



Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 19, 2020

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 49:3, 5–6

1 Corinthians 1:1–3

John 1:29–34

Next week:

Isaiah 8:23–9:3

1 Corinthians 1:10–13, 17

Matthew 4:12–23

Psalm

Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will. (*Psalm 40*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. José Rubio.

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 20, 8:30 a.m. MLK Day Prayer Walk, Crossroads Community Church
(see page 2 for details)

Monday, January 20, 7:00 pm TMC Spiritual Education Committee, Thomas House

From Thomas Merton

May today has lost consciousness of his need for truth. What he seeks is power. Truth is made to serve the ends of power. Truth is of no value unless it is expedient. When truth is not expedient, then it is deliberately manipulated and twisted to serve the aims of the powerful. Objective truth is considered irrelevant. It is derided by the powerful, who can change truth to suit themselves, and bend it this way and that for the sake of ambition and fortune.

--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.

COMMUNITY NOTES

News Announcements Requests

Martin Luther King Day events:

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.

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**

Heart & Home Women's Winter Shelter Jan. 23:

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 home-made 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.

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.

Discover Thomas House Library treasures:

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

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**

Altar flower arranger needed:



We are grateful for the help arranging flowers for the STA altar provided by Hee Kyung Kim, Margie Harrington, Nancy Hannibal and Elaine Jek over the last year. Ann Jumadas provides the orchids for the side altars. But Hee is not able to continue, so

another willing volunteer is needed. This is at most a monthly task for each person on the flower team. (Some weeks following Christmas and Easter, it is just watering the poinsettias and lilies, respectively.)

Volunteers are trained and given direction about securing flowers and vases. Please contact Sally Benson: (408) 464-0750, sallymbenson@gmail.com.

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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.]

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Church Unity Octave: January 18 - 25:

[By Rev. Thomas Orians, SA , Associate Director
Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute]

The Church Unity Octave was first observed in January, 1908. Celebrated in the chapel of a small Atonement Franciscan Convent of the Protestant Episcopal Church, on a remote hillside fifty miles from New York City, this new prayer movement caught the imagination of others beyond the Franciscan Friars and Sisters of the Atonement to become an energetic movement that gradually blossomed into a worldwide observance involving many nations and millions of people.

...Two American Episcopalians, Father Paul James Wattson and Sister Lurana White, co-founders of the Franciscan Friars and Sisters of the Atonement, were totally committed to the reunion of the Anglican Communion with the Roman Catholic Church. As such, they started a prayer movement that explicitly prayed for the return of non-Catholic Christians to the Holy See.

...When Fr. Paul and Sr. Lurana became Roman Catholics, Pope Pius X gave his blessing to the Church Unity Octave and in 1916, Pope Benedict XV extended its observance to the universal church. This recognition by papal authority gave the Octave its impetus throughout the Roman Catholic Church.

What were some of the important historical antecedents to this octave of prayer? Certainly in the 19th century, the desire for Christians to pray together was part of the spirit of the age among those alarmed by the divisions which weakened the power of Christian witness. ...

The Association for the Promotion of the Unity of Christians was founded in 1857 with Anglican, Roman Catholic and Orthodox participation. Its purpose was "for united prayer that visible unity may be restored to Christendom." Unfortunately Rome withdrew its support for the Association. The problem, of course, was not the act of prayer in itself as much as the questions that surfaced concerning the nature of the church and the nature of the unity being sought through prayer. This difficulty would not begin to be resolved until almost the middle of the 20th century.

It is noteworthy that the Popes had urged Roman Catholics to pray for Christian unity but from the particular stance of return to the Roman Catholic Church. In 1894 Leo XIII encouraged Catholics to recite the rosary for the intention of Christian unity. ...

The Lambeth Conferences during this period also promoted prayer for Christian unity....[T]he second conference of 1878 was typical of the concern of Anglicans for reunion. At that conference, the bishops spoke of their desire that the conference support the observance of a season of prayer for the unity of Christendom.



...In 1935, Abbé Paul Couturier, a priest of the Archdiocese of Lyons, sought a solution to the problem of -Roman Catholics not being able to observe the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity. He found the solution in the Roman Missal as the Association for Promotion of the Unity of Christians had done seventy-eight years earlier in England. Couturier promoted prayer for Christian unity on the inclusive basis that "our Lord would grant to his Church on earth that peace and unity which were in his mind and purpose, when, on the eve of His Passion, He prayed that all might be one." This prayer would unite Christians in prayer for that perfect unity that God wills and by the means that he wills. ...

In 1993, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity issued the Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism and explicitly encouraged participation in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. So today the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity belongs to all Christians who are sincerely interested in the fulfillment of Christ's prayer "that all may be one." When he discusses prayer in common in his A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism, Cardinal Walter Kasper specifically mentions that "the celebration of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity world-wide is an initiative of singular importance to be encouraged and further developed."

It is sponsored by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity. The material for 2020 was created by Christians Together in Malta and representatives of the Roman Catholic Episcopal Conference where churches work together through different platforms to address issues related to the unity of the church as well as common concerns in society, at local, regional and national levels.

On a national basis, materials for the celebration of the Week of Prayer are the work of Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute in collaboration with the Commission on Faith and Order of the National Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Bishops' Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.
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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.

Religious freedom and culture wars:

[By John Gehring, NCR, 1/16/20]

President Donald Trump's reelection campaign will be framed with a faith-based sales pitch heavy on rank hypocrisy. "The day I took office ... the federal government's war on religion came to a very abrupt end," the president declared at a recent launch of his campaign's "Evangelicals for Trump" coalition.

... The Trump administration's crass weaponization of religious freedom must be challenged by people of faith who recognize that the religious right does not own this moral high ground.

Not long ago, religious freedom was largely viewed across the ideological and political spectrum as a bedrock value of American democracy that transcended partisan agendas. When the Religious Freedom Restoration Act passed Congress in 1993, Republicans and Democrats rallied to support the legislation.

...Religious freedom debates are now at the epicenter of the culture wars. In state legislatures across the country, GOP lawmakers have tried to pass narrowly defined religious freedom bills that offer sweeping exemptions for faith-based providers, and pit the human rights of LGBTQ people against religious conscience — a false choice that serves neither important value.

At the federal level, the Trump administration created a religious liberty task force housed in the Department of Justice to oversee legal directives on religious liberty cases. ...

While the Obama administration sought to expand the definition of equality to include transgender people, Trump is busy dismantling LGBTQ protections. The administration recently proposed a rule that would allow the Department of Health and Human Services to use taxpayers' money to support programs that deny services to people based on religion, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Current Attorney General William Barr, a Catholic, gave a breathless speech that focused heavily on religious freedom at the University of Notre Dame in October. His rhetoric was emblematic of those on the right who view themselves as cultural casualties.

"Secularists, and their allies among the 'progressives,' have marshaled all the force of mass communications, popular culture, the entertainment industry, and academia in an unremitting assault on religion and traditional values," Barr decried.

This scorched-earth style is reminiscent of how Catholic bishops approached the Obama administration, and mirrors the dark tone sometimes found in the U.S. bishops' "Fortnight for Freedom" campaign, which has evoked Christian martyrs of past centuries in the same breath as contemporary policy disputes over health care and other issues in a pluralistic democracy.

As Catholics, we have a rich intellectual, theological and social tradition at our disposal that rejects false framing and binary arguments that fit too neatly into partisan boxes. Catholics could be leaders in reclaiming a more authentic commitment to religious freedom that doesn't pit religion against LGBTQ dignity, or view rights and responsibilities as opposing forces.

...Authentic respect for religious freedom demands theological and political humility, a framework anchored in empathy for arguments that challenge your prevailing biases. It's no surprise that when Barr bemoans attacks on religion, he doesn't mention an Arizona humanitarian worker who was recently acquitted in federal court after providing aid to migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. The worker, inspired by his faith to act, successfully invoked the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in his defense.

When Trump is courting Catholic voters in swing states, he won't remind anyone that part of his administration's plans for a border wall include bullying the Catholic Diocese of Brownsville, Texas, which is protesting the federal government's efforts to seize land on the site of a historic chapel. Selective deployment of religious liberty arguments that simply advance your preferred party, ideology or candidate turn a treasured tenet of American democracy into a blunt tool for transactional politics.

While the right-wing trope that liberals are hostile to religion is bogus, progressives are also not exempt from the need for self-scrutiny. As Melissa Rogers, former executive director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships under President Barack Obama, writes in her new book, *Faith in American Public Life*, "Some government officials have erred by presuming that religious beliefs and practices are insincere and that everything they would define as 'intolerance' can and should be eradicated by the state."

The government at times "must reject some requests for religious exemptions," Rogers writes. "But they should do so without disparaging people's faith or appearing to call into question an entire First Amendment right."

...A new movement to rescue and reclaim religious freedom from the political and religious right is more important than ever heading into an election. Religious liberty is not a partisan ornament or a weapon to wield for electoral gain.

The next year will challenge those of us who care about the role of faith in public life to both call out cheap expedience and, most importantly, build something better for the future. A multifaith and diverse generation now has the opportunity to leave stale narratives behind and do justice to a value that is the birthright of all Americans.

[John Gehring is Catholic program director at Faith in Public Life, and author of *The Francis Effect: A Radical Pope's Challenge to the American Catholic Church*.]