



Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 16, 2020

Readings

This week:

Sirach 15:15–20

1 Corinthians 2:6–10

Matthew 5:17–37

Next week:

Leviticus 19:1–2, 17–18

1 Corinthians 3:16–23

Matthew 5:38–48

Psalm

Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord! (*Psalm 119*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. Xavier Lavagetto, OP.

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, February 17, 7:00 p.m.

Spiritual Ed Committee,
Thomas House Library

From Thomas Merton

We must be wary of ourselves when the worst that is in man becomes objectified in society, approved, acclaimed and deified, when hatred becomes patriotism and murder a holy duty, when spying and delation [accusation] are called love of truth and the stool pigeon is a public benefactor, when the gnawing and prurient resentments of frustrated bureaucrats become the conscience of the people and the gangster is enthroned in power, then we must fear the voice of our own heart, even when it denounces them. For are we not all tainted with the same poison?

--Emblems of a Season of Fury

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

Crab Dinner Dance February 22:

Take this chance to buy tickets for the 22nd Annual Crab Dinner Dance and Auction, Saturday, February 22: This is a fun parish event, benefiting the work of the Knights of Columbus in our area.

Tickets may be obtained from Knights of Columbus today after Mass. Tickets must be purchased in advance. Tickets after this weekend may be purchased from Jerry or Charles of the Knights of Columbus; see contact information below

The KofC Palo Alto Council of STA Parish is asking parishioners for donations of new or gently used items or services (carwashing, wine tasting party, babysitting hours, progressive dinner, event tickets, etc) for the silent auction table at the Feb 22nd, 2020 Crab Dinner Dance. Please call Jerry Lucha (650)424-9660 or Charles Guenzer (650)387-4268 to coordinate drop off of your donations.

Artists wanted:

Are you an artist? If you would like to hang your work for a month in the St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center, please contact Ted Baer at tabaer@sbcglobal.net.

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 jsaoso@comcast.net. And hang that schedule by your calendar and mark the dates when you are up for duty!

Take a meal to STA parish priests:

Please join a new STA parishioner-led project, which will provide Sunday dinner to our three parish priests. Named "Take Them A Meal," the meal project is an outreach program that lets the parish priests know they are appreciated. To participate, parishioners cook and deliver a meal on the busiest day of the week for the priests, Sunday. If you choose to join, you will pick a date that is convenient for your schedule and prepare a meal for three; Fr. Stasys, Fr. Sev, and Fr. Maurice. There are no food allergies, although dietary stipulations include no beef, no pork, low salt and not too spicy.

Delivery is set on Sunday between 12:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. to the Saint Albert the Great rectory. Located in the rectory carport is a blue Igloo cooler into which the prepared food will be placed. Our priests are not always home for dinner at 5 PM, but they are happy to reheat the meal when arriving back in the evening.

If you have further questions or you are ready to sign-up, please reach out to Julie Sanford at julsan@umich.edu or by phone, 408-829-8717. For Spanish speakers, please contact Raquel Fleischmann at rqbcovery@gmail.com or by telephone--650-739-5830.

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 lots more, including a collection of books about or written by Thomas Merton. There is a binder with a sign-out sheet for borrowers.

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, 650-704-8002

Liturgy: John Arnold, 650-269-2950, jsaoso@comcast.net

Sally Benson, 408-464-0750, 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, 650-704-8002, 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, Dick and Jeanne Placone, 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

Francis punts on married priests:

[By Thomas Reese, *nronline*, 2/14/20]

It was disappointing but not a surprise that Pope Francis decided not to respond to the Amazon synod's recommendation that the Catholic Church ordain mature, married men to make up for the huge shortage of priests in the Amazon region. Francis did not say yes to married priests, but neither did he really say no. Discussion of the matter will continue, whereas previous papacies said no to even discussing the topic.

Priests are in such short supply in Amazonia that the Eucharist and other sacraments are not readily available to most Catholics. Many villages see a priest only once or twice a year. The shortage has gone on for decades and the Amazonian bishops, who met in Rome in October, see no hope for a turnaround.

They also wanted to open the diaconate to women, who in many villages are already the religious leaders of their communities. Here the pope gave a definitive no.

Francis responded to the recommendations of the synod in a 20-page exhortation, "Querida Amazonia" or "Dear Amazon," which was released Wednesday (Feb. 12).

It is clear that Francis was upset with the media, who focused on the ordination of married men almost to the exclusion of the other topics of the synod, such as the devastation of the environment and exploitation of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon....He also insisted that concern for the environment must be linked to concern for indigenous peoples.

While I sympathize with the pope's desire to emphasize the issues facing the environment and indigenous peoples, I find it disappointing that he recycles the old recommendations of praying for vocations and enlarging the role of the laity.

Don't get me wrong. I am all for these solutions, but we have been praying for vocations for more than a century and we have been increasing the role of the laity since the Second Vatican Council ended in 1965. True, more can be done, but are we going to be a Eucharistic community or not?

Clearly, Francis does not want to be the pope who gets rid of mandatory celibacy, which he strongly values. He may also fear that vocal opponents to ordaining married men would further divide the church if he allowed it, even though they are a small minority.

"Querida Amazonia" eloquently acknowledges the absence of the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation in so many places in the Amazon, but rather than ordaining married men, he urges the ordination of more male deacons. By accident or by plan, this will create the cadre of candidates for priesthood if he ever allows for exceptions.

But Francis is not open to ordaining women to the diaconate. His arguments against women deacons were disappointing and patriarchal. He fears "clericalizing" women — as if that is not a bigger problem for male deacons. He calls for more recognition of women's roles in the church ...but why not go all the way and ordain women?

Our disappointment with Francis' decisions on married priests and women deacons should not blind us to the many other excellent things in his exhortation. What he says about the environment, global warming and indigenous peoples underscores the points made by the synod.

He also gives a full-throated endorsement to more inculturation in the church so that Catholicism is no longer simply a European import but rather reflects the indigenous wisdom, practices and cultures of the Amazon. He wants a church that has "new faces with Amazonian features."

Francis especially notes the need for inculturation of the liturgy. This will require replacing Cardinal Robert Sarah as head of the Congregation for Divine Worship with someone sympathetic to inculturation. Sarah, who is a vocal opponent of any exceptions to the rule of celibacy, must submit his resignation in June when he turns 75.

Francis' exhortation is itself a change to business as usual in the church. While previous popes have written their own long documents that superseded anything done by a synod, Francis encourages people to read the Amazon synod's final document, which, he says, "profited from the participation of many people who know better than myself or the Roman Curia the problems and issues of the Amazon region, since they live there, they experience its suffering and they love it passionately." He does not want to replace that text but rather calls on everyone in the Amazon region to "apply it."

The pope has shown that in the synodal process he will listen, enthusiastically endorse most recommendations, say no to some and postpone others until more opportune times.

Not all will like this approach. For some it is too "popular" or "democratic." For others, it is too slow and not democratic enough. But it is a long way from previous popes who said, "My way or the highway."

Francis is not afraid of open discussion and even disagreement in the church. In his new book, "St. John Paul the Great," published the day before his exhortation, he said, "What holds the church together isn't the fact that we all agree, but a word that many have forgotten: communion," where "different parts collaborate for the good."

[Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese is a columnist for Religion News Service and author of *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*.]

The most dangerous building in town:

[By Bill McKibben, *Sojourners*, February 2020]

What's the most generic, uninteresting building in your town? Probably the new bank branch, all brown brick with sterile "landscaping" in the parking lot.

And what's the most dangerous building in your town? Probably the new bank branch, with its drive-through window and its smiling teller and its pens on chains.

Dangerous because if it's connected to one of the big national banks—Chase, Citi, Wells Fargo, Bank of America—that branch is deeply enmeshed in the destruction of God's creation that climate change represents. It's taking your money and turning it into carbon.

Those four banks—the same ones that helped nearly bring down the world economy in 2008—are the main lenders to the fossil fuel industry. If you want to build a new gas pipeline, if you wish to frack a well, if you hope for a shiny new LNG port, all you have to do is apply and chances are you'll get your cash. Consider Chase, which lends more than any bank on Earth to the fossil fuel industry. In the last three years it handed the industry \$196 billion. For ultra-deep-sea drilling, for Arctic exploration—you name it. It's single biggest energy client? TC Energy, which is still trying to punch the Keystone XL pipeline across the continent. Its lending has gone up—way, way up—since the Paris climate accords. If Exxon is a carbon giant, so is Chase.

The rest of the banks aren't far behind, nor is the rest of the finance industry. Big asset managers such as Blackrock own most of the world's coal and gas and oil; big insurance companies such as Liberty Mutual not only pour your premium dollars into fossil fuel stocks, they also offer the insurance that lets these companies keep building new infrastructure (even as they abandon homeowners who now find themselves living amid drought-fueled wildfire zones or on the edge of a rising sea).

As the pope has been saying, we need to count abuse of the planet as a sin. We all have something to answer for, but few of us come close to these guys. You can almost even feel sorry for Exxon—they fight for their survival, since they only know how to do one thing. But Chase—Chase could lend to anybody. Oil and gas and coal are just a corner of their business. (Before you start to feel too sad for Exxon, however, reflect that their former CEO, Lee Raymond, has for many years been on Chase's board—this is a cozy and connected little chamber of horrors.)

Can we do anything about this? We can. We can fight. On April 23, people will be holding teach-ins in Chase branches across America. People will be pulling out their money and cutting up their credit cards. People will be saying "not with my money" and switching

their accounts to local credit unions or to the handful of banks that have taken this crisis seriously. People will be trying to shut down the worst pipeline of all, the pipeline of money.

Will you be there? Perhaps you've admired all the young climate strikers around the world, who have done so much to awaken the planet's consciousness. Admire them you should—but it's not okay to take the world's biggest problem and hand it off to junior high students. Time to be an adult.

[Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org, is the author most recently of *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?* (April 2019).]

Masses suspended in Hong Kong:

[Catholic News Service, 2/13/20]

HONG KONG —The threat of spreading the coronavirus has forced Catholic officials in Hong Kong to suspend all church programs Feb. 15-28, including Sunday Masses and the Ash Wednesday liturgy that marks the beginning of Lent.

Ucanews.com reported Cardinal John Tong, apostolic administrator of Hong Kong, said the "disappointing" decision had been made "because the next two weeks will be a crucial time to suppress the epidemic...This is not an easy decision."

The move comes amid global fears that the epidemic, now called COVID-19, has worsened in China against the prediction of experts. The epidemic, first reported in Wuhan city of Hubei province, has spread across the world and claimed more than 1,300 lives, with more than 60,000 confirmed cases as of Feb. 13, mostly in China.

Hong Kong, which has open borders with China, has reported 50 confirmed cases and one death. The densely populated Hong Kong city-state of 7.4 million people is on high alert to check the virus, as thousands have crossed over from mainland China to avoid the infection, ucanews.com reported....

Tong said he wanted Catholics to fulfill their Mass obligation by participating in Mass online, receiving Holy Communion spiritually and meditating on the Scriptures or saying the rosary at home. He also urged Catholics to help each other; share anti-epidemic materials; live the Gospel virtues of faith, hope and love; and pray for each other.

As part of efforts to arrest the outbreak, Hong Kong has set up a slew of mass quarantine camps to isolate victims. So far, around 2,200 people have been placed in quarantine camps in Hong Kong, and some people have criticized the government for setting up the camps in residential areas. With the prices of essential goods soaring and unavailability of medical masks, residents have raided supermarkets and pharmacies, braving chilly winds. Schools in Hong Kong will extend closures until March 16.... #