



# The Baptism of the Lord

January 12, 2020

## Readings

*This week:*

Isaiah 42:1–4, 6–7

Acts of the Apostles 10:34–38

Matthew 3:13–17

*Next week:*

Isaiah 49:3, 5–6

1 Corinthians 1:1–3

John 1:29–34

## Psalm

Lord, ev'ry nation on earth will adore you. (*Psalm 72*)

## Today

Today's presider is Fr. 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, January 13, 1:00 pm TMC Liturgy Committee, Thomas House Library  
Friday, January 17, 6:00-7:30 p.m. STA Site Fish Fest Dinner  
Saturday, January 18, 9 am-12 noon STA Thomas House Library work day

## From Thomas Merton

We are beginning to understand that we live in a climate of all-embracing conformities. We have become mass-produced automatons. Our lives, our homes, our cities, our thoughts, or perhaps our lack of thoughts, have all taken on an impersonal mask of resigned and monotonous sameness. We who once made such a cult of originality, experiment, personal commitment and individual creativity, now find ourselves among the least individual, the least original and least personal of all the people on the face of the earth... People “express themselves” in ways that grow more and more frantic in proportion as they realize that the individuality and the distinctive differences they are attempting to express no longer exist... There is nothing so monotonously unoriginal as the capricious eccentricities of atoms in a mass-society.

*--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. Visit: [www.thomasmerton.org](http://www.thomasmerton.org).

# COMMUNITY NOTES

News    Announcements    Requests

## **Heart & Home Women's Winter Shelter Jan. 23:**    **Fish Fest Dinner this Friday, January 17:**

The Heart and Home Collaborative shelter is providing a safe and warm sleeping space for about 15 enrolled unhoused ladies. Our parish is continuing its commitment to provide another meal to the ladies on Thursday, January 23rd at University Lutheran church on Stanford Ave.

We encourage parishioners to prepare a small homemade dish for 6 or more as a personal contribution to this dinner to support the efforts of many people to house these ladies during the cold, wet winter nights. To volunteer with either food or funds, call Terry at (650) 714-2131.



The STA Site Committee has resumed the Friday Fish Fest dinners on the “teenth” Friday of the month. Are you ready once again for tasty fish filets, chips, and tangy cole slaw? Come January 17 at 6:00 p.m. for this traditional fish supper in the Thomas House in the friendly company of others in our parish. Suggested donation is only \$5 for dinner and \$2 for a beer or glass of wine--lemonade is free

**BUT: Please, please RSVP** to Helen Baumann, 650-327-9236, hbbaumann@aol.com in advance. We need to be sure to have enough fish for all.

## **Thomas House Library “rustle” Jan. 18:**

Would you like to see new books available in the Thomas House library, a parish-wide resource for faith-based reading? Do you have a few hours on Saturday morning, January 18th, 9:00 am till noon?

Come join us in the Thomas House, 745 Waverley St. (next door to the church), for sorting, organizing, cataloging and shelving a collection of books donated to the library. Ted Baer has generously volunteered to lead us in the effort. Bring a friend. Coffee will be available to perk us up for the effort! [Note: we are not taking any more book donations at this time.]

Books already catalogued can be checked out after 8:45am Sunday Mass, approximately 9:45-10-45. Contact Anna Jaklitsch to volunteer: 650-327-0978, annajak14@yahoo.com.

## **Martin Luther King Day events:**

1) Sunday January 19 from 3-4:30 pm, the First Methodist Church on Hamilton Avenue has invited everyone to join their annual community and interfaith celebration commemorating the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

2). Monday, January 20 at 8:30am, the 3rd annual multi-church prayer walk will begin at Crossroads Community Church, 2490 Middlefield Rd, The walk will end at University AME Zion church for a time of celebratory worship.

We invite one and all to join in these meaningful celebrations.    --*STA Human Concerns Committee*

## **New voting methods unveiled Jan. 23:**

Come Thursday, January 23, 7:00 pm, to St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center, 1095 Channing Ave, Palo Alto to learn about the voting changes in Santa Clara County.

There will not be any more polling places —it will all be “vote by mail”. The Registrar of Voters will be explaining the changes and answer questions so people will know about the various options for casting ballots. We all know how important voter turnout is—and the program will also discuss the CENSUS. So try to attend and invite a friend.    --*STA Parish Green Committee*

## **Save February 8 for Dr. Rosemary Ellmer:**

**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 share her frank 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 Dr. Ellmer 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 and spoken about her personal reaction to what she heard and challenges all Catholics to be a community of hope and healing if the Church is to survive.

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## **Discover Thomas House Library treasures:**

During hospitality after 8:45 TMC liturgy please stop by the Thomas House library and browse the book col-

lection. There are books in the living room, the hall, and the library itself, about the lives of saints, church history and a collection of books about or written by Thomas Merton. There is a binder with a sign-out sheet.

# COMMUNITY FORUM

*Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns*

## **Wisdom could heal abortion divide:**

[By Patrick Carolan & Brian McLaren, *National Catholic Reporter*, 1/9/20]

For the last 40 years, the abortion debate, as currently framed, has raised huge sums of money for non-profits and political organizations, especially those on the right. It has also provided leaders of both parties with a simple issue around which to mobilize voters: for Republicans, the rights of the unborn, and for Democrats, the rights of women.

But the conventional debate has a dark side, a set of side effects and unintended consequences that we believe citizens of moral conscience need to know and pay attention to.

For example, each side, by providing us with a short-cut to a sense of moral superiority, also gives us a weapon with which to demonize and even dehumanize our counterparts. When we render our opponents the evil enemy, we risk becoming a house so divided that our nation becomes ungovernable. When one side frames ethically complex issues as simplistic moral absolutes, then negotiation, the heart of politics in a democracy, becomes moral compromise. And when the other side frames abortion as if it were a simple legal and medical matter with no moral dimension, adherents render themselves insensitive and incomprehensible to their counterparts.

We're left with polarization, paralysis and mutual vilification, right at a critical moment when so many other serious problems demand our unified attention: runaway climate change and economic inequality, unchecked gun violence, the need for immigration reform, and a resurgence of racism in its many ugly forms.

That's why more and more of us are waking up to this realization: The current framing of the debate is wounding our nation and may in fact become our undoing, dividing us so deeply that in seeking to win elections, we lose our nation's soul.

As religious leaders, one Catholic and one Protestant, we see the great harm the old abortion debate is doing, both to our national politics and to our religious communities. That's why we would like to invite politicians, religious leaders and citizens in general to turn away from the rhetoric of mutually-assured destruction and reframe the abortion debate in more productive terms for the future.

A "Next Generation Abortion Conversation" would have the following ground rules:

**First**, we would stop demonizing each other. We would acknowledge how seductive it is for each side to consider itself morally superior and reduce its opponent to the level of moral filth. We would face the harm that kind of pride can do, both politically and spiritually. In our

combined 120-plus years of life experience, neither of us has ever met a single supporter of abortion rights who hates babies, supports infanticide, or who has a "the more the better" attitude toward abortion. Nor have we ever met an abortion opponent who hates women and wants to throw mothers in jail for seeking an abortion. No doubt, such extremists may exist, but we have yet to meet any, and we can no longer let the debate be framed and fought from the extremes.

**Second**, we must acknowledge that there aren't only two positions on abortion. It would be more accurate to say there are five, with purists on either end of the spectrum, and in the middle, three groups that account for the majority of us, those who are against abortion but do not want to criminalize it, those who support abortion rights but who would like to see abortion rates reduced, and those in between who see wisdom (and problems) on both sides. If we get beyond the old two-sides framing, we can drop the old pro-life versus pro-choice binary entirely. The fact is that life and choice are not mutually exclusive, and in a democracy, we can hold our own moral convictions about life and choice, rooted in our religious traditions, without feeling that others should be forced to live by them.

**Third**, we must shift the debate from making abortion illegal to making abortion less and less necessary. The truth is that we can both reduce abortions and protect vulnerable women from having politicians (who are mostly wealthy, white and male, by the way) interfere with one of their most personal moral decisions. Abortion reduction rather than criminalization is a goal that nearly all of us can agree to.

And there's great news in this regard. We're already succeeding at reducing abortion rates, and we already know what will reduce them even more. If we shift our energies in the direction of abortion reduction, focusing on the causes and conditions that lead to abortion, everyone will benefit.

For 40 years, our nation has been torn apart by one framing of the abortion debate. It's time for a new generation to address the issue in a new and wiser way.

[Patrick Carolan is the Catholic Outreach Director for Vote Common Good. He was executive director of the Franciscan Action Network since 2010 and is a co-founder of the Global Catholic Climate Movement. Brian McLaren is an author, speaker, activist and public theologian. A former college English teacher and evangelical minister, he co-leads the Common Good Messaging Team, part of Vote Common Good.]

**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

**Website:** Jim Davis, 328-2584, james\_davis@pacbell.net

## *A Harmful Doctrine*

[By Mollie Wilson O'Reilly; in *La Croix International*, January 4, 2020]

Look, it's 2020, so I'm just going to say it: the Catholic Church is wrong about gay people. To put a finer point on it: it is my opinion that the magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church, as it applies to homosexuality and same-sex relationships, is mistaken and ought to be revised.

This has been my opinion for a long time, but I've been quiet about it, for a couple of reasons. First, who cares what I think? And second, why should I make trouble?

The answer to the first question is probably still "nobody." My position on this matter is not especially consequential. That's why I can say it. As for the second, I still don't have much of an appetite for trouble. But avoiding the subject for civility's sake has begun to feel cowardly.

I don't think the view that the church is wrong about gay people is a radical opinion. I think a lot of Catholics agree. Some are afraid to say so publicly, because it could make real trouble for them, especially if they are contractually obligated to uphold orthodoxy.

What will it cost me, besides a little awkwardness?

A few years ago, I was invited by a parish in my hometown to give a talk about Vatican II. I was then uninvited: the bishop told them to find someone else. When I asked for a reason, he expressed vague concern about providing a forum for criticism of the church.

It's funny, because I am seldom more positive about the Catholic Church than I am when speaking about Vatican II. But anyway, since I'm already blacklisted in Scranton, what have I got to lose?

So much for keeping quiet. Here are my reasons for speaking up. It has been my experience that same-sex relationships can be occasions of grace and manifestations of deep, self-sacrificing love, just like opposite-sex relationships can.

I have seen how the church's claims to the contrary can damage children who are developing a sense of their own identities and worth. I have known the wounded adults those children grow up to be, whose grudges against the church strike me as entirely just.

And I have seen LGBTQ people so drawn to Christ's presence in the church that they look past all the dismissals and insults to fight for their place at the Eucharistic table. Their faithfulness inspires and challenges me. Their witness convinces me the church is wrong to condemn them.

Meanwhile, I have looked to the church for guidance in a time of politics gone haywire. I have waited for the nation's bishops to respond to the malice and hatred and rank dishonesty that characterize President Donald Trump and his supporters in a way that seems commensurate with the threat—not calmly worded state-

ments of dismay over "rhetoric" and "polarization," but direct denunciations of the ugliness that streams directly from the White House and the human misery it engenders.

But when I read what the bishops as a body have to say about what is at stake, their formal guidance about what a Catholic citizen's priorities should be, I see language about how Catholics are "called to defend marriage" that clangs like a broken bell.

When the U.S. bishops talk about religious liberty, I wait for them to condemn Donald Trump's constant attacks on Muslims, his enthusiastic support for war crimes committed against them, and his campaign pledge to block them as a whole from entering our country.

The bishops conference, however, is focused on preserving the right of Catholic institutions to discriminate against LGBTQ people. Flagrant violations of human rights are somehow less urgent than the threat of same-sex couples marrying or raising children.

A stubborn persistence in error that used to seem embarrassing but tolerable—Sigh, the church moves so slowly—now makes me feel like I'm losing my mind.

Our government is turning away refugees, jailing migrants, cutting assistance to the poor, denying the threat of climate change, fueling violent white supremacy, and undermining the legitimacy of government itself.

For a Catholic to support a party that carries out those policies is preposterous. For bishops to hold back on criticizing that party because of a perceived need to "defend marriage" is grotesque.

As I see it now, the church's condemnation of homosexuality isn't just an error that needs fixing. It is an obstacle that stops Catholics, leaders and laity alike, from speaking clearly about urgent moral crises and from being perceived as credible when we do.

There are plenty of Catholics who believe the church is right about homosexuality, and they aren't afraid to say so. Which is good! Let's all talk about it, instead of keeping quiet and hoping the subject won't come up.

It is reasonable to worry about what such a public debate would do to the church. But I'm much more afraid of what will become of a church that goes on denying the full humanity of LGBTQ people and spending so much of its energy preserving that denial.

[Mollie Wilson O'Reilly is an editor at large and columnist at *Commonweal*.]

**PRAY FOR US:** Please remember in your prayers this week Art Adams, Denise Alongi, Rudy Bahr, Char Buchholz, 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, Mercedes McCaffrey, Maureen Mooney, Susan Miller, Hayden Pastorini, Alicia Placone-Combetta, Paul Prochaska, Anne Rush, Priya Smith, Bernice Sullivan, Jean Vistica, Dolores Walsh, KathyAnne Woodruff and T. J. Wooten.  
[Add/subtract names by e-mailing Kay Williams, [kaywill@pacbell.net](mailto:kaywill@pacbell.net).]