



Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 23, 2020

Readings

This week:

Leviticus 19:1–2, 17–18

1 Corinthians 3:16–23

Matthew 5:38–48

Next week:

Genesis 2:7–9, 13:1–7

Romans 5:12–19

Matthew 4:1–11

Psalm

The Lord is kind and merciful. (*Psalm 103*)

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

Wednesday, February 26, 6:00 p.m.

Ash Wednesday Mass and Distribution of Ashes.

Saturday, February 29, 9:30 a.m.

Memorial Mass for Alicia Placone-Combetta, STA church

From Thomas Merton

Hell is where no one has anything in common with anybody else except the fact that they all hate one another and cannot get away from one another and from themselves.

And yet the world, with all its wars, is not yet hell. And history, however terrible, has another and a deeper meaning. For it is not the evil of history that is its significance, and it is not by the evil of our time that our time can be understood. In the furnace of war and hatred, the City of those who love one another is drawn and fused together in the heroism of charity under suffering, while the city of those who hate everything is scattered and dispersed, and its citizens are cast out in every direction, like sparks, smoke, and flame.

--*New Seeds of Contemplation*

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

Alicia Placone memorial Mass Feb. 29:

Dick and Jeanne Placone's daughter, Alicia Placone-Combetta, gave up her nine-month battle to be with God's angels on Wednesday, February 5, 2020. Dick and Jeanne and Alicia's two daughters Meradith and Elena were with her as she breathed her last earthly breath.

Alicia led a dynamic and active life as a music and science teacher, with her final appointment as Music Director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in Pittsburg, California. Over the years, hundreds of 6th - 8th graders became good musicians, with many moving on to the area's high school program.

A memorial Mass will be celebrated in honor of Alicia's life on Saturday, February 29, at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Palo Alto at 9:30 a.m.

Following the Mass, there will be a reception for all guests in the Thomas House next door to the church. The family invites all to attend, and thanks everyone who helped with these arrangements and who have sent prayers and condolences.

Those wishing to honor Alicia's memory may do so with a contribution to the American Cancer Society.

Save March 21 for Lenten morning retreat:

Fr. Kevin Ballard, S.J., will lead a Lenten morning retreat, "Making Room YOURSELF for Getting to Know God: How are you GIVING IN for Lent?."

Come to St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center, 1095 Channing Ave., Palo Alto, from 9:00 am till noon for this time to listen, reflect, discuss, meditate on Fr. Ballard's unique blend of soul work and humor.

Light refreshments will be available. No cost to attend, although donations to the sponsoring group, the Thomas Merton Center, are appreciated.

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.

Take a meal to STA parish priests:

Please join a new parishioner-led project, which will provide Sunday dinner to our priests. Named, ***Take Our Priests 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 low salt and mild to medium spice. Also, when beef is served, please include an alternative dish such as chicken, pork, or seafood for one.

Delivery is set on Sunday between 3:00 PM and 5:00 PM to the Saint Albert the Great rectory. Located in the rectory carport is a blue Coleman Cooler where prepared food will be placed inside. 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.

Seton School books collection: March 14-15:



Our parish collection for new books for Seton 2nd grade books will be held on March 14-15. Your generosity in past years has provided a package of 5-7 books for each 2nd grade student to read at home during the long summer weeks. These emerging readers benefit from this educational opportunity

inspiring them to read, learn and share these books with others while maintaining skills during their school break.

Last year, each 2nd grader received 4 favorite individual choices which was a real winner! Recent feedback from those students was very positive!

Any cash donations may be given to a Human Concerns rep after each mass that weekend. We are happy to shop for you! You will see lots of smiling faces in photos of the handing-out event come June.

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

When our nation is stuck in a spiritual desert:

[By Adam Taylor, *Sojourners*, March 2020]

Lent is a season of introspection and reflection as we prepare for Easter. By observing the 40 days of Lent, we replicate Jesus' sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days.

When I was 16, my mom accepted a new job at the University of Arizona, and my parents made the untimely decision to uproot our family and move from the Pacific Northwest to the Arizona desert just before my last year in high school. As a result, I know something about deserts.

Deserts are not simply physical places—they are also spiritual and emotional seasons in our lives. What the physical desert does to the body, the spiritual desert does to our soul, making us feel drained and depleted. In moments of spiritual desert, we can feel disoriented and alienated from God. St. John of the Cross referred to these as dark nights of the soul—times when “we feel a spiritual drought and estrangement from God.”

Nations can also go through what feel like periods of desert. America seems stuck in a dire one now. The current political crisis represents a test of our democracy and of the witness of the church. U.S. Christianity is also facing desert times as younger Christians abandon the church in record numbers.

Jesus knew something about deserts. He spent 40 trying and formative days fasting and wandering in the desert, just before he faced and overcame the devil's three temptations of instant gratification, power, and control, which helped prepare him for his three years of public ministry. Time in the desert can be essential to prepare us for and sustain the long, hard work of seeking justice and advancing God's reign.

The desert provides time for preparation through deeper discernment. Time in the desert gives us the space to think more deeply, listen more carefully, and see more clearly. Solitude and silence must be learned and practiced. In the context of pursuing justice, discernment sharpens our analysis and enables us to see possibility in the impossible and hope in seemingly hopeless situations.

Second, time in the desert provides a time for purification. Many justice leaders burn out because their starting point is righteous indignation rather than steadfast love. Our soul yearns for the purification and renewal that real and regular contemplation provides. Contemplation grounds and sustains faith-inspired activism. As Christian leaders and activists, we must constantly resist the dangers of self-righteousness, absolutism, and, at worst, demonizing and hating our opponents and enemies, which has become all too common in American politics. We must overcome the evil that is external but also the

evil that lies within each of us.

Third, the desert provides a time for total surrender. All genuine spirituality requires letting go. Letting go of illusion, ego, and sin. In the desert, we must be willing to give everything to God—our past regrets and hurts, our present problems and doubts, our future fears and dreams. In the desert, we are reminded that there is no burden that God cannot carry, there is no yoke that is too heavy for God.

Our communities, nation, and world may be in a harsh and difficult time—but if we engage in deeper discernment, purify ourselves, and surrender to God, we will be better equipped to lead out of the desert, transforming ourselves, our nation, and our world.

[Rev. Adam R. Taylor is executive director of Sojourners. He previously led the Faith Initiative at the World Bank Group.]

(Mickens, continued from page 4)

ordination of married men; 2.) establish equal rights for men and women in the Church," he said.

The bishops should not wait for the pope to do this. Nor should they expect him to do so, at least not on his own.

They can take action now to fulfill their responsibility to provide their people with the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. The first step is to formally petition the pope to allow the ordination of married men.

The legal way forward

The bishops at the Synod assembly on the Amazon "proposed" this, but – technically – they did use the canonical language over which people like Cardinal Baldisseri love to split hairs. In fact, there is a canonical process that a bishop or conference of bishops (or perhaps a Synod assembly) can follow to request the ordination of married men.

The Code of Canon Law actually foresees this possibility. While it states that "a man who has a wife" is simply impeded from receiving holy orders (Can. 1042, no. 1), it also says – quite specifically – that the Holy See can dispense of this impediment (cf. Can. 1047 § 2, no. 3).

We often say it's easier to get what you want if you ask nicely. In the Catholic Church – yes, also in the pontificate of Pope Francis – it's even better if you ask "canonically." #

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

Time to bury the clergy-centered Church:

[By Robert Mickens, *LaCroix International*, 2/20/20]

What's the greatest threat to the Roman Catholic Church today – a schism? Or the rise in power of fundamentalist clericalists?

José María Castillo, himself a priest, believes it's the latter.

The 90-year-old Spaniard was one of the most influential theologians in Latin America and elsewhere during the first two decades following the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). His books, published in the dozens, were mandatory reading in many Spanish-speaking seminaries and universities immediately after the Council.

Then they weren't.

Not long after his election in 1978, John Paul II put the brakes on the push for further ecclesial reform (as theologians like Castillo were advocating) and began his restorationist project of carefully narrowing the interpretation and application of the Vatican II documents.

One way the Polish pope did this was by appointing compliant and doctrinally conservative (and unimaginative) bishops. They, in turn, with the support of the Vatican's doctrinal office, began silencing and marginalizing theologians like Castillo.

Return of the early post-Vatican II theologians

These theologians have found a new lease on their ecclesial lives since Jorge Mario Bergoglio SJ was elected Bishop of Rome in 2013.

The man we now call Pope Francis, even without any formal writ of rehabilitation, has allowed them to begin contributing again to the discussions, debates and process of discernment that his pontificate has reintroduced in the Church.

It is nothing short of amazing how much the atmosphere inside the Church has changed in just seven years.

Archbishop Piero Marini, the longtime Vatican official most identified with the post-conciliar liturgical reforms, said just after Francis' election that we had been "breathing the air of a swamp."

Unfortunately, the Argentine pope, who is famous even beyond Church circles for being one of the world's most outspoken defenders of the environment, has not been able to completely clean up the old, stifling atmosphere within centralized Catholicism. There are priests, bishops and cardinals in places of influence and power – in Rome and abroad – who are doing everything they can to stop the 83-year-old pope from making any changes that might threaten their clericalist privileges.

The clericalists strike back

And one of the sinister methods they are using to try halt him in his tracks is to constantly raise the specter

of a Church schism.

Some commentators believe this was at least a factor in the pope's decision not to mention, in his recent exhortation on the Amazon, the issue of married priests and women deacons.

"At the Vatican the ideas and interests of the cardinals, bishops and monsignors that represent the conservative clergy far outweigh the deprived needs of the hundreds of thousands of Catholics who live in the Amazon region," José María Castillo has observed.

In an article published Feb. 17 on the site *Religión Digital*, he said the threat posed by the continued, lopsided influence of such clericalists is much more serious than any possible schism. And the reason is simple. The clericalists, just a minuscule part of the 1.2 billion-member Church, are seriously violating the rights of the Catholic faithful.

Castillo cited paragraph 37 of *Lumen gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

"The laity have the right, as do all Christians, to receive in abundance from their spiritual shepherds the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the assistance of the word of God and of the sacraments," that Vatican II text says.

The obligation to feed God's people

With every right, there is an obligation. And here it is the obligation and responsibility of the Church's spiritual pastors (first and foremost its bishops) to provide the Catholic people with the sacraments.

But the bishops are not doing that in the Amazon. Nor are they doing it in many other places of the world where there are not enough ordained presbyters to lead Eucharistic celebrations – i.e. to validly consecrate the hosts. "It is a pressing obligation of Church authority to adequately respond to this right of the faithful," Castillo wrote. "It's a duty the pope must respond to despite the arguments and interests of the fundamentalist and conservative clergy," he continued.

"In the Church of the early centuries every community had the recognized right to elect its ministers. And even the right to remove them when the ministers' behavior was not in conformity with their mission," he noted. He cited the acts from a synod held in Spain in the 3rd century to show that even Rome upheld this right. And, thus, the Church consisted in the community more than in the clergy.

Priorities upside down

But today, he said, the situation is totally reversed. "That which is imposed is what's in the interest and convenience of the clergy, even when that leads to the religious and evangelical abandonment of hundreds of thousands of Catholics," he wrote.

"It's extremely important to underline very clearly that this situation will only be resolved when two, ever more pressing decisions are made: 1.) allow the presbyteral

(Mickens, continued on page 3.)