



23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 8, 2019

Readings

This week:

Wisdom 9:13–18b

Philemon 9–10, 12–17

Luke 14:25–33

Next week:

Exodus 32:7–11, 13–14

1 Timothy 1:12–17

Luke 15:1–32

Psalm

In every age, O Lord, you have been our refuge. (*Psalm 90*)

Today

Today's presider is Rev. 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, 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, Sept. 9, 7:00 pm TMC Liturgy Committee, Thomas House Library
Thursday, Sept. 12, 7:00 pm TMC Board of Directors, Thomas House Dining Room
Saturday, Sept. 14, 9 am-12 pm Garden grooming at STA--bring gloves, etc.

From Thomas Merton

Reading ought to be an act of homage to the God of all truths.

Books can speak to us like God, like men, or like the noise of the city we live in. They speak to us like God when they bring us light and peace and fill us with silence. They speak to us like men when we desire never to leave them. They speak to us like the noise of the city when they hold us captive by a weariness that tells us nothing, gives us no peace, and no support, nothing to remember, and yet will not let us escape.

Books that speak like God speak with too much authority to entertain us. Those that speak like good men hold us by their human charm; we grow by finding ourselves in them. They teach us to know ourselves better by recognizing ourselves in one another.

Books that speak like the noise of multitudes reduce us to despair by the sheer weight of their emptiness. They entertain us like the lights of the city streets at night, by hopes they cannot fulfill.

--Thoughts in Solitude

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

TMC Spiritual Education programs coming:

Mark your calendars for the following programs brought to you by the TMC Spiritual Education Committee and the TMC Liturgy Committee. More details will follow as each program approaches.

▼ ***Saturday, Sept. 28, 3:00 p.m. at SAGH: The Catholic Media: Past and Future.*** A discussion with Jim Purcell, Chairman of the Board of the *National Catholic Reporter* and past CEO of Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County. How familiar are you with the broad landscape of Catholic media? Progressive and conservative sources abound. How does one sift through it all? Conversation, questions and answer session with Jim Purcell. Followed by wine/cheese reception.

▼ ***Saturday, October 12, 10:00 a.m. at Thomas House: How to plan a Catholic funeral liturgy.*** The TMC Liturgy Committee, under the leadership of Maureen Locke, will offer a workshop on how you can think in advance about your own or a loved one's funeral/memorial Mass.

▼ ***Saturday, December 7, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm: Advent Morning of Reflection, at St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center*** with Fr. Larry Percell. Set your personal spiritual house in order as Christmas approaches.

▼ ***Saturday, February 8, 3:00 p.m., at OLR Hall: The Future of the Church in the Light of the Clergy Abuse Scandals,*** with Dr. Rosemary Ellmer. A licensed clinical psychologist, Dr. Ellmer has worked for over 15 years at Santa Clara University both as an adjunct professor and a clinical psychologist and training director at the university's counseling center. She will offer reflections from the fields of psychology and theology on the current crisis facing the church. At the request of Bishop P.J. McGrath, in the fall of 2018 she moderated the four diocese-wide listening sessions held to seek input from people in the pews on the pathway to reform and to listen to those victimized by clerical sexual abuse. She has written her personal thoughts from those sessions in an article published in *Theological Studies*, available at <https://theologicalstudies.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/>. (Printed copies will be available in advance from TMC Spiritual Education Committee.)

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.

A place to live is needed:

TMC member Diana Diamond has an acquaintance who is looking for a place to live. He's been an in-home handyman/caretaker (not licensed) for elderly individuals and couples. He needs housing in return for some services. Diana vouches for him and he can provide references. Contact Diana at DianaLDiamond@gmail.com or call her at 650-323-4787.

Garden grooming September 14:

The gardens around STA church and the Thomas House are begging for a cleanup. Come help with weeding, pruning, spreading mulch, etc. The garden groomers will gather at the church on Saturday, Sept. 14, at 9:00 am--come when you can. Quitting time will be around noon. Wear your garden gloves, bring a trowel or favorite garden tool or accessory, and join the team! For information: contact Vicki Sullivan, 650-740-0124, or email vickisullivan@comcast.net.

Altar furniture to be dedicated Sept. 15 at 10:30:

Bishop Oscar Cantú of the Diocese of San Jose will celebrate the 10:30 Mass at STA on September 15 and will dedicate the new altar during the Mass. There is a special blessing and ritual when a new altar is installed in a Catholic church.

Parishioner and master craftsman Jan Dedek built the new altar furniture, donating his skill and time to this holy project.

Parish Potluck Picnic September 15 at OLR:

On September 15, if you stay on to attend the 10:30 Mass and get to know Bishop Cantú a bit, make it a day and continue over to Our Lady of the Rosary at 3233 Cowper St., Palo Alto, to join the annual parish potluck and picnic.

The Knights of Columbus will be flipping burgers (beef and veggie) and hotdogs on the grill. The Freecycle table may hold some treasures and you can bring some of your own to give away. Music and dance performances will keep you entertained, and you can get to know parishioners from the other two Palo Alto churches in a friendly and welcoming setting. There's one requirement: the potluck happens because those with last names from A-P are bringing salad or side dish for 8, and Q-Z get to indulge their dessert craving. You need lunch anyhow, so come to OLR from 11:15 till 2:00 p.m. on Sept. 15!

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Climate change is most important life issue:

[By Daniel P. Horan, OFM, NCR, 9/4/19]

Sunday marked the start of the annual ecumenical "Season of Creation" observance, which lasts from Sept. 1 through Oct. 4, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. It is a time set aside for Christians to reflect on the state of creation through prayer and action...

In recent decades there has been some nasty infighting among Catholics who argue about which life issue is the most important, especially in guiding one's political choices...

While I agree with the intellectual and moral integrity of the consistent ethic of life principle, which upholds that every human life — born and unborn — is inherently valuable, dignified, and must be protected, we live in a time in which there is now a more fundamental issue that threatens all life: climate change. For this reason, it seems to me dangerously shortsighted to propose directing our attention, argumentative energies, and financial resources to any singular anthropocentric ethical issue. The stakes are too high for us now to be so myopic.

Global climate change threatens every life now and poses an existential danger to the very condition of the possibility for future life on this planet. If we are called to be moral agents guided by a seamless garment approach, as I believe we are, then climate change is the body on which such a garment hangs. The preservation of particular human lives is predicated on the future of the planet and delicate ecosystems on it that make life possible at all.

What good is it to prevent abortions or save the elderly from euthanasia or ensure the elimination of capital punishment if there is no air to breathe, water to drink, land to farm, plants or animals to eat, or habitats free from flooding, hurricanes, wildfires, tornados, earthquakes or some of the other devastating weather phenomena?...

There are some people who rightly understand the gravity of our circumstances and the urgency that should govern our response.

Pope Francis... situated his 2015 encyclical letter "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home" within the broader tradition of Catholic moral teaching, reminding the church and world that despite our self-centered compartmentalization, there is only ever an "integral ecology" in which the fate of humanity and non-human creation are inextricably intertwined. ...

Greta Thunberg, the 16-year-old Swedish climate activist, is another prophetic voice on this life issue today. Her recent sailing trip across the Atlantic Ocean to New York for the United Nations climate talks, a mode of long-distance transportation with zero carbon emis-

sions, put her back in the spotlight. ...

The problem is that too few people listen to the inspired voices of Francis or Thunberg... Instead of working to solve the crisis, Donald Trump and his administration are actively exacerbating it. According to a New York Times report published last week, the Trump Administration has "rolled back" 84 environmental rules and policies so far. ... No one who aspires to be truly pro-life, who cares about justice and peace, can support the environmental policies of Trump. The numerous other anti-life policies of Trump and his administration notwithstanding, his views on and harmful actions related to climate change alone disqualify him from any claim of being "pro-life."

As another presidential election cycle kicks into higher gear, Catholics and others will begin to select lenses through which to evaluate political candidates — both presidential and down-ballot. Some people will inevitably claim and preach and advertise that a singular anthropocentric life issue, like abortion, is the only political litmus test for judging a candidate. The United States bishops have repeatedly responded to this sort of illogical absolutism, stating directly in their guide to voting: "As Catholics, we are not single-issue voters. A candidate's position on a single issue is not sufficient to guarantee a voter's support." ...

The magnitude of climate change's threat to life — human and nonhuman alike — eclipses everything else. People are already dying from its consequences, and more will follow... Let us not squander this year's Season of Creation, but instead allow it to be a time for us to reorder our priorities and form our consciences to be truly pro-life, because the future of all life is counting on us.

[Daniel P. Horan is a Franciscan friar & assistant professor of systematic theology & spirituality at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.]

TMC Board: Gerard McGuire, gerardmc@aol.com, 650-814-2223

Bulletin: Kay Williams, kaywill@pacbell.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

Adult Education: Jim Davis, 650-704-8002, Jim_Davis@pacbell.net

Mary Coady, 650-261-9155, coady_94025@yahoo.com

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, 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, Patricia Markee, Nancy Marty, Maureen Mooney, Hayden Pastorini, Alicia Placone-Combetta, 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.]

Should we be calling priests 'Father'?

[By Anne Inman, *The Tablet*, 8/19/19]

According to Matthew's Gospel, there is a word which Jesus, told us, his followers, not to use to address anyone on earth: that word is 'father'. (Mt. 23.9) Yet in the English-speaking world we currently use 'father' as a form of address for all ordained priests and the pope is called 'Holy Father'.

While Jesus' warning regarding this form of address was never intended as a blanket prohibition, neither, surely, was it intended to be ignored. It is clear from Mt. 23.9 that Jesus' purpose was to warn his own disciples against three tendencies which he identified in some Jewish leaders of his own day: They should not give in to self-importance; they should not set themselves above other people; they should not place on others burdens that are too hard to bear.

As Pope Francis repeatedly warns against the dangers of clericalism, it is perhaps time for the dangers inherent in the use of 'father' as a form of address to be taken seriously. Since the later half of the nineteenth century, the use of 'father' as a term of respect for all ordained priests has served as one of the main planks of clericalism. At the same time as encouraging priestly self-importance, it has served to infantilise the laity, thus providing a perfect setting for certain depraved priests to molest children with impunity.

Thus when priests, under the cover of their exalted status, were able to commit the most unspeakable crimes against children, the children's own parents, their natural protectors, were unable to protect them, since they themselves, in their relation to the priest, had taken on the role, not of parent to their child, but of child in relation to the 'father' abuser.

Priests have not always been called 'father', though early on Christians did begin to call their spiritual mentors 'mother' or 'father'. The term 'father' continued to be used as a form of address for those men whom Christians sought out as a spiritual mentor, while the very presence of the early church 'mothers' was largely written out of history. We think primarily of the desert fathers; spiritual directors but not generally ordained priests. The male confessor was revered as a spiritual father, and addressed as such. He was sought out for his holiness.

As priests began to take on the role of confessor, so they came to be addressed as 'father' when they served in this capacity, yet 'father' was still not the formal title for the ordained priest. Throughout the Reformation Catholic priests in England were called 'Sir'. Thus for example we have it from Eamon Duffy in 'The Voices of Morebath' that the priest who served

the parish of Morebath at the time of the English Reformation was Sir Christopher Trychay.

It was not until the later half of the nineteenth century that 'father' became the form of address for all ordained priests, largely thanks to Cardinal Manning, archbishop of Westminster (1865-1892). In his book *The Eternal Priesthood* (1883) Manning describes the title of father as 'the first, the chief, the highest, the most potent, the most persuasive, the most honourable of all the titles of a priest.' (p.22) Manning's book was hugely influential in the English-speaking world.

The restoration of the English hierarchy had taken place in 1850, and no doubt the use of the title 'father' for Roman Catholic priests helped to differentiate them from their Anglican counterparts. But for Manning it was much more than that. Manning had a highly exalted notion of the holiness that a priest should and could attain. The priest was to set himself up above others in terms of spiritual perfection. Manning says that the priest's role as teacher, guide and judge of men (sic) demands spiritual perfection.

In hindsight it is clear that Manning placed upon priests a burden that for most was too hard to bear. Striving for perfection they might be painfully aware that they fell short. Set up as models of holiness, it was almost as if they had hypocrisy forced upon them. The discrepancy between the light in which they were portrayed and the reality of their lives was a heavy burden placed upon them. And to keep up the illusion it was necessary to focus on the lives of very holy priests (of whom, of course, there were many), but to keep hidden the sins of others. In this atmosphere, when a century after Manning's book, bishops were becoming aware of the sexual abuse of children by priests, many succumbed to the temptation to have the abuse covered up.

Perhaps it is time for all adult Catholics to reflect on Mt. 23.9 and to think about the dangers of calling priests 'father', and for all Catholic priests to think about the dangers of accepting the title from other adults. In February this year, the Nigerian Sister Veronica Openibo, head of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, addressed the Vatican summit on the Protection of Minors. Towards the end of her presentation she addressed the pope directly, and she called him 'Brother Francis'. As a 'Sister' herself, and as someone concerned with the protection of minors, it seems to me that 'Brother' was an entirely appropriate form of address for her to use, in place of the usual 'Holy Father'. It is perhaps time for all of us to work towards forms of address for our priests which, while showing due respect, do not at the same time serve to undermine our own responsibilities as adult Christians. #

[Dr. Anne Inman is a retired lecturer in Theology.]