



Seventh Sunday of Easter

May 24, 2020

Readings

This week:

Acts of the Apostles 1:12–14

1 Peter 4:13–16

John 17:1–11a

Next week:

Acts of the Apostles 2:1–11

1 Corinthians 12:3b–7, 12–13

John 20:19–23

Psalm

I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living. (*Psalm 27*)

Today

In this time of COVID-19 restrictions, we are not celebrating Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas Church at 8:45 as usual. When we are able to resume in-person liturgies, we will be starting our Mass at 9:00 a.m. at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, located at Waverley and Homer Streets in 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. While we are sheltering-in-place, donations can be made through our website, www.thomasmerton.org. Click on the “Donate” tab to make a donation via credit card or direct deposit. Or you may mail your donation check to: TMC, P. O. Box 60061, Palo Alto, CA 94306.

Calendar

Sunday, May 24, 1:00 p.m.
TMC Annual Meeting, via Zoom.
(See invitation on page 2)

From Thomas Merton

It seems to me that, as a contemplative, I do not need to lock myself into solitude and lose all contact with the rest of the world; rather that this poor world has a right to a place in my solitude. It is not enough for me to think of the apostolic value of prayer and penance; I also have to think in terms of a contemplative grasp of the political, intellectual, artistic and social movements in this world—by which I mean a sympathy for the honest aspirations of so many intellectuals everywhere in the world and the terrible problems they have to face.

(From a letter to Pope John XXIII, Nov. 1958, in *The Hidden Ground of Love*)

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 Annual Meeting invitation (via Zoom):

On Sunday, May 24, at 1:00 pm, please join the TMC Annual Meeting via Zoom. Here is the information: (no password necessary):

Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android: <https://stanford.zoom.us/j/6613675188>

Or iPhone one-tap (US Toll):
+18333021536,,6613675188# or
+16507249799,,6613675188#

Or Telephone:

Dial: +1 650 724 9799 (US, Canada, Caribbean Toll) or +1 833 302 1536 (US, Canada, Caribbean Toll Free)

Meeting ID: 661 367 5188

International numbers available: <https://stanford.zoom.us/j/aeJM56ZrYI>

Meeting ID: 661 367 5188

SIP: 6613675188@zoomcrc.com

Mass time will change to 9:00 am:

At the request of STA's pastor, Fr. Stasys Mikalonis, and in collaboration with the 7:30 Mass sacristans, we will be changing the start time of this Mass to 9:00 a.m. when we can resume attending Mass physically at St. Thomas Aquinas. This adjustment will allow a smoother transition between the 7:30 and 9:00 Masses.

Attend STA Sunday Mass at 11:00 via Zoom:

Every Sunday, Fr. Stasys Mikalonis and the parish vicars celebrate Mass at STA via Zoom at 11:00 am. It is very heartwarming to see our STA altar on screen, hear lectors from the ambo, and hum along with the one or two musicians who are playing and singing.

Here's the Zoom information to join the Mass live:

<https://dsj.zoom.us/j/759166471>

Meeting ID: 759 166 471

[P.S. One of STA's parochial vicars, Fr. Maurice Igboerika, will depart STA for the Diocese of San Francisco on July 1st.]

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Heart+Home Womens' Shelter at UUCPA:

The Heart and Home Collaborative Women's Shelter is hosted at UUCPA on Charleston Road.

[\(https://www.hhcollab.org/\)](https://www.hhcollab.org/).

The shelter has been extended to June 15 at the UUCPA location with thirteen participants who are relying on us to provide their shelter-in-place capability during the COVID-19 virus emergency. To keep these vulnerable women safe, Heart and Home is seeking additional **dinner donations** and at least one **lead volunteer** to serve dinner one evening a week and/or to serve as a volunteer shelter host on Saturday mornings from 8 am to noon. They can only accept volunteers under age 60 with no underlying health concerns for onsite shifts.

For context, it may help to know that this shelter extension was an unforeseen need for the 2019-2020 shelter season. As you may know, Heart and Home typically operates a seasonal cold-weather shelter and had planned to close in the first week of April.

In response to the Santa Clara County COVID-19 public health orders, Heart and Home has extended their shelter close date to JUNE 15 (two weeks past the expiration of Shelter in Place on May 31.)

To keep providing safe shelter for this extended season, they have been more reliant than ever on volunteers.

STA Parish's contact is Terry Atkinson. Call her at 650-714-2131 to let her know of your donation amount, then send check to STA Pastoral Center with HCC/Heart & Home shelter on memo line (3290 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto, CA 94306). Small amounts can add up to enough. Terry will arrange a date with the shelter, order (hoping somewhat nutritious) pizza. Helen Baumann has volunteered to provide salad.



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, and T. J. Wooten.

[Add/subtract names by e-mailing Kay Williams, kaywill@pacbell.net]

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Reopening rules, people starving for ministry:

[By Phyllis Zagano, *National Catholic Reporter*, 5/22/20]

Just about everyone seems to have ideas for restarting church, or at least about providing sacraments.

The Thomistic Institute began with advice on confession, went on to Eucharist and anointing, and now is looking at baptism. The Catholic Medical Association put out its pandemic paper and the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions had its own guidelines.

What's a bishop to do? One can imagine him, throwing his hands in the air during his 19th Zoom meeting of the week and singing, or shouting: "Words, words, words! I'm so sick of words."

Well, why not? "My Fair Lady" isn't running anymore.

He may be thinking about ministry, but he is in the middle of the new Communion war.

Some ideas are patently ridiculous. The Thomistic Institute, based at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C., and headed by a Yale-educated priest-lawyer, said Communion on the tongue was OK, but not masks. Just don't forget the hand sanitizer. Its 14-person working group (one woman ...) contributed to the downloadable guidelines.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Medical Association says straight out: Communion should be received in the hand, priest and the communicant wearing masks.

The Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions posts competing diocesan decisions: the bishops of Burlington, Crookston, Gaylord, Honolulu, Lansing and Washington permit Communion on the tongue, while those of Cincinnati, El Paso, Jackson, Milwaukee, Orlando, Springfield, Massachusetts, Toledo and Wheeling-Charleston discourage or forbid it.

Diocesan boundaries make for interesting circumstances, where neighboring bishops disagree on what should happen just across the river or the road. Confusion can replace common sense, but even the bishop of Tyler, Texas, who with Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò called for Pope Francis' resignation last summer, suggests communicants "consider" receiving in the hand. This despite curial Cardinal Robert Sarah's calling Communion in the hand a satanic attack on the Eucharist.

Arguments about procedure obscure the simple question: What is church? We cannot have any expectation

of ordinary pre-pandemic Masses soon, but the tease of guidelines and statements raises a false hope.

Meanwhile, the people of God are starving for ministry. Many are simply starving.

The minimal input of women to coronavirus reopening plans is obvious. Any woman who cared for a sick child or parent knows about crowds, good housekeeping and personal hygiene. "Keep your hand out of your mouth" is a playground mantra. Most folks know it is a smart thing to keep other people's hands away from their mouths as well.

Will the men in charge ever listen to women? Will they look across their desks to see who feeds the hungry, gives drink to the thirsty, clothes the naked, shelters the homeless, visits the sick and imprisoned, even buries and mourns the dead?

While many parish and diocesan entities provide food, too often ministry is lacking. Sacraments are crucial, but person-to-person ministry disappears behind mechanized approaches. The Thomistic Institute suggests inviting parishioners to Mass on a rotating basis, perhaps using online ticketing systems such as Eventbrite.

Such avoids the point. People are starved for Eucharist, but rules do not create community and hand sanitizer does not provide grace. The people of God need what Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day called personalism. They need to be loved.

We are in an international ecclesial meltdown that cannot be solved by documents. Things will not return to the way we were, they just will not. Statements — words — are not ministry. Ministry is rooted in the Word.

And church is supposed to be about the Word. It is supposed to be about the Gospel. Only that allows for sacraments.

[Phyllis Zagano is senior research associate-in-residence at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York. She will speak Oct. 3 at the Voice of the Faithful Conference "Visions of a Just Church" in Newton, Massachusetts, and Oct. 4 at St. Ignatius Church, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. Her books include Women Deacons: Past, Present, Future (in Spanish as Mujeres Diaconos: Pasado, Presente, Futuro), published in France and Canada as Des femmes diacones and in Portugal as Mulheres diaconos: Pasado, presente, futuro. Study Guides are available for free download at <https://sites.hofstra.edu/phyllis-zagano/>. Her most recent book is Women: Icons of Christ.]

A Regimen for Reentry:

At last week's TMC Zoom Coffee hour, Ron Ariagno recommended an article in *The New Yorker* (May 13, 2020) by Dr. Atul Gawande, a surgeon and public-health researcher, associated with the Massachusetts General Brigham hospital system, and a writer for *The New Yorker* magazine. Titled "Amid the Coronavirus Crisis, A Regimen for Reentry," Gawande recommends in detail the rules that should govern a return from the national lockdown. He asks: "What are the rules for reentry?"

He turns to health care for the prescriptions that should characterize a return to the reopening of nonessential businesses.

He sees it as "combination therapy—like a drug cocktail. Its elements are all familiar: hygiene measures, screening, distancing, and masks. Each has flaws. Skip one, and the treatment won't work. But, when taken together, and taken seriously, they shut down the virus.

Hygiene: "A study conducted at a military boot camp found that a top-down program of hand washing five times a day cut medical visits for respiratory infections by forty-five per cent. Research on the 2002 SARS coronavirus outbreak found that washing hands more than ten times a day reduced people's infection rate by even more. Disinfecting surfaces helps, too, and frequency probably matters, although I haven't found good research on this. The key, it seems, is washing or sanitizing your hands every time you go into and out of a group environment, and every couple of hours while you're in it, plus disinfecting high-touch surfaces at least daily."

Distancing: "We have all now learned the [six-foot rule](#) for preventing transmission of contagion-containing droplets...[But] there's no stop sign at six feet that respiratory droplets obey...*COVID-19* isn't actually crazy infectious. Measles is crazy infectious: for instance, in a 2008 outbreak in San Diego that began in a school where thirty per cent of students were unvaccinated, each infected child spread the virus to, on average, [eighteen others](#)—meaning that the disease has a "reproductive ratio," or R0, of eighteen. By comparison, a person with *COVID-19* will infect, on average, only two to three others out of all the people he or she encounters while going about ordinary life. Exposure time matters: we don't know exactly how long is too long, but less than fifteen minutes spent in the company of an infected person makes spread [unlike-ly](#)."

Screening: "Hence the practices begun in Asia, and adopted by my health system, to institute [daily screening of all employees, patients, and visitors for symptoms](#) of *COVID-19*. ...Testing when people have symptoms is important; with a positive result, a case can be quickly identified, and close contacts at work and at home can be notified. And, with a negative result, people can quickly get back to work and keep the hospital going.

Masks: "Studies now [consistently](#) indicate that infectivity starts [before symptoms do](#), that it peaks right around the day that they start, and that it declines substantially by five days or so. This is the pattern we see in influenza....That's why we combined distancing with [masks](#). They provide "source control"—blocking the spread of respiratory droplets from a person with active, but perhaps unrecognized, infection....A study published in *Nature* last month shows that, if worn properly and with the right fit, surgical masks are effective at [blocking ninety-nine per cent of the respiratory droplets](#) expelled by people with coronaviruses or influenza viruses. The material of a double-layered cotton mask—the kind many people have been making at home—can block droplet emissions [as well](#). And the *SARS-CoV-2* virus does not last long on cloth; viral counts drop [ninety-nine per cent in three hours](#). Cloth masks aren't as breathable as surgical masks, though, and that's important....Surgical masks are made of a melt-blown polypropylene fibre fabric, which, under magnification, looks like cotton candy. Most of the filtration this material provides isn't from direct blockage but from an electrostatic charge applied to the fibre using a machine called, aptly enough, a corona charger. The static electricity captures viral particles the same way that a blanket in the dryer catches socks. This allows the material to breathe more freely. Cloth masks feel warm and smothering by comparison, and people tend to loosen them, wear them below their noses, or take them off more frequently. The fit of improvised masks is also more variable and typically much worse. A [comparison study](#) found that surgical masks did three times better than homemade masks at blocking outward transmission of respiratory viruses.

"Don't ditch your T-shirt mask, though. A recent, extensive [review](#) of the research from an international consortium of scientists suggests that if at least sixty per cent of the population wore masks that were just sixty-per-cent effective in blocking viral transmission—which a well-fitting, two-layer cotton mask is—the epidemic could be stopped. The more effective the mask, the bigger the impact...."

Conclusion: "As political leaders push to reopen businesses and schools, they are beginning to talk about the tools that have kept health-care workers safe. The science says that these tools can work....Still, regardless of what model politicians set, more and more people are figuring out how to do what has worked in health care, embracing new norms just as we accepted social distancing. We see proof of a changing culture every time we step out and find a neighbor in a mask. Or when we spend time to make our own fit better. Or when we're asked whether we have any concerning symptoms today. Or when we check to see whether the number of *COVID-19* cases in our community has dropped low enough to warrant reentry. If we stick to our combination of precautions—while remaining alert to their limitations—it will."

(Excerpts from a much longer and more detailed article, with compelling descriptions of the health care regimen that Gawande cites as the best model for a return to the post-pandemic society.)