



Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 26, 2020

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 8:23–9:3

1 Corinthians 1:10–13, 17

Next week:

Malachi 3:1–4

Hebrews 2:14–18

Luke 2:22–40

Psalm

The Lord is my light and my salvation. (*Psalm 27*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. Kevin Ballard, S.J.

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**

Calendar

No TMC meetings this week.

From Thomas Merton

At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. This little point of nothingness and of *absolute poverty* is the pure glory of God in us. It is so to speak His name written in us, as our poverty, as our indigence, as our dependence, as our sonship. It is like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven. It is in everybody, and if we could see it we would see these billions of points of light coming together in the face and blaze of a sun that would make all the darkness and cruelty of life vanish completely...I have no program for this seeing. It is only given. But the gate of heaven is everywhere.

Confessions of a Guilty Bystander

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

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.

Multi-faith climate meeting Feb. 8:

Come to a special multi-faith climate event at the Congregational Church of San Mateo at 225 Tilton Ave on Saturday February 8 from 10 AM - 2 PM featuring the Rev. Jim Antal, Special Advisor on Climate Justice to the President of United Church of Christ.

Rev. Antal is the author of *Climate Church, Climate World*, a ground-breaking book that outlines the steps churches and their individual members can take to address climate change. Rev. Antal will address the gathering as well as moderate a panel of local faith leaders in discussion. Attendees will participate in group breakout discussions on climate activism.

The cost to register is \$15 per person which includes lunch and beverages (If you would like to attend but cannot afford the registration fee, please call Gary White at 650-346-1519). You can register by going to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/climate-church-climate-world-tickets-88431379637?ref=eios>.

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.

Please step up to deliver donated food:

We need one or two volunteers to pick up the donated food after the 8:45 Sunday Mass and deliver it to the St. Francis of Assisi food bank center in East Palo Alto, 1425 Bay Road. (On a Sunday morning, it's a 9 min. drive from the church of 2.8 miles, straight out University Ave. to Bay Road.)

With enough volunteers, each one would do the delivery once a month. Getting the cans and boxes of food to those who need it is a vital ministry!

Please talk to Gerard Vurens at 650-520-7556 or Tom McKay (at church) for details.

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.

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.

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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

Climate organizers are the young in 2020:

[By Jesse Remedios, NCR, 1/21/20]

Catholic climate organizers say they're certain of it: 2020 is "absolutely the year" for climate mobilization.

On Nov. 4, the United States is scheduled to officially withdraw from the Paris Agreement on climate. That's one day after the 2020 U.S. presidential election, the outcome of which will largely shape the U.S. response to climate change moving forward.

2020 is also the anniversary of two major milestones in the environmental movement — the 50th anniversary of Earth Day on April 22, and the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical, "Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home," on May 24. With all that in mind, the Catholic Climate Covenant is organizing what they are calling the "U.S. Catholic Climate Project," a yearlong intergenerational Catholic initiative to gather Catholics from across the church to make "the moral call for climate action."

"We at the Covenant have been trying to elevate that into a more substantive theological and practical concern for the U.S. Catholic Church," said Jose Aguto, associate director of the Catholic Climate Covenant and co-chair of the Climate Project.

According to the Climate Project's website, the project will reach out to a range of Catholic institutions to provide support on activities that can galvanize action. ...A list of possible activities includes prayer services, liturgies, service projects, public demonstrations, classroom instruction, and advocacy with church and political leaders.

"With this very important 2020 election coming up, we also want to form Catholic consciousness around this element of our faith," said Aguto, who added that care for creation does not exclude other priorities of the church.

Aguto told NCR that there is a "significant synergy" among young adults, the institutional church and individual Catholics that has coalesced in united calls for the Trump administration and the Senate to reconsider the president's decision to remove the U.S. from the Paris Agreement.

Participation and leadership by youth and young adults is a big part of the Climate Project. In bold letters on its website, the project writes, "We seek especially to cultivate and be guided by Catholic youth and young adults."

Aaron Salzman, 21, is one of those young adults leading not only the Climate Project but also the climate movement as well. For the past three years, Salzman has led organizing efforts with the Catholic Divestment

Network at Boston College, where he is a senior philosophy major. Salzman...is part of the project's planning team, helping to organize events that can mobilize Catholic institutions like parishes and universities.

Salzman told NCR that youth and young adult leadership is important because even though his generation has grown up with a clear understanding of the crisis, he and his cohorts "aren't really in positions where we can do something about it from the top-down." He added: "So, I think young people have been a force from the bottom-up."

The Catholic Climate Project understands that young people are the ones who will have to deal with the consequences of climate inaction, and project leadership is hoping to make use of young people's passion for the issue to pull older generations into the fight.

"Fundamentally, this is about the future of youth and young adults and their growing awareness of the interdependence between the Creator's gifts and the lives we lead," Aguto told NCR via email. "We of older generations have the moral obligation to support them."

Claire Sanfilippo, a member of the Climate Project's team and the school outreach and special events coordinator with Catholic Charities of Washington, has been impressed by how well the teenagers she's worked with in D.C. have articulated the urgency of the situation.

...So far, a number of Catholic organizations have signed on to take part in the Climate Project. These include the Global Catholic Climate Movement, Ignatian Solidarity Network, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' youth and young adult ministry.

While the Climate Project's early efforts will be centered on the Earth Day and Laudato Si' anniversaries this spring, Aguto said the project's core team is committed to engaging throughout 2020. They also plan to organize activities around the Season of Creation in September.

Sanfilippo told NCR that while events raising awareness is a good thing, a key point to remember is that "unless people start taking action, then it's all kind of for naught."

"[Young people] have been clear that care for creation and climate action are top priorities," Aguto said. "Since these issues are also within the theology of our church ... then we should be working in concert with them to promote it."

[Jesse Remedios is an NCR staff writer. His email address is jremedios@ncronline.org. Follow him on Twitter: [@jcremedios](https://twitter.com/jcremedios).]

What lies beneath the criticism of Francis?

[By Kevin Clarke, *U.S. Catholic*, Dec. 2019]

Schisms and rumors of schisms troubled the end of summer as preparations began in Rome for the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region—at least among folks who comprise what is known as Catholic Twitter. On that occasionally benighted platform, 240-character communiqués from crowds of Henny Pennies in all corners of the church’s various cultural blocs weighed in with the latest news about the internal crumbling of the church.

Self-appointed watchdogs of church orthodoxy worried over schismatics they perceived among the followers of Germany’s “synodal way” or at a tree planting ceremony that opened the synod in Rome. This crowd in turn became the targets of self-described progressives in the church happy to point out the hypocrisy among fellow Catholics who during previous papacies had little patience for critics of “their” popes.

Surveying all the unpleasantness, one can only wonder what an outsider would make of these Christians, who, early reports suggest, would be known by their love for one another.

First, a deep cleansing breath—if that’s not too much of a yogic exercise—and a gentle reminder: Don’t mistake the church for its contorted reflection on social media. The internet hot zones of ideological combat are not where most Catholics in the pews find a reflection of themselves, their experiences, or their concerns. Catholic Twitter, thank goodness, is not the Catholic Church.

That is not to say there are not actual and important theological and ecclesial issues to debate about the future of the church. But it is worth asking about what lies beyond—or beneath—the conflict on the surface.

Some of the voices most critical of Pope Francis are happy to duke it out on issues related to priestly celibacy, communion for couples trying to extract themselves from “irregular” unions, and the church’s outreach to its marginalized communities—whether among indigenous villages along the Amazon or in LGBT neighborhoods in the West’s largest cities.

The pope acknowledged such voices, emerging particularly from the United States, as expressions of schism-lite that would not deter him.

Behind these voices are Catholics of simpatico concerns and, frankly, lots of money to throw at platforms of contemporary communication that keep the criticism of Francis steady and loud. These critics emerge from a power nexus that from the beginning of his papacy has found reason to be concerned about Francis. Before they were objecting to his tolerance of indigenous inculturation and access to communion for the divorced, individuals within this network were more clearly worried about his so-called politics.

Francis’ critique of a global throwaway culture that

offers up human dignity before the altar of the free market and his call for the end of overconsumption as a practical and spiritual obligation have alarmed the sentinels and beneficiaries of the global economic status quo.

Pope Francis has undertaken reform of the curia and structures of repression within the Catholic Church even as he has demanded a reappraisal of the global economic order and pointed at the persistent failure to meet our obligations to creation. He seeks a personal and systemic upheaval that is proving intolerable to many in positions of wealth and influence.

So are the vivid criticisms of Francis driven by real concern for “confusion” among the people in the pews or by portfolio management? Probably a bit of both. Even the well-heeled faithful can entertain legitimate worries about orthodoxy, and they are within their rights to invest—sometimes heavily—in messages they want to transmit to Rome.

But ulterior motives are also worth exploring as the rhetorical Molotov cocktails are thrown across social media barricades. To many, there is much more at stake than “likes” and retweets in this ideological combat.

[Kevin Clarke is the chief correspondent for *America* magazine and author of *Oscar Romero: Love Must Win Out* (Liturgical Press).]

Women can be the needed anti-pope:

[By Jamie Manson, excerpt from article in NCR, 1/21/20]

[P]erhaps it's time for a new kind of second anti-pope-- not one single man, but a union of all of the women of the church.

A Chinese proverb says, "Women hold up half the sky." It's fair to say, women hold up a lot more than half of the Catholic Church. Think about it, women make up 52% of the more than 1 billion people in the church, and in the United States alone, 85% of church positions are held by women. So, we've got the numbers. If women walked away from the church for one day, the whole enterprise would be thrown into chaos.

What if we used that leverage, stormed the Vatican (peacefully, of course), and initiated the friendliest of hostile takeovers of this fine mess that men have gotten us into?

What if the 1,350 sisters in the Leadership Conference of Women Religious went into the Vatican and initiated their own kind of apostolic visitation? ...[P]erhaps it's time for the sisters around the globe to step in and regulate this papal situation gone awry....

They may be the only ones up to the task.

Last week, Pope Francis received worldwide acclaim for making a woman an undersecretary at the Vatican Secretariat of State — an office she had labored in for 27 years. If this is the course we are on, it's going to be a slow boat to equality. We all know the church can't wait that long for justice.... #