



Second Sunday of Lent

March 8, 2020

Readings

This week:

Genesis 12:1–4a

2 Timothy 1:8b–10

Matthew 17:1–9

Next week:

Exodus 17:3–7

Romans 5:1–2, 5–8

John 4:5–42

Psalm

Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you. (*Psalm 33*)

Today's presider is Fr. Larry Percell.

Today



Daylight Saving
Time started
today!!

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, March 9, 1:00 p.m.

TMC Liturgy Committee, Thomas House Library

Thursday, March 12, 7:00 pm

TMC Board of Directors, Thomas House Library

From Thomas Merton

My chief joy is to escape to the attic of the garden house and the little broken window that looks out over the valley. There in the silence I love the green grass. The tortured gestures of the apple trees have become part of my prayer. I look at the shining water under the willows and listen to the sweet songs of all the living things that are in our woods and fields. So much do I love this solitude that when I walk out along the road to the old barns that stand alone, far from the new buildings, delight begins to overpower me from head to foot and peace smiles even in the marrow of my bones.

--*The Sign of Jonas*

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

POSTPONED: ←←←←←

March 21st Lenten Retreat with Fr. Ballard:

Fr. Kevin Ballard, S.J., who was on tap to lead a Lenten morning retreat, “Making Room YOURSELF for Getting to Know God: How are you GIVING IN for Lent?.”, on Saturday, March 21, has been called to celebrate the funeral Mass of a close friend on that morning.

We are therefore postponing this retreat until we can set another date and place—which may be after Lent. Please watch for further announcement of this event.

Concerts at Christian Science church this spring:

The Christian Science church in Palo Alto welcomes you to a brand-new concert series this spring! Concerts will feature celebrated organist James Welch, notable pianist Elizabeth Poole Roper, high school *a cappella* choir Mountain View Madrigals, and brass ensemble Monteverdi Brass. Concerts will be on three Sunday afternoons — March 8, April 26, and May 31.

All concerts will be held at 3 pm in the auditorium of First Church of Christ, Scientist, 3045 Cowper St., Palo Alto. There’s a suggested donation of \$10 per person; all proceeds will go to Second Harvest Food Bank.

March is TMC membership month:



Thomas Merton Center (TMC) membership materials will be sent out to all current TMC members in March.

The Thomas Merton Center is a membership-based nonprofit religious education organization required by its bylaws to register its membership annually. Membership fees are minimal—\$15 per individual or \$30 per family. Your choice to become a member helps to keep this Catholic, lay-led, progressive faith community active.

Your membership shows your support for sustaining the Sunday 8:45 a.m. Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas church, the adult spiritual education programs, and educational opportunities at St. Elizabeth Seton School in Palo Alto.

Please contact Kay Williams for more information: kaywill@pacbell.net, 650-270-4188.

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

Can you help with Sunday coffee & donuts?



The TMC hospitality ministry is an important and rewarding adjunct to our weekly Sunday Mass. It is often the friendly public face of our community.

There is a core group of volunteers who keep it running smoothly and perform a myriad of tasks behind the scenes: from picking up the fresh donuts each week, making coffee, setting out the plates, cups and napkins, to cleaning up afterwards to hand off the facility in good order for the next users.

However, our volunteer support staff is dwindling in numbers and we are in need of help. Please, please consider helping out one or more Sundays a month.

Let me know if you can join the team by talking to me directly or by sending an email to jim_davis@pacbell.net. You may also speak to Anna Jaklitsch who coordinates the activity in my absence.

— Jim Davis, TMC Hospitality

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.

--The Human Concerns Committee

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

Loving our neighbor in time of coronavirus:

[By Jim Wallis, *Sojourners*, 3/5/20]

Economic, social, and political inequality affect everything—including how we handle the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19: who gets it, how they are treated, the chances for recovery, job security, etc. Our Sojourners team looked at that question this week: How is our deep and shameful inequality in America at play as the threat of the new coronavirus rises? Here is what we found.

As always, those who are in poverty, those suffering from illness, immigrants, and/or refugees are the most likely to be severely impacted. These are, obviously, all groups of people Jesus calls on us to protect in Matthew 25 — always a core Gospel text for us that clearly relates to this growing health threat.

First, the fact that enormous inequities persist in our health care system works to the detriment of efforts to contain and treat the coronavirus in the United States. Can anyone seriously doubt there will be people who contract the coronavirus and pass it on to others because they are afraid of medical bills they cannot afford to pay?

Second, “self-quarantining” — staying home from work if you are not feeling well — is much less feasible if you could lose your job for it. How many minimum wage workers and those in the service sector will go to work despite being sick because they don’t get any paid sick leave?

Third, since our nation’s appalling economic inequity means much of the burden of any outbreak falls disproportionately on the working poor, what will working class families with children do if schools close and they are without affordable child care? What happens to their jobs?

We must also reckon with the fact that this administration’s overtly racist and xenophobic rhetoric and policy agenda is actively harming efforts to contain spread of the virus. For example, if the administration wasn’t deliberately processing asylum requests extremely slowly, dramatically cutting the number of refugees it admits annually, and seeking to deny asylum to as many refugees as possible, we would not have a humanitarian crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border, with thousands of asylum seekers living in squalid conditions mere feet south of the border as they await the opportunity to enter the United States. The conditions in which asylum seekers are being forced to live could make it much more difficult to protect them from a potential spread of the coronavirus.

We must also remain vigilant and prepared for Trump and his allies to attempt to use migrants as scapegoats in this crisis, as Trump has done so many times before. Indeed, he is already touting his “tough on borders” policies as the key to claims (against significant and growing evidence) that the U.S. is handling the situation so well. In his telling, we would have larger

spread already if we adopted his opponents’ preferred immigration policies. We can all see where this is going: Not only is xenophobic sentiment already being stoked to channel fear of disease into fear and hate of (non-white) people from other countries. We should also absolutely expect the Trump administration to try to leverage the crisis to secure additional funding for its anti-immigrant agenda — perhaps to argue that we need more wall on the southern border to keep us safe from the coronavirus.

In this moment, we badly need — and should passionately advocate for — a more thoughtful and compassionate strategy for fighting the spread of the coronavirus. It is both unjust and completely counterproductive to charge anyone for a test, vaccine (once one is available), treatment, or quarantine expenses while we are actively working to prevent spreading. This kind of public safety mission to avert catastrophe is one of the most critical functions of government and the tax dollars we all pay. Vulnerable populations, like undocumented immigrants, should also be able to get tested and treated for the coronavirus without fear that it will put them in greater jeopardy of identification and deportation. That’s both the Christian and moral thing to do; as it happens, it’s also the smart thing to do if we truly want to minimize the spread of the virus.

It seems that each day brings new reports of U.S. states that have identified cases of the coronavirus, along with new deaths attributed to the virus. Many other nations are experiencing the same thing to varying degrees. Between those reports and the coronavirus-induced stock market tumble in recent days, it’s natural to feel a heightened level of anxiety and fear.

Further, the U.S. government’s response has been a direct cause for this considerable concern. Donald Trump has been downplaying the legitimate fears about what an outbreak could mean — mostly thinking in terms of what it means for him politically in an election year. He has even gone so far as to accuse his political opponents and the mainstream media of colluding to spread needless alarm about the virus merely to hurt his re-election chances. The New York Times very diplomatically refers to the administration’s inconsistent response as a “struggle by the Trump administration to project confidence and progress without misleading the public about the virus’s spread.” We’ve heard Trump question what he claims are the “false numbers” (from the World Health Organization) and say he has “a hunch” people can just sit around and get better — and even go back to work — when doctors and health officials are saying the opposite and telling people not to go to work if they are sick.

When a health crisis threatens Americans, it is no time for the president to riff off the top of his head on cable news shows. But that is Trump’s way of governing: putting his own personal agenda before public service, and that is now adding to the threat of an escalating worldwide disease. All of Trump’s political energy and

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Spread priesthood by eliminating clergy:

[by Gabe Moran, *ncronline*, 2/29/20]

Pope Francis has backed away from the proposal to allow for married clergy in a part of the world where there is a shortage of priests. The move might have been a step toward a significant change in the Catholic Church. It is the kind of small change that could open the door to larger changes typical of church reforms in the past.

These times, however, require a more imaginative and bolder change. Forty years ago, Andrew Greeley proposed a solution to the priest shortage that he called a "Priest Corps." He thought of this move as a temporary experiment which is still the way it could be begun. But it could lead to a permanent change in the leadership of the Catholic Church.

His proposal was to ordain priests for 10 years. The celibacy question becomes immediately irrelevant (gender, too, one can hope). Some people who are very good at the role would be reappointed. There might be individuals who would continue for a lifetime in the position, but no one would be appointed as permanent. Those with extensive experience could be appointed as overseers or bishops for a specified period of time.

Pope Francis in 2015 made this remarkable statement: "A time limit should be established for roles in the church, which are in reality a form of service. ... It would be opportune for all roles of service in the church to have a time limit – there are no lifelong leaders in the church." Pope Benedict XVI led the way in showing that the papacy should be included in this principle. Ten years is plenty of time for anyone to occupy the papacy.

There has been a proposal in recent years to do away with priesthood. Most of the people who strongly oppose the proposal have been priests, understandably so. They are right in arguing that such a change is impractical and undesirable. While there was no one called priest in the earliest church, a prayer leader is a valuable role in a community.

The development in the early church that was an unfortunate historical accident was the split between the readers and the nonreaders. In part because of the church's success in attracting converts, a two-class structure emerged with the clergy on top. The bottom class was simply called the people or the laity. Clergy and priesthood unfortunately were coextensive.

Many people, including the current pope and some bishops, have said that the church has a problem of clericalism. The only sure way to get rid of clericalism is to eliminate the clergy, which would also mean eliminating the laity. A laity exists only because there is a clergy. Although "laity" started out meaning "people," its only meaning for many centuries, and the meaning that the church bequeathed to the secular world, is that the "layperson" is someone lacking knowledge or skill. The church is the only institution that keeps trying to give "laity" a positive meaning.

Many priests in recent years have acknowledged that clericalism is a problem, and they have urged their fellow priests to get rid of the attitude and practices that make up clericalism. I sympathize with these good men and do not wish to ridicule their efforts.

But clericalism is inherent to the present system of men who promise never to have a sexual life, are sent for education to a segregated place called a seminary, are ordained to be the sole leader of an organization composed of "laity," are paid by contributions from the people served, who dress in ornate clothes and are addressed with a paternal title, and live in a provided residence next to their work. Any contemporary priest who might be described as non-clerical would have had to resist almost every element of this system.

"Priesthood" is one of the functions of a community. Prophecy is another. There is no reason to expect that someone good at priesthood would necessarily be good at preaching. Why not tap the talent in the community for a variety of works. After someone serves for a time in a church office, he or she would simply cease to be an official without "reduction to the lay state."

This change, as Greeley proposed, could be initiated immediately with a few outstanding Catholics who could step into the role of priest. It would take many decades for the big picture to change dramatically. Experiments would be needed in creating a new configuration of church offices. But the Catholic Church needs immediate change of language and the first clear steps to reform.

[Gabriel Moran is professor emeritus of educational philosophy at New York University.]

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that of his administration could be spent giving the American public transparent, truthful, and measured facts, updates, and advice about the virus and its spread. That is what public service and presidential leadership should look like.

Each of us has a personal responsibility to each other: to be prepared and to do what we can to minimize transmission of this virus. Please, if you have a fever, cough, or shortness of breath, seek the advice of a doctor and avoid going to work or school if you can. While it's true that you might be at low risk for hospitalization or death if you get the virus, especially if you are young and healthy, I can guarantee you that there are people in your life, on the street, at your office, at your church, and so on who are not so fortunate. A healthy co-worker may care for an ailing parent. An apparently healthy fellow parishioner may in fact be immunocompromised. Loving your neighbor as yourself in this moment also means doing what you personally can to protect not just yourself but your neighbors. It is time for all of us, including the president, to look after each other and not just ourselves. #

[Jim Wallis is president of Sojourners.]

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.