most irresponsible president we have ever had: Can anyone doubt that he might foment a crisis had Mueller's findings been different?

Catholic social teaching indicts Trump on virtually every one of its core principles. He evidences no solidarity with suffering humanity. He wouldn't recognize the common good if it bit him. He tramples on the human dignity of immigrants and refugees. His commitment to human life is conditional on being in the womb — after that, human beings are on their own in Trump's dystopian political universe.

We hope the voters will refuse him a second term, but we are relieved that the country will not now have to face the terrible conundrum of discovering the president is a traitor.

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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.