



Ascension of the Lord

May 20, 2007

Readings

This week:

Acts 1:1-11

Hebrews 9:24-28, 10:19-23

Luke 24:46-53

Next week:

Genesis 11:1-9

Exodus 19:3-8a, 16-20

John 7:37-39

Psalm

God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord. *Psalm 47*

Today

Today's presider is Fr. Tenny Wright, S. J.

The Thomas Merton Center community worships and celebrates Sunday liturgy each week at the regularly scheduled 8:45 a.m. 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, May 21, 7:30-9:00

Wednesday, May 23, 7:30-9:00

Spiritual Education, Thomas House basement
STA Site Committee, Thomas House basement

From Thomas Merton

[I had] a marvelous vision of the hills at 7:45 a.m. The same hills as always, as in the afternoon, but now catching the light in a totally new way, at once very earthly and very ethereal, with delicate cups of shadow and dark ripples and crinkles where I had never seen them, and the whole slightly veiled in mist so that it seemed to be a tropical shore, a newly discovered continent. And a voice in me seemed to be crying, "Look! Look!" For these are the discoveries, and it is for this that I am high on the mast of my ship (have always been), and I know that we are on the right course, for all around is the sea of paradise.

A Year With Thomas Merton—Journal Entry for May 21, 1963

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

TMC annual meeting held last Sunday:

Thanks to Larry and Vicki Sullivan for hosting the TMC 2007 Annual Meeting Brunch in their delightful garden two Sundays ago, May 6. Thanks also to TMC members who shopped, set up and cleaned up before and after the meeting. The weather was pleasant and warm and the conversation lively!

We thanked Helen Baumann for her service on the Board and reelected Judy Creek and Henry Organ for 3 years. There are three more candidates to be elected: Mary Coady is standing for reelection, Patricia Markee for the position vacated by Helen Baumann and Mary Dowly to fill out the remaining one year left in the term vacated by LaVerne Sheehan when she moved. More information will follow by e-mail to those who were not able to vote at the Annual Meeting.

As a Board we are always concerned with fulfilling the TMC mission and fostering the continuity of this lay-led independent Catholic organization. To this end we decided to engage the community in a discussion of broader issues-- to check the pulse of TMC in preparation for our periodic meeting with Bishop McGrath later in the year. At the Board retreat in February we prepared a list of possible discussion topics. Then when invitations to the Annual Meeting were sent out we asked members to use their ballots to vote for discussion topics in the order of interest.

Ordination of women and unjust war received about the same number of 1st place votes, **married clergy** received the most 2nd place votes, and the **Death Penalty and how it is described in the current Catechism** received the most 3rd place votes. We decided to have a discussion group for each topic and participants were asked to join one of four groups. Board members recorded notes and any proposed action items. Each group will decide if they want to continue these topics in person or by e-mail, or write an article on an individual topic. In conclusion Msgr. Boyle encouraged us to keep these topics alive, and he also urged us strongly to let our position be known on the critical Congressional action expected soon on comprehensive immigration reform legislation.

~ Anna Jaklitsch, Co-President TMC.

Needs net:

Do you find yourself in need of a helping hand, a last minute car ride, a cat sitter, or the like? Between now and June 10, while Roberta is away, contact Bonnie at the Needs Net—(650) 838-9011.

Remember to wear red for Pentecost:

In the first reading next Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, we will hear that as the apostles were gathered together in one place “divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.” Please help bring the liturgy alive by wearing something red. We thank you for contributing to the spirit of the day.



Friends of Kiriti:

Some of our community have been touched by the needs of the orphans in Fr. Kiriti's parish. It has come to the attention of one of the visitors that there is a great need of basic bedding and furnishings. Old mattresses need to be replaced and new ones purchased. An additional room has become available, having been vacated by the nuns in the parish. With this room it is now possible to provide separate sleeping quarters for the boys and girls, some of whom are now approaching maturity.

Thanks go to the TMC members who have already contributed to the refurbishment of the orphanage. If anyone else would like to contribute, please identify the orphanage on the memo line of a check to TMC.

Day worker center looking for new location:

About a month ago, the pastor landlord gave the Day Worker Center until July 31st to vacate the premises because he wants to use the premises to further his own mission. We at the center have been busy looking for a new place, unfortunately, to no avail.

We would hope to find property that we could rent in the vicinity of San Antonio and El Camino Real. We would like at least 1200 feet and hopefully a kitchen area, but at the very least we need the space to place a trailer and we would build a fence between our facility and our neighbors. Please let Maria Marroquin, (650) 903-4102, know immediately if you know of such a facility.

Please join us for coffee, juice and pastries after Mass in the Memorial Garden next to the church. If this is your first time at this Mass, or you are visiting today, you are especially encouraged to stop by the garden; we'd like to get to know you. The coffee and doughnuts are free; just come and enjoy. If you want to know more about the Merton Center, ask around at coffee, or contact someone listed in the masthead on page 4.

Please remember to fill the food basket:

Only a few of us are doing most of the donating for the food basket each Sunday, and the need invariably out-strips the donations. Please, everybody, bring at least one item of nonperishable food and place it in the basket in the vestibule before Mass. Staple items are always needed: cereals, canned soups, fruits and vegetables, pasta, rice, beans, canned meat. Please remember our neighbors who are struggling to make ends meet!

Getting our library started:

Have you some "spirit" books you no longer need? You can share these with other TMCers by donating them to the TMC Library which will open this fall. Roberta Kehret, our volunteer librarian, asks that you do NOT give them up at summer garage sales (including the Palo Alto all-city sale on June 2). Instead, please bring them to Mass with you June 10, our first Collection Day, and place them in the metal cabinet downstairs in the Thomas House after Mass.

Stages in our spiritual development:

Sr. Helen Thompson, BVM, will present ***Evolution of Stages in Our Spiritual Development*** on Saturday, June 16, 9:30 am to 3:00 pm at St. Albert Hospitality Center. Sr. Helen is a faculty member at GTU in Berkeley. TMC members who heard a shortened version of this workshop at the April Call To Action were highly impressed by the clarity of her thinking. In this expanded June 16 session, she will present a road map through the four stages of the evolution of spiritual consciousness, both on a Western cultural and individual level. She talks about how shifts in consciousness come about, and how they affect our culture, our Church and ourselves. She shows us the filters we inherit from our families and culture, and how to change these filters in our ever changing world as we move on our spiritual

Lay convocation just 2 weeks away:

We hope this event will be the start of a new way of communicating within the Church in Northern California. You won't want to miss this "first annual" Lay Convocation, a gathering of the People of God to talk about issues of concern. Once again, the time and place—Saturday, June 2, 9:00 am to 3:30 pm at St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco. Register at wwwNorCalLayConvocation.org.

Fr. Louie Vitale coming to San Mateo:

Fr. Louis Vitale, Franciscan Priest and Pace e Bene Action Advocate, will deliver an address ***Torture on Trial***, Tuesday, May 29, 7:30 pm at Transfiguration Episcopal Church, 3900 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo.

Fr. Vitale will stand trial in early June in Tucson for nonviolent action at Fort Huachuca while attempting to speak with enlisted personnel and give a letter condemning torture to the post commander. He will speak here about the U.S. role in torture, Fort Huachuca and U.S. interrogation tactics, the Military Commissions Act of 2006, the School of the Americas, and the upcoming trial. A reception will follow his talk. A longtime social activist, Fr. Louie co-founded the Nevada Desert Experience, a movement to end nuclear testing. He served 13 years as pastor of St. Boniface Catholic Church in San Francisco's Tenderloin District and last year completed a six-month sentence for nonviolent action to close the School of the Americas/WHINSEC at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Freewill offerings will be gratefully received.

For more information: Anne Carey, 415-238-0704.

path. There is no charge, but a free-will offering will be appreciated. **RSVP** by June 1 to Sr. Elizabeth Avalos at sociateabvm@mac.com or call her at (408)569-7222 .

Community Forum

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Reflections on the Pope in Brazil:

From an article by James Carroll in The Boston Globe , May 14, 2007.

RELIGION SERVES two functions. It explains the mysteries of life. It helps overcome life's difficulties. Preachers who have influence are like good teachers, in the first case, or like motivational speakers, in the second. The powers of intellect are in tension here with emotional fervor. As happiness itself depends on vital interaction between thought and feeling, good religion achieves a balance between these polarities. The conflict between them was on display when Pope Benedict XVI arrived last week in Brazil.

Such are the stresses of life in the present generation that more and more people are looking to religion for the emotional boost they need to get through the day. The root meaning of "enthusiasm" is to be inspired by God, as the root of "ecstasy" is to be lifted out of oneself. Rapture, bliss, exaltation, the surprise of joy -- these are descriptions of the high excitement that can come with certain kinds of religious experience, and they are

(Continued on page 4)

The Pope in Brazil, continued:

(Continued from page 3)

much sought after. Enthusiasm is an escape, and there is much to escape from.

The decline of mainstream churches, with their often dry and emotionally sterile approaches to worship, is one measure of this, but so is the astounding growth of megachurches, engaging millions of Christians around the globe. Megachurch liturgies, speaking generally, are more like rock concerts than like traditional worship services, and the sermons are more like pep talks than discourses. The intense delight of group experience, whether through singing or moving to a raucous beat or trading the call-and-shout with the preacher, is valued over solitary contemplation. Labeled as evangelical, pentecostal, or charismatic, these transporting movements are mostly associated with fundamentalist Protestant denominations, but other churches, including Anglican and Roman Catholic, have their enthusiastic versions, too. These forms thrive especially in Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia.

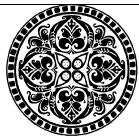
When it comes to emotional religion, the cerebral Benedict is the skeptic-in-chief, with a long history of warnings against the flight from rationality. Brazil is a world center of fervent pentecostal devotion, but in his visit the pope stayed away from it. From his circle came cautions against thinking of religion as entertainment. But the temperamental reserve of Northern Europe, like the predisposition of an academic theologian, is an inadequate basis on which to criticize the charismatic piety that has taken hold throughout the Southern Hemisphere. The issue is not whether praying people sway or lift their hands or close their eyes or give themselves over to group elation. The issue is what they pray for, what values they attach to their fervor, how their religion makes them behave.

In the United States, the megachurch movement is solidly aligned on one side of the culture wars. Suspicion of enlightenment assumptions, like the need for

critical reading of texts or the notion of an evolving universe, is a mark of most new-breed evangelical religion. Megachurch preaching targets homosexuality and feminism. The flip side of rapture is an aggressive anti-intellectualism. The reason to oppose this American manifestation of religious enthusiasm is not just because it's bad religion: it's bad culture and politics, too.

In Latin America, impoverished people depend on religion for meaning and hope, but it is important that their beliefs not reinforce what keeps them impoverished. A piety that emphasizes rewards in heaven, downplaying the significance of the here and now, can do this. Fundamentalist religion has such tendencies, and should be criticized for them. But Latin American religion, even while increasingly fervent, can be expressly political. The Gospel is centrally a call to justice, and poor people throughout the continent are hearing it that way. The "base community" movement, spawned by Liberation Theology, is emotionally expressive and intellectually vital. Base communities -- grass-roots worship groups within a top-down church -- are explanatory and motivational centers both. When the critical mind and unleashed emotions come together in enthusiastic religion centered on social change (we saw this in the US civil rights movement), the results can be as politically transforming as they are spiritually transporting.

Therefore, regarding what he saw in Brazil, Pope Benedict's skepticism toward religious enthusiasm is not nearly as significant as his long-established opposition to Liberation Theology. By silencing and banishing its intellectual leaders, the pope has been undermining the crucial connection between thought and feeling that keeps religion humane. He has been shoring up the power and wealth of that tiny oligarchy that cannot stand a growing mass of believers



Please remember in your prayers this week Elaine, Msgr. Gene Boyle, Chloe Chang, Joanne Claus, Mary Connors, Ken Dias, Tom Jaworowski, Joanne Hasegawa, François Jamati, Joseph Kehret, Alicia Kot, Joan Kuhn, Kami Ladd, Andre Lippard, Ric Lippard, Carol Locke, Mercedes McCaffrey, Eileen McNevin, Maureen Mooney, Stephanie Mullinex, Joe Narewski, Dorothea Nudelman, Hank Okanski, Lynne Owens, Hayden Pastorini, George Peinado, Nora Peinata, Ramona Rocha, Anne Rush, George Schardt, Jean Vistica, Dolores Walsh, and T. J. Wooten.

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Newsletter submissions must be e-mailed by Friday noon or phoned by Thursday, 9:00 pm.