



Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 2, 2020

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 55:1–3

Romans 8:35, 37–39

Matthew 14:13–21

Next week:

1 Kings 19:9a, 11–13a

Romans 9:1–5

Matthew 14:22–33

Psalm

The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs. (*Psalm 145*)

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, August 2, 1:00 pm, via Zoom

TMC (virtual) Coffee and Donuts
(Zoom link to meeting is on Page 2. [New Zoom meeting ID # is being used.](#))

Wednesday, August 5, 5:00 pm, via Zoom

TMC Racism Discussion Group (contact Bob Foley at bob.foley@gmail.com)

Wednesday, August 5, 7:00 pm, via Zoom

STA Site Committee meeting

From Thomas Merton

Absurdity [is] the anguish of realizing that underneath the apparently logical pattern of a more or less “well organized” and rational life, there lies an abyss of irrationality, confusion, pointlessness, and indeed of apparent chaos. This is what immediately impresses itself upon the man who has renounced diversion. It cannot be otherwise: for in renouncing diversion, he renounces the seemingly harmless pleasure of building a tight, self-contained illusion about himself and his little world. He accepts the difficulty of facing the million things in his life which are incomprehensible instead of simply ignoring them. Incidentally it is only when the apparent absurdity of life is faced in all truth that faith really becomes possible. Otherwise, faith tends to be a kind of diversion, a spiritual amusement, in which one gathers up accepted, conventional formulas and arranges them in the approved mental patterns, without bothering to investigate their meaning, or asking if they have any practical consequences in one’s life.

—*Disputed Questions*

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 Coffee Hour invitation (via Zoom):

NOTE: The recurring standing TMC Coffee & Donuts Hour meeting has been renewed, and this is the new Meeting ID:

On Sunday, August 2, at 1:00 pm, please join the TMC Coffee and Donut Hour—via Zoom. Here is the **NEW** information: (no password necessary):

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83624814842>

Meeting ID: 836 241 4842

One tap mobile:

+16699006833,,81402157461#,,1#,158515# US (San Jose)

Or by telephone: +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

Prayer shawl ministry—calling all knitters:

If you enjoy knitting and have a little extra free time these days, making a prayer shawl is a wonderful way to help someone else in need.

To date, almost 100 shawls have been given to people who are going through a very difficult time and wish to enjoy the warmth, love and prayers of a hand-knitted prayer shawl.

IF YOU KNOW of someone who might also be comforted by a prayer shawl, we are happy to currently offer a small selection from which to choose. They are distributed by our parish Home Ministries.

Call Judi Swope 650-856-6972 or Terry Atkinson 650-714-2131 for information. We look forward to hearing from you.

TMC donates \$1000 to Innocence Project:

With a heightened awareness of the importance of actions to support the Black Lives Matter movement, the Board of TMC responded to a suggestion from the TMC ad hoc committee on Racism and White Privilege and voted to donate \$1,000 to the Northern California Innocence Project, based at Santa Clara University School of Law, in honor of Colin Kaepernick.

The work of the Innocence Network (ncip.org)—made up of 67 independent innocence organizations—often lays bare the reach and effects of systemic racism and white supremacy within the criminal justice system and our society at large.

As a coalition of organizations dedicated to freeing people incarcerated for crimes they did not commit, we affirm our commitment to combat white supremacy and anti-blackness in all forms and in all places. This includes in our own organizations, institutions, practices, and offices. The Innocence Network values racial equity and understands that we must first grapple with our own complicity before we can even begin to tackle racial justice at large. Finally, we acknowledge the unbelievable pain and burden this causes our clients and colleagues of color in the Network. #

Masses streamed from STA church:

1) **Parish Mass:** Attend Mass at 11:00 am, streamed from STA church every Sunday morning and celebrated by STA pastor Fr. Stasys Mikalonis or vicar Fr. Sev Kuupuo: <https://dsj.zoom.us/j/759166471>

2) **Stanford Catholic Community:** Attend Mass at 4:30 p.m. every Sunday, streamed from STA church and celebrated by the Dominican priests of the Stanford Catholic Community (including Fr. Xavier Lavagetto, who has celebrated the TMC Mass once a month for several years): go to www.stanfordcatholic.org for that day's link to the YouTube channel.

Outdoor daily Mass:

Daily Mass is celebrated @ Saint Elizabeth Seton School Playground, Mon-Sat at 8:30 a.m. for an allowed number of 60 attendees. No prior sign-up is necessary.

- Upon arrival:
 - A. Sanitize your hands (bring your own sanitizer).
 - B. Cross off 1 # per person on the white board chart.
 - C. Sanitize your hands again.
- Bring and wear your face mask during the Mass.
- Bring and use your own chair or mat. No benches or chairs will be provided. (We will have special accommodations for those who might need it)
- Keep social distance (minimum of 6 feet) at all times.
- No daily missals will be provided.
- Holy Communion reception will be explained on site.

Black Lives Matter at St. Columba parish in Oakland:

The TMC faith-sharing group on racism and white privilege that meets on Wednesday afternoons has been impressed with the work of St. Columba Parish in Oakland: <https://stcolumba-oak.com/>.

St. Columba Catholic Church's mission is clearly stated on the website: "St. Columba is a community of believers in Oakland California who know "who and whose we are" (God's people). Through African-American traditions, we are moved by the Spirit to serve in this world today."

It is a vibrant parish, with many ministries and prayer and action events.

Take a look, participate, be educated and inspired.

PRAY FOR US: Please remember in your prayers this week Art Adams, Denise Alongi, Terry Atkinson, 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, Eleanor Kraft, Hunter Kubit, Dick Jackman, Alicia Kot, Fr. Bill Leininger, Andre and Alyssa Lippard, Deacon Ysidro and Dolores Madrigal, Patricia Markee, Mercedes McCaffrey, Maureen Mooney, Susan Miller, Hayden Pastorini, Paul Prochaska, Bill Risch, Anne Rush, Priya Smith, Bernice Sullivan, Jean Vistica, Dolores Walsh, T. J. Wooten.
[Add/subtract names by e-mailing Kay Williams, kaywill@pachell.net]

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Franciscan Sisters endow NCR EarthBeat:

[By NCR Staff, 7/31/20]

The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration announced on July 31 a gift of \$1.5 million to NCR's endowment earmarked to support and amplify "integral ecological education and journalism reflecting the spirit of Laudato Si'." The gift marks the establishment of the Laudato Si' Fund, which NCR will seek to grow with gifts from other donors.

It is one of the largest donations ever received by NCR. The donation represents roughly half of the amount needed to permanently endow NCR's environmental coverage.

The La Crosse, Wisconsin-based community was among the first supporters of EarthBeat, the project of NCRonline.org launched last year to tell stories of climate crisis, faith and action. The money will assure environmental reporting will be a permanent component of NCR.

FSPA President Sr. Eileen McKenzie, calling on other religious communities and individuals to help match the gift and complete the environmental endowment, said the fund is intended to "wake up the world to the moral urgency surrounding climate change and care for our common home."...

Explaining the name of the fund, McKenzie said, "Laudato Si' is a document rooted in Franciscan spirituality, penned by Pope Francis as an historical call to eco-justice and eco-conversion, and we create this in the year of the document's fifth anniversary. Laudato Si' encompasses what we hope for in endowing NCR to continue to chronicle the integral relationship of the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor."

NCR CEO/President Tom Fox said the gift would "amplify countless voices and much needed activities to avert climate catastrophe." He said NCR's increased environmental coverage is a response to Francis' call to acknowledge the urgency of the environmental crisis.

In April 2019, FSPA provided seed money to get EarthBeat off the ground. It is among 12 women religious communities that have provided funds to keep the project running for three years.

The Laudato Si' Fund will be part of an NCR umbrella editorial endowment fund that the NCR Board of Directors established in 2016. Called the Tom Fox Fund, it was meant to honor Fox's decades of service as editor and publisher....

McKenzie said the sisters welcome the chance to partner with EarthBeat in pursuit of several objectives. They include: waking up the world in the area of Laudato Si' and cry of the Earth, cry of the poor; educating through storytelling; inspiring a movement; inspiring action, including additional financial support

(Abortion, continued from page 4)

Instead of invoking Josef Mengele, however, let's note a different aspect of Greene's observation. She uses the language of solidarity, not the language of autonomy: "They want to take care of the children they already have."

The first thing to be done by those of us who believe abortion is an infamy is to find or create greater bonds of solidarity with women and their children and to discuss abortion only in terms of solidarity. The science, so often invoked these days by those on the political left, will help end the libertarian, autonomy framing of the discussion: Whatever else you may or may not know about an unborn child, its DNA is different from that of its parents and so the argument "it's a woman's body" misstates the actual scientific reality. So, too, does ignoring the degree to which an unborn child is completely dependent on the mother's body. As soon as we, as a culture, recognize that we are talking about two souls, solidarity has a shot to redirect the discussion in ways that respect women and protect unborn lives.

The abortion issue is about to heat up. A "pro-choice" Catholic is about to be nominated for the presidency, and he undoubtedly will be joined by a pro-choice woman on the Democratic Party's ticket. The challenge for Catholics is to avoid the debate and look for ways to start some conversations. The McGrath Institute's report is a good place to start.

[Michael Sean Winters covers the nexus of religion and politics for NCR.]

and concrete steps to save the planet....

EarthBeat's founding editor, Bill Mitchell, who becomes NCR publisher Aug. 1, said the sisters' work on behalf of eco-spirituality and environmental action reflects strong solidarity with EarthBeat's readers...

Barbara Fraser, who takes over EarthBeat as NCR's Climate Editor on Aug. 1, said: "With Laudato Si' and the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region, Pope Francis has given us guideposts for exploring climate change — and our role, as people of faith, in addressing it — from the standpoint of ethics and environmental justice. We are committed to telling stories that make those issues come to life." #

<p>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</p>

Abortion: discuss don't debate:

[By Michael Sean Winters, *NCR*, 7/31/20]

It started on Twitter. After our executive editor Heidi Schlumpf published a column praising Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez for a magnificent speech she delivered after Congressman Ted Yoho called her something vulgar (which I shall not repeat), pro-life activists attacked Schlumpf on Twitter. She was called Satan. She was called a baby murderer. Schlumpf's sin? She had not denounced AOC's stance on abortion.

Other angry pro-lifers called the NCR customer service number and shouted vulgarities at the people who answer the phones, people who were not responsible for AOC's position on abortion or for Schlumpf's column.

The emails were worse: "You must be a extremist leftist liberal DUMBOCRAP? You should be reprimanded and then issue a formal apology to the Catholic Religious community," one "concerned Catholic" wrote to Schlumpf. "If not, you will be dealt with by the Silent Majority In a way that you will regret. Your [sic] a disgusting and pathetic journalist who's [sic] main objective is to disturb and agitate many folks out here. You are exactly what is wrong with our country today. You have absolutely no values. Go away. Crawl back under you [sic] keyboard Snowflake. Shame! Shame! Shame!"

In this day and age, we have grown accustomed to these kinds of reactions, but shouldn't we expect better from pro-lifers? If you really care about the dignity of every human life, you can't treat other people like dirt. We all have bad days. No one knows better than I the spiritual and moral danger of judgmentalism, and many times must I confess the sin of *delectatio morosa*. But it seems that every time someone crosses the pro-life Catholic brigade, you get this kind of over-the-top, profoundly hateful reaction, and I suspect it doesn't help the pro-life cause one little bit.

Now, a new report from the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame confirms that suspicion. The methodology of the study — in-depth interviews with 217 people, selected at random but who approximate the diversity of the country — allowed the researchers to get past the tired and hoary labels that this discussion is stuck with: Turns out "pro-life" and "pro-choice" are terms that have become fraught with associations that do not reflect the complexity and the ambivalence of people's views on abortion.

"The majority of Americans occupy the edges of neither ideology nor abortion attitudes," the report states. "Most fall somewhere in between."

The whole report is important, but for my purposes today, I would like to focus on the fourth part, which offers suggestions about how we, as a culture, can facilitate a more fruitful conversation about abortion, specifically two of the key points the report makes.

First, the report states, "Americans can talk about abortion under the right conditions, are more inclined to enter conversations than debates, and would benefit from expanded education in science, law, and moral reasoning."

Far be it from a columnist to denounce the positive benefits of debate: Steel sharpens steel. But because abortion is viewed by most people as a deeply personal issue first, and only as an abstract political issue subsequently, the preference for conversations over debate is more likely to avoid short-circuiting the conversation.

There are times and issues on which it is advisable to be stiff-necked. Indeed, on this issue, I wish some Catholic politicians had been more stiff-necked in the 1970s. (Connecticut Gov. Ella Grasso was a great exception: She remained opposed to abortion and will always be a hero to me.) It is no longer the 1970s, and there is no going back. It is a time to persuade, and persuasion requires more conversation and less debate.

The other point I would like to highlight is this one: "Americans can enter conversations about abortion on common ground to support positive long-term outcomes for pregnant women, their conceiving partners, and children." The report confronts the prevailing narrative that has largely governed the discussion so far: "For decades we have heard that the abortion question hinges on one thing: whether or not what is inside the womb is a 'baby' or a 'fetus' — a 'person,' 'human being,' or 'life' with equal protection under the law."

This is true, of course: In one sense, the discussion is a categorical one. Still, the categorical debate has landed our country and our culture in this terrible place in which the extremes dictate the terms of debate.

The report notes that while the respondents discussed issues like fetal viability, "just as commonly, we heard interviewees ponder the essentials of a 'good life' for the baby or parent(s). A 'good life,' it would seem, includes health, support, financial stability, affection, rights, and pursuit of chosen livelihoods. Americans deliberate these 'good life' cornerstones as much as they do those marking the onset of 'life.' "

This is thin ice to be skating on. It is the language of eugenics, and it is scary. Listen to a recent interview Terry Gross had with Professor Diana Foster Greene about a study comparing "the emotional health and socioeconomic outcomes for women who received a wanted abortion and those who were denied one." Greene states, at one point:

So when you ask women, why do you want to have an abortion? — they give reasons. The most common is that they can't afford to have a child, or they can't afford to have another child. And we see very large differences in economic well-being over time. Another surprising fact is that most women who have abortions — 60% of women who have abortions in the United States — are already mothers. And so a common reason is that they want to take care of the children they already have.

Our country and our culture should do all in its power to make sure that the first, and most common, reason for procuring an abortion is dealt with: No mother should be made to feel she cannot afford to have a child. The second reason is the choosing of one child over another, and it is halfway down the slippery eugenic slope.

(Abortion, continued on page 3)