



Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 9, 2020

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 58:7–10

1 Corinthians 2:1–5

Matthew 5:13–16

Next week:

Sirach 15:15–20

1 Corinthians 2:6–10

Matthew 5:17–37

Psalm

The just man is a light in darkness to the upright. (*Psalm 112*)

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

Thursday, February 13, 7:00 p.m.

TMC Board, Thomas House Library

Saturday, February 15, 9:00 am - 12 pm

STA Garden Grooming (see page 2)

From Thomas Merton

In the interior life there should be moments of relaxation, freedom, and “browsing.” Perhaps the best way to do this is in the midst of nature, but also in literature. Perhaps, also, a certain amount of art is necessary, and music. Of course, we have to remember our time is limited and first things have to come first. We can't spend too much time just listening to music.

You also need a good garden, and you need access to the woods, or to the sea. Get out in those hills and really be in the midst of nature a little bit! That is not only legitimate, it is in a certain way necessary. Don't take your cloister concept too materially. Now, I may be running into all kinds of problems with constitutions. But the woods and nature should be part of your solitude, and if it's not periodically part of your solitude, I think the law should be changed.

--Contemplation in a World of Action

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

Garden grooming Feb. 15:



Please join Vicki Sullivan for grooming of the STA church gardens on Saturday, February 15th, 9:30 - 12 noon. Bring garden gloves, if you have them. Vicki will have tools, extra gloves, and garden stools. There are tasks for all levels of ability.

Nourishment will be provided: bagels, juice, smiles!

The garden needs fluffing and tidying up. The Homer St. side needs weeding before the weeds get too big. We will spread compost and mulch to control weeds and perk up the plants, as well as add azaleas to the driveway. Many hands will get the job done quickly.

Please let Vicki know that you can join her:
vickisullivan@comcast.net or 650-327-5339.

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.

Condolences to Jeanne and Dick Placone:



Alicia Placone-Combetta, the daughter of Jeanne and Dick Placone, passed away peacefully in her sleep at 2 p.m. Wednesday, February 5. She was in a palliative care home in Sunnyvale, after having been cared for by Jeanne in their Palo Alto home for the past several

months. Her two daughters and Jeanne and Dick were there. A priest from St. Simon's came and said a blessing for her and the family. She is at rest now with the angels. Funeral arrangements are pending. Jeanne and Dick thank you for your prayers.

Lector/Communion Minister schedule:



John Arnold has sent out by email the next schedule for lectors and Communion ministers. It covers February 16 till July 26. If you are one of these ministers and did not receive the schedule, please

call John at (650) 269-2950 or email him at jsao-so@comcast.net. And hang that schedule by your calendar and mark the dates when you are up for duty!

Feb. 14 next Heart & Home dinner:

The Stanford-founded Heart and Home Collaborative shelter is providing a safe and warm winter sleeping space for about 15 enrolled unhoused ladies. Several parish volunteers contributed to a plentiful meal on Thursday, January 23rd at University Lutheran church on Stanford Ave. Thanks to those contributors from our site!!! A second date of Friday, February 14 (Yes, Valentine's Day) has been selected.

Prepare a small homemade dish for 6 or more people as a personal contribution. Meat loaf, mashed potatoes, greens and a salad are among favorites! Call Terry at 650-714-2131 for any questions, \$ donations or food contributions. Thank you so much. (www.hhcollab.org)

Lectures this week on peace, the Little Flower:

Monday, Feb. 10: Combatants for Peace: hear a live presentation with Israeli and Palestinian former combatants, Monday, February 10, 7:30 pm, at First Congregational Church, 1985 Louis Road, Palo Alto.

Tuesday, Feb. 11: Spirituality Tuesday Assembly: "Saint Therese of Lisieux and her Little Way", by Fr. Kevin Joyce, a priest of the Diocese of San Jose, who has a PhD in spirituality from the Catholic University of America. He serves at our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in San Jose and as a spiritual director and instructor at Saint Patrick's Seminary and University in Menlo Park.

Therese of Lisieux died in 1897 at the age of 24. Within 30 years, millions of people had read her autobiography and were demanding that she be declared a saint. Her "little way" of spirituality made holiness appear to be accessible to anyone. In this presentation, Fr. Kevin Joyce will explore her life and teachings

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

Bulletin: Kay Williams, kaywill@pacbell.net

Finance: Helena Wee, 650-520-7556, 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

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

Straining for Sabbath amidst technology:

[By Ron Rolheiser, OMI, 2/4/20]

We are, without doubt, becoming more enslaved to and more compulsive in our use of mobile phones and the internet.

For many of us it is now existentially impossible to take off a day, let alone several weeks off, and be on a genuine holiday or vacation. Rather the pressure is on us to constantly check for texts, emails, phone messages, and the like; and the expectation from our families, friends, and colleagues is precisely that we are checking these regularly. The sin-du-jour is to be, at any time, unavailable, unreachable, or non-communicative.

But the rhythm of time as God designed it is meant to give us, regularly, weekly, some time off the wheel, some "Sabbath-time" when ordinary life, ordinary pressures, ordinary work, and ordinary expectations are bracketed and we give ourselves permission to stop, to shut things down, and to rest. Today, nowhere is this more appropriate and urgent than in regard to our use of phones, notebooks, and computers. They, more than anything else, constitute regular time, servile work, and the occupations and preoccupations from which the commandment to keep holy the Sabbath ask us to refrain.

When I was young both our churches and our culture still took the concept of Sabbath (for Christians, especially the idea of not working on Sunday) more seriously. A popular question was always: What are you allowed to do on a Sunday and what are you not allowed to do? Mostly this focused on different kinds of physical labor: May you work in your garden on a Sunday? May you harvest your apples tree on a Sunday?

Today, I worry less about gardening or picking apples on a Sunday. The more important issue is: Can we step off the treadmill of phones and computers on Sundays and be genuinely available to celebrate Sabbath?

Sabbath, as best-selling author Wayne Muller tells us, is time off the wheel, time when we take our hand from the plough and let God and the earth care of things, while we drink, if only for a few moments, for the fountain of rest and delight.

Today that plough looks a lot like a mobile phone or a computer.

#

(Black History month, continued from page 4.)

Whiteness, then, is presented as normative in terms of culture, music, dress, diction, food, behavior and worship, among so many other categories. Such a culture of meaning making becomes internalized in minoritized populations and concurrently bolsters a sense of entitlement and privilege in those who are identified as part of the majority. Racism is reduced to discrete acts of animus by and against individuals, and false narratives are woven into our collective history to justify racial injustice on grounds other than the truth.

The very nature of structural racism preserves itself and perpetuates injustice by making it appear invisible to the beneficiaries, thereby setting up those in positions of power to become defensive, dismissive and even violent when confronted with the truth always already at work. This is the case as well in our church as much as it is elsewhere in the world. The only way for whites to begin seeking authentic racial justice is to first acknowledge the two-sided coin of racism and white supremacy and own one's complicity within this system.

This is something that the late Trappist monk and author Thomas Merton sought to do in his 1963 essay, "Letters to a White Liberal." Inspired and challenged by King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," Merton sought to examine the nature of racism in the church and world, seeing for himself the uncomfortable truths that surfaced when he listened to his brothers and sisters of color. He explained at the end of his lengthy essay that: "I have spelled it out for myself, subject to correction, in order to see whether a white man is even capable of grasping the words, let alone believing them." And then alluding to Jesus' saying in the gospel, Merton added: "For the rest, you have Moses and the Prophets: Martin Luther King, James Baldwin and the others. Read them and see for yourself what they are saying."

Like Merton, I am a white male cleric, someone who also resides in a social location at the intersection of unearned and unsolicited power and privilege. As someone who unwittingly benefits from racial injustice, who has been socialized not to ask tough questions or acknowledge racist complicity, and who is inherently complicit in the perpetuation of white supremacy in the church and the world, it is incumbent on me to continue the ongoing self-examination necessary to contribute to the work of anti-racism. This is a lifelong struggle because our culture of racism is a life-shaping phenomenon. It is not something that can be accomplished in just one month out of each year.

[Daniel P. Horan is a Franciscan friar and assistant professor of systematic theology and spirituality at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. His most recent book is *Catholicity and Emerging Personhood: A Contemporary Theological Anthropology*.]

A white Catholic looks at Black History month:

[By Daniel P. Horan, OFM, *ncronline*, 2/5/20]

The month of February is recognized in the United States and Canada as Black History Month. While the civil commemoration in America officially began in 1970, its origins date back to at least 1926 when historian Carter G. Woodson called for the observance of "Negro History Week" during the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

That the country needs to explicitly set aside a time of recognition for black history unveils the uncomfortable truth that white people avoid facing and that people of color reckon with daily: structural racism is real, white supremacy is normative and the stories we tell about ourselves as a nation — and as a church — are skewed in such a way as to subjugate and erase black oppression and white privilege.

Often times Black History Month is treated as a time for women and men of African descent to celebrate their cultural patrimony and history. This is certainly a good outcome of the civil designation. Providing greater visibility to African American heritage is always a good thing. However, the commemoration also ought to remind white women and men — such as myself — that ours is not the only history, our experiences are not universal experiences and our perspectives and cultures should not be viewed as normative.

One of the unintended drawbacks of Black History Month as a social and educational phenomenon is that it gives cover to white vincible ignorance. White students are often exposed only to a predetermined, sanitized and a selected few historical figures of color, who are treated as exceptional or exotic, presented so as not to rock the boat of racial injustice or threaten the sense of moral superiority and racial rectitude among white populations.*

I only have to recall my own well-intentioned but notably inadequate upstate New York elementary and secondary Catholic schools' presentation of figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman. ...Their heroic actions were historically conditioned such that we could look back with the hindsight of the late 20th century and justify the pretend narrative that things used to be really bad in the past, but thank God these aren't real problems today.

Absent from the whitewashed curriculum was the broader social context and dangerous memory of chattel slavery, white supremacy and intersectional injustice that King regularly highlighted in the trifold reality of race, poverty and violence. Likewise, there was no serious engagement with the lives and work of more "radical" (a label typically used to dismiss) civil rights leaders and authors such as Malcolm X, James Baldwin, or Angela Davis.

Similarly, I do not recall hearing a single lecture in school or homily in church that acknowledged the realities of either the Catholic Church's complicity in the sin of racism or the longstanding history of Black Catholics.

... At the national level, the U.S. bishops' conference most recent document on racism — its first in nearly 40 years — falls shockingly short of acknowledging such complicity, identifying the persistence of white supremacy and naming the sinners that are culpable for the "sin of racism."

On the latter point, scholars have been doing important work for decades in an effort to raise greater awareness of the Black Catholic community that has been present on this continent for centuries. The classic study of this history is the late Benedictine Fr. Cyprian Davis' 1990 book *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*. The work of theologians like Dominican Sr. Jamie Phelps and Boston College professor emerita M. Shawn Copeland have collected essays highlighting the distinctive yet underappreciated contributions and experiences of Black Catholics in the American context. ...

But this point was made most clearly and directly last month in an article written by Shannen Dee Williams, a historian at Villanova University, titled: "Black history is Catholic history." Williams states the stark fact that:

In the United States, where the roots of many black Catholics predate those of the vast majority of white and white ethnic Catholics by at least three centuries, popular and scholarly discussions and depictions of the American Catholic experience rarely include the church's black faithful. At best, black Catholics are presented as historical anomalies. At worst, they are altogether erased.

The summary takeaway is simple: the white church in the American context has not been truthful about its own history. Given that the church is inextricably "in the modern world," as Vatican II states in *Gaudium et Spes*, and not "apart" from the world, it is not surprising that the way this nation narrates its civil history is reflected in the way the church in this country expresses its own past and self-understanding. White Catholics, especially many in leadership, have not yet reckoned with what the church as an institution and its members have done and what they have failed to do.

... While Black History Month is an opportune time for children, women and men of African descent to celebrate their legacy, this time of commemoration offers a particular challenge and opportunity for whites like me.

I need to be made uncomfortable; to risk vulnerability and open myself up to the painful truth that I am part of a society that is steeped in what Fr. Bryan Massingale calls "a culture of racism." Unwittingly, I and everybody else in the United States have been socialized and affected by a structure of racism that simultaneously subordinates minoritized communities and elevates those who are identified (or identify) as white.

(Black History month, continued on page 3.)