



Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 7, 2010

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Luke 5:1-11

Next week:

Jeremiah 17:5-8

1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

Luke 6:17, 20-16

Psalm

In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord. (*Psalm 138*)

Today

Today's presider is Bishop Patrick J. McGrath, assisted by Msgr. Gene Boyle and Fr. George Aranha.

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 plan 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 8, 7:15 pm

Liturgy Team, Location TBA

Thursday, February 11, 7:30 pm

TMC Board, St. Albert Hospitality Room

From Thomas Merton

True sanctity does not consist in trying to live without creatures. It consists in using the goods of life in order to do the will of God. It consists in using God's creation in such a way that everything we touch and see and use and love gives new glory to God. To be a saint means to pass through the world gathering fruits for heaven from every tree and reaping God's glory in every field. The saint is one who is in contact with God in every possible way, in every possible direction. He is united to God by the depths of his [or her] own being. He sees and touches God in everything and everyone around him. Everywhere he goes, the world rings and resounds (though silently) with the deep harmonies of God's glory.

—*Seasons of Celebration*, 137

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.

COMMUNITY NOTES

News Announcements Requests

Make a nametag today:

Step right over to the nametag table in the church vestibule this morning and make yourself a stick-on nametag before Mass. Better still, sign the list that will get you a permanent name badge with a neck lanyard that can be worn week after week. Wearing name badges is a way to help build community. . . . When Bishop McGrath greets you today, it would be great if he could call you by your name. Our regular presiders, too, would like to be able to speak your name when you are receiving Communion.

—Kay Williams

Haiti update:

February 2—Catholic Relief Services [the international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States] and its Caritas partners have stepped up relief efforts in Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas, delivering food and water to hundreds of thousands and providing medical care to thousands more. To date, CRS has provided food to more than 100,000 people in Port-au-Prince, many of whom are gathered at the city's largest camp run by CRS. Just days after the earthquake that killed an estimated 200,000 people and left as many as one million people without shelter, CRS turned a Port-au-Prince golf course into one of the first formal camps for the homeless, delivering food, water and hygiene materials to some 40,000 people. CRS is collaborating with the local Church in Haiti and its Catholic Caritas partners, including Caritas Haiti and the Caritas Internationalis confederation. . . . How to help:

Donate via phone: 1-877-HELP-CRS; donate via text: Text RELIEF to 25383 to add \$10 to your cell phone bill; donate online: www.crs.org; write a check: Catholic Relief Services, P.O. Box 17090, Baltimore, MD 21203.

Age of Aquinas:

Age of Aquinas Coordinator and founder Randy Jones of the TMC community is passing the baton. After leading Age of Aquinas for seven years, he's getting married, and is seeking volunteers to organize events, maintain web pages, moderate the Yahoo group, etc. If you're interested or curious, e-mail Randy at age-of-aquinas@paloaltocatholic.org or call him at (408) 739-2881. And see the parish bulletin for scheduled events this week.

Bulletin editor position open:

The two TMC bulletin editors would like to bring a third editor on board. Are you interested? Contact Kay at (650) 328-2781 or kaywill@pacbell.net.

Lent starts in ten days:

Lent is only ten days away—Ash Wednesday is on February 17 this year! We will have a 6:00 pm Mass and distribution of ashes at St. Thomas Aquinas Church that day, and there are also several other opportunities to prepare for Lent within five miles of STA Church.

Vallombrosa in Menlo Park will have a *Lenten Prayer Service with the Vallombrosa Choir* on Sunday, February 21, at 2:00 pm. This event is open to all, and is followed by a five-day *Busy Person's Retreat*, offered in conjunction with the Catholic Community at Stanford. Each retreatant will have the opportunity for individual spiritual direction, and will



be provided with materials for reading and reflection. The retreat will conclude with a prayer service at 6:00 pm on Thursday, February 25. Go to www.vallombrosa.org for more information.

El Retiro, the Jesuit retreat house in Los Altos, is offering a *Lenten Healing Service* on Tuesday evening, February 26, at 7:30 in the Rossi Chapel—*The Death of Jesus: Source of Our Healing*. Fr. Bernie Bush will lead. He worked for 13 years as a therapist for clergy and religious, and has written books and articles on spirituality, social justice, and child abuse prevention.

Then on Ash Wednesday, there will be a *Day of Prayer*, a non-silent retreat for men and women—*Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust*—in which you can consider how you will follow Christ through Lent. Leaders are Fr. Gerald Hudson and Helen Bunje of our community, assisted by Bro. Thomas Koller.

Call to Action conference in Santa Rosa:

All are Welcome: Building Inclusive Christian Community is the theme of the next Northern California Call to Action conference, at the Flamingo Conference Resort in Santa Rosa on April 16-18. Keynote speakers are Mary Ramerman & Jim Callan, Edwina Gateley, and Michael Morwood. For questions call Bill at (707) 538-9664 or Dan at (707) 996-5765, or get a registration form and other information at www.cta-redwood.org.

Don't forget to bring food:

Please continue to bring a food item or two to church each Sunday! Primary needs are for soups, canned meats and tuna, pasta/sauce, beans, peanut butter, rice, powdered milk, crackers, jelly/jam, cereal, and canned fruits and vegetables.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Health care reform—don't let it die:

The second session of the 111th Congress officially started on January 5. The House returned on January 12, and the Senate returned on January 19. The top issues for Congress right now are finishing health care and doing something about jobs. The Senate passed its version of health care reform legislation, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act by a vote of 60-39 on December 24. Now the Senate bill must be reconciled with the House bill that was passed in November. . . .

Network, the Catholic social justice lobby, asks you to urge your representatives to demand better assistance for low-income people in the final bill. You can send an e-mail with Network's recommendations (and/or add your own) by going to <http://capwiz.com/networklobby>. People of faith can play an important role in the final stages of health care reform negotiations by praying for all our leaders as well as contacting our own elected representatives. Please see <http://www.faith-fulreform.org/> to find out about an Interfaith Virtual Vigil. Network's latest statement on health care is at <http://www.networklobby>. And you can find a comparison of key provisions in the two bills at <http://www.speaker.gov/pdf>.

Preaching to bishops: an undertaker's view:

Abridged from an article by Thomas Lynch in Commonweal published January 15, 2010 at www.commonwealmagazine.org.

"Preaching to bishops," a churchman told me years ago, "is like farting at skunks. You'll win some battles, but lose the war." All the more so, no doubt, the higher you go. His Holiness, Their Eminences and Excellencies—"Don't cross 'em," the curate cautioned; "those boys aren't to be tampered with."

Among the blessings of my work as a funeral director is that it has put me in earshot of the reverend clergy trying to make sense of senseless things: the man who kills his wife. . . and then himself; a mother who drowns her baby, . . . the teenager with the broken heart and loaded pistol; the tumors and emboli, flus and tsunamis. . . —the endless renditions of the Book of Job. When someone shows up—priest or pastor, rabbi or imam—to stand with the living and the dead and speak into the gaping maw of the unspeakable, I know I am witnessing uncommon courage and my perennially shaken faith is emboldened by theirs. . . . Which is why the recent ecclesiastical mischief by rear- and upper-echelon sorts seems cartoonish, unseemly, so lacking in gravitas by comparison. The papal poaching of "traditionalist" Anglicans (to wit: those put

Gung hay fat choy!:

The Chinese New Year celebrations began yesterday and run through most of February. On the Chinese calendar, 2010 is Lunar Year 4708. On the Western calendar, the start of the New Year in 2010 falls on Sunday, February 14—The Year of the Tiger. If you were born in 1914, 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, or this year, you were born under the sign of the tiger. Like the tiger, you are one of the most caring and thoughtful signs in the Chinese zodiac. You have a lot to say on the best way to right society's wrongs. For the tiger in 2010, any recent setbacks or obstacles can be overcome, so look forward to a year in which to really shine, either personally or professionally.

Within China, regional customs and traditions concerning the celebration of the Chinese new year vary widely. People will buy presents, and it is also the tradition that every family thoroughly cleans the house to sweep away any ill fortune and make way for good incoming luck. On the Eve of Chinese New Year, supper is a feast with families. The family will end the night with firecrackers. Early the next morning, children will greet their parents by wishing them a healthy and happy new year, and receive money in red paper envelopes. The Chinese New Year tradition is a great way to reconcile, forgetting all grudges, and sincerely wishing peace and happiness for everyone.

To see as God sees:

What is right in front of us we see least. We take the plants in the room for granted. We pay no attention to the coming of night. . . . We see only ourselves in action and miss the cocoon around us. . . .

Learning to notice the obvious, the colors that touch our psyches, the shapes that vie for our attention. . . —the context in which we find our distracted selves—is the beginning of contemplation. Awareness of the power of the present is the essence of the contemplative life and common to all contemplative traditions. "Oh, wonder of wonders," the Sufi master says, "I chop wood. I draw water from the well." I live in the present, in other words. I know that what is, is the presence of God for me. "The first step of humility is to 'keep the reverence of God always before our eyes' and never forget it," the Rule of Benedict says. . . .

Etty Hillesum, Jewish prisoner in one of Hitler's concentration camps, saw the goodness in her German guards. That is contemplation, that is the willingness to see as God sees. . . . Without awareness, enemies stay forever only enemies and life is forever bland.

—From *Illuminated Life* by Joan Chittister (Orbis)

Let's think outside the rectory:

Abridged from an article by Bishop Fritz Lobinger, the retired bishop of Aliwal, South Africa, at the U.S. Catholic web site, www.uscatholic.org.

Mmusong is a small but vibrant Catholic community of about 700 high in the mountains of South Africa. On Sundays the simple church building is full, but most of the time not for Mass, only for a service of the Word. Mass is something rare in Mmusong. The priest of the distant parish center serves nine communities, and he is able to celebrate Mass in Mmusong only once a month. [But] that distant community of Mmusong is by no means desolate. They have several teams of trained leaders who prepare themselves during the week to conduct a lively and meaningful Sunday service. The people will thus hear a well-prepared sermon every week, even when there is no priest.

There are teams of others who conduct funerals wearing liturgical garb, signifying that what these leaders do is the liturgy of the church, not a private prayer. Similarly there are trained catechism teachers, youth leaders, and leaders of gospel-sharing groups. The priest of this parish has helped each of the nine communities in his care to become a self-ministering community.

As the bishop of the diocese, I would visit Mmusong once a year, listening to the community and solemnly blessing its leaders. Each time I went home with the same painful question in my heart: "Why can I only give a blessing to those leaders? Why can I not ordain some of them? When will the day come when I can ordain the proven leaders of our communities?"

I know that if the Church continues to only admit celibate, university-trained candidates to ordination, there will be no hope of ever overcoming the scarcity of sacraments. I equally know that the early church indeed did ordain local leaders who were married, had only received brief local training, were chosen by the local community, but had proven their worthiness over some time. I am not alone. There are hundreds of bishops who feel that renewing this ancient tradition is the only solution. . .

.Looking at the whole of the Catholic Church today, we can see that more than half of its communities have no resident priest. This is especially the case in Asia, Africa, and Latin America but also to some extent in Europe and North America. A great number of these self-ministering communities are ready or almost ready for the introduction of teams of ordained elders. They already have teams of trained leaders, and they have priests who are used to continually training these leaders. Ordaining proven local leaders could thus be the starting point for a solution. Because the majority of proven local leaders are women, it is unavoidable that the question of their inclusion among ordained elders will arise. . . .

Preaching to bishops, continued:

off by female clerics and homosexuals) is but one sup of thin gruel boiled up lately by the hierarchies. Another is the carping of Archbishop Raymond Burke (late of St. Louis, latterly installed in the Vatican) at Cardinal Seán O'Malley's generous opening of the church's arms to the corpse and people of the late Edward Kennedy. . . .The Vatican's investigation of American women religious makes many of us who were well schooled in faith and morals by nuns even more devoutly lapsed than we've been for years. Trying to retain the imitation of Christ our faith calls us to while removing ourselves from the endless contretemps and imbroglios of the church's princely caste is becoming more the mug's game than ever.

The church is already served by a "priesthood" of women, gay bishops, and good Catholics who have long ignored the preachments of the old boys on sexual matters. To be blind to what *is* while proclaiming what *isn't* is not faith. It is denial. The church's people have moved along, even if the prelates won't.

Bringing the dead and their families into church is something I've been doing all my life, first with my father, then with my brothers and sisters, now with my sons and nieces and nephews. . . .And I know when the clergy who meet us in the journey—whether male or female, gay or straight, celibate or sexually active, whether robed in talliths or white chasubles, Brooks Brothers suits or business casual, reciting from Bible or Torah, Qur'an or Zen koan, with incense, icon, or ancient liturgy—I know they bring a brave and sacred narrative to bear on the existential questions: *Is that all there is? Can it happen to me? Are we all alone? What comes next?*

In earshot of such powerful medicines, the high-churchy intrigues and inquisitions, the connivance of bishops seems a waste of God's precious gifts of grace and time.

Please remember in your prayers this week Cecilia Aranha, Sr. Fran Ciluaga, Joanne Claus, Ron Clazie, Mary Connors, Wayne Cummings, Ken Dias, the family of John Gill, Arlen Hagen, Joanne Hasegawa, Howard Hatcher, Dick Jackman, François Jamati, Alicia Kot, Kami Ladd, Allyssa Lippard, Andre Lippard, Joe Narewski, Janice O'Brien, Lynne Owens, Sr. Anne Owour, Collin Parsons, Hayden Pastorini, Anne Rush, George Schardt, Ellen Thieme, Jean Vistica, Peter Voll, Dolores Walsh, Tucker Wolf and T.J. Wooten.

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