



17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 29, 2007

Readings

This week:

Genesis 18:20-21, 23-32

Colossians 2:6-14

Luke 11:1-13

Next week:

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

Luke 12:13-21

Psalm

Today

Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me. (*Psalm 138*)

Today's presider is Fr. Michael Marini.

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

No regularly scheduled TMC meetings this week.

From Thomas Merton

Imagine a man or a group of people who, alone or together in a quiet place where no radio, no background music can be heard, simply sit for an hour or a half hour in silence. They do not speak. They do not pray aloud. They do not have books or papers in their hands. They are not reading or writing. They are not busy with anything. They simply enter into themselves, not in order to think in an analytical way, not in order to examine, organize, plan, but simply in order to *be*. They want to synthesize, to integrate themselves, to rediscover themselves in a unity of thought, will, understanding, and love that goes beyond words, beyond analysis, even beyond conscious thought. They want to pray not with their lips but with their silent hearts and, beyond that, with the very ground of their being.

What would prompt modern people to do such a thing?

Are they moved by a sense of human need for silence, for reflection, for inner seeking? Do they want to get away from the noise and tension of modern life, at least for a little while, in order to relax their minds and wills and seek a blessed healing sense of inner unity, reconciliation, integration?

These are certainly good enough motives. But for a Christian there are even deeper motives than this.

— "Creative Silence," in *Love and Living*


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

Spiritual Education preview for fall:

Saturday, September 15, 9:30 am—3 pm, Palo Alto Foothills Park: Retreat with Sr. Kathleen Deignan, an educator, theologian, composer, and performer, professor of religious studies at Iona College in New Rochelle, New York, where she founded and continues to lead the Iona Spirituality Institute. She has written numerous articles on the legacy of Thomas Merton. She recently edited *A Book of Hours*, by Thomas Merton (reviewed July 6 in *National Catholic Reporter*).

 Please remember in your prayers this week Elaine, Chloe Chang, Joanne Claus, Mary Connors, Ken Dias, Barbara Jane Ferrall, Joanne Hasegawa, Dick Jackman, François Jamati, Joseph Kehret, Alicia Kot, Kami Ladd, Carol Locke, Mercedes McCaffrey, Eileen McNevin, Maureen Mooney, Stephanie Mullenix, Joe Narewski, Dorothea Nudelman, Hank Okonski, Lynne Owens, Hayden Pastorini, George Peinado, Ramona Rocha, Anne Rush, George Schardt, Dolores Walsh, and T. J. Wooten.
[Add or subtract names by e-mailing the Bulletin editors: Jane Bahr, Michelle Hogan, Kay Williams.]

Monthly donation envelope for TMC:

On this last Sunday of the month, a return envelope is enclosed in the bulletin. Your donation to the Thomas Merton Center provides the means for the liturgical and educational programs that identify TMC to the parish of St. Thomas Aquinas and to the spiritually seeking community in Palo Alto and beyond. In particular, donations subsidize our Sunday 8:45 a.m. Mass needs and our spiritual education programs. Thank you all!



TMC Needs Net:

Do you or someone you know need a helping hand—a last-minute ride, a cat-sitter, help with a computer problem, or the like? Perhaps you know of someone who is too shy to ask for help. That's the time to cast the TMC Needs Net and catch some help for that sudden problem: Roberta Kehret, 494-1488, robkehr@yahoo.com.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Reflection on Mary at the feet of Jesus:

(A letter to Fr. George Aranha from Dick Placone)

Dear Father George,

July 23, 2007

Here are some of my thoughts re your homily on Sunday, July 22.

You stated that Mary wanted to be a man as one of the reasons she chose to sit at the feet of Jesus during his visit to her home, which she shared with her sister Martha and her brother. I think what you meant is that Mary wanted to occupy a position that was equal to that of the men. ...

The segregation between men and women [at that time in Jewish culture] was very complete, perhaps not quite as stringent as in orthodox Muslim settings of today, but very close. Women were pretty much confined to the household, while the men had considerable freedom. In the case of Mary, her appearance with the group of men gathered around Jesus to engage in discourse with him must have been shocking, and no doubt uncomfortable. I can hear whispers of "scandalous behavior" amongst some of the men. What Mary was doing was scandalous in the eyes of those gathered, and but for the presence of Jesus, a visiting and we can assume widely known itinerant "rabbi", Mary may have been asked to leave, and none too politely. It is within this atmosphere that Martha appears on the scene, irritated and out of sorts, and rightly so. Not only has her impetuous sister brought potential disgrace to the family and the home of her brother, but she has left Martha and the other women of the household to do all the work. She points this out without much tact.

You explained that this was not just a matter of Mary taking a front row position, but that to sit at the feet of the rabbi is to be taken as a student, in fact, to be taken as one who too wants to learn to be a rabbi. Now it is very important to understand the graveness of this breach of cultural and behavioral etiquette by Mary to truly appreciate what Jesus did in response. This was a major breach on Mary's part, one that would not likely have been tolerated by any other rabbi, itinerant or otherwise. Under these circumstance what Jesus did was just as shocking and "scandalous" as Mary's "bizarre" behavior. To Martha Jesus replied words to this effect: "Martha why are you so concerned. Your sister Mary has chosen the better part, AND IT SHALL NOT BE TAKEN AWAY FROM HER." (Emphasis mine)

Jesus, being who he was, we can assume that that pretty much ended the discussion, though we should not be surprised to learn that some of the men gathered quietly took leave of the group. The gospel writer does not tell us that, only that Jesus continued his discourse. But people in those days were not much different from us today, where when something happens



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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.

Tom Reese, SJ: Guide for Thinking Catholics

[Notes from his talk at St. Ignatius, SF on June 22, 2007, taken by Ann Carberry, CTA Sacramento]

Introduction:

Father Thomas Reese entered the Jesuits in 1962 and was ordained in 1974. He was the editor of *America Magazine* until fired soon after Benedict XVI's election. He was a scholar in residence at the University of Santa Clara last year working on a book. He is in residence at USF for a month and offering talks around the Bay Area.

He expected that all of us had some doubts or questions about the Roman Catholic Church. (He cautioned those who did not that we would be discussing questions that could hurt their absolute faith in the Church.)

Prepared Remarks:

His book in progress is tentatively called, *A Survival Guide for Thinking Catholics*. He (and he believes the audience are) Critical Thinking, Catholic and American. A questioning mind is part of being American; also educated and with a mass-popular, secular culture. This applies to conservative and liberal Americans and American Catholics. The Vatican sees things differently. For them, when Rome has spoken, the case is closed. For Americans, when Rome has spoken, the debate has just begun.

His 10 Guidelines:

1. *First understand what the Church is saying.* Really listen to the other person. Be able to explain one's position and the "why" or cause behind it.
2. *Be inspired by sympathy, not sarcasm.* Get inside the mind, heart, and feelings of the other. Disagree, but as a friend and brother or sister. Remember: know we are Christians by our love, not know we are Catholics by our fights.
3. *Do your homework.* Read (magazines: *America*, *US Catholic*, *Commonweal* and websites: USCCB and Vatican). Avoid blogs that are full of anger. Link Scripture to issues. We are a continuation of the believing community. All of us.
4. *The believing community is >2000 years old; take the long view.* In a long history there were saints and sinners, successes and failures. Understandings evolve:
 - Catholic Biblical Scholarship is only 100 years old but major strides have been made. We can grow in other areas too.
 - Read history: change is possible and normal. Periods of no change are rarer.
 - Contraception: John Noonan nuances this issue.
 - For most of history, the Pope did not appoint Bishops. Things can change.
5. *Distinguish between church law and doctrine:* A heretic defies doctrine, not law.
6. *Distinguish between types of Church statements.* Not every Vatican Statement is definitive or infal-

libile:

- Only two doctrines are infallible (Assumption and Immaculate Conception).
- Next in importance are conciliar documents like those of Vatican II.
- Then Encyclicals.
- Then other Papal publications.
- Then other publications.

Examples:

- Pope Benedict's recent book on Jesus was written as a theologian, not the Pope.
- Church rarely admits when it is wrong. The Vatican newspaper ran an obituary for a bishop who was still alive. When asked to run a retraction, it would not, but it did run an article about his activities, showing he was alive.
- Even teachings change: capital punishment, limbo, maybe allowing condoms to prevent the spread of HIV.

7. *In interpreting Vatican statements, be aware of culture, style, context, and author.*
 - German theologians have a metaphysical understanding of person in the Trinity. Others may be more psychological. Same word means different concepts from different frames of reference.
 - "Intrinsically evil": metaphysical vs. psychological language and concepts.
 - When Pope John Paul II praised a free market in Poland, he was not praising materialism in U.S.
8. *Words have many meanings.* Sometimes ambiguous words are used to get a vote or consensus or defer an issue until later. This can cause future problems and disputes.
 - In 2005, Vatican barred men with homosexual tendencies (actions) from ordination but allowed those with homosexual orientation (only). This has been confusing to many and interpreted differently by right and left. Many seminaries ignored, while others did not.
9. *Catholic for life?* In his parents' day, there were only two faith options: stay or leave. Protestants left. Lefebvre left after Vatican II.
 - Italians are culturally Catholic while they do not attend Mass, do legalize abortion, and have a low birth rate. They do not question or challenge Church, they just do/believe what they want. Cafeteria Catholics.
 - Traditional European education: students never question their teachers. Teachers are the source and do not encourage college students, even advanced degree students, to read the original authors and sources. Teachers control interpretation. (This is the context Benedict/J. Ratzinger lived.)
10. *There will always be disagreements.*
 - Even Paul and Peter disagreed and needed the Council of Jerusalem to find a compromise: converts would keep Jewish dietary laws but not circumcision.

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An informed conscience is the highest moral authority.

- Temper all with humility and charity.
- Without temperance, we risk clericalism, witch hunts, and schisms.

The Church is open to redemption and renewal. We share faith in the same Word of God. With Christian love and forgiveness, there can be a revival.

Questions and Answers (partial)

1. *Many parents are concerned about their children going to other faiths (alternative and through intermarriage).*
 - Polling data shows 40% of younger Catholics are happy in other churches and feel no obligation to return.
 - We/Catholics need to make our teachings beautiful and attractive for the next generations. Guilt does not work. When we live as a life community, committed to love and justice, we are attractive.
2. *What is a thinking Catholic supposed to do about a Church that does not bless the full personhood of women by not ordaining us?*
 - The Church's teaching on women is a disaster in the West.
 - The Church in Europe lost working men when it sided with monarchies during revolutionary times.
 - The Church can survive without men. It cannot survive without women. In U.S., women are running the parishes and teaching the faith.
 - Should women be ordained? Absolutely.
3. *Why do we stay in?* Father Reese asked.
 - JustFaith program.
 - Non-geographic parishes.
 - He challenged us to act. This is a "Do It Yourself Church." If you want it, just do it.
 - Adult Catholics need to be responsible: come to Sunday Mass prepared by reading Scripture first and make own interpretation or study. That puts homilist view in a context. Start with personal dialogue with Scripture. Over time, can expand circle.
4. *His ouster [as editor of America]:*
 - In the midst of the Communion-to-politicians-supporting-abortion controversy, he ran a photo in *America* magazine of Pope John Paul II giving Communion to a pro-choice Italian politician. (This seemed like the last straw.)

Conclusion

What is the future of the U.S./Rome dialogue?

Cultural difference will make it very difficult. Pray for Pope, love him, and try to listen to him. You don't walk out on family.

—Notes by Ann Carberry, acarberry@pacbell.net

Bulletin submissions must be e-mailed by Thursday noon or phoned by Thursday, 9:00 pm. For Kay, e-mail kaywill@pacbell.net or (650) 328-2781. For Michelle, e-mail myhogan@earthlink.net or (650) 493-8452. For Jane, e-mail bahrjunior@comcast.net, (650) 967-8246.

that goes too much against the grain, people get up and leave, and often not too quietly.

This little scene is of prime importance to us today, especially to the women in our (global Catholic) community, for this is a very clear indication of the place Jesus saw for women in his ministry, then, and from extrapolation, now. Many times he told his followers that after he was gone, they were to go and do as he did and as he taught by word and example.

There can be no clearer evidence in the Gospels that Jesus not only did not object to women having equal ministerial roles in promulgating his teachings, but in fact ordered it so. This being the case, the institutional church has, for the last 1800 years, been doing the exact opposite of what Jesus both taught and intended. The Church has not only created a royal priesthood which it holds to be a higher state than that of any non-ordained member of the Church, but has gone even further and has decreed that the men of patriarchal bent gathered around Jesus, some of whom may have left the scene, were right and Jesus was wrong! What the Church has done and is doing, upheld and endorsed by the pope, all bishops and by all members of the clergy, is fostering the perpetuation of an untenable patriarchy in the matter of the spiritual journey of human beings on their way to the Cosmic Creator God. I believe that this will not be tolerated by God who created all human beings, male and female, to be equal, and that any biological differences make no difference at all when it comes to doing God's work (and by extension) the work Jesus set out for all of us.

Therefore, I conclude that the Catholic Church in denying the right of women to be ordained priests is not just totally illogical, but directly contrary to the teachings of Jesus, and is sustainable only under the guise of a closed, male dominated hierarchy who for the sake of power and position, are determined to keep it that way. The present pope, Benedict XVI, in his staunch and unshakable insistence that women shall not be ordained priests, is on very shakable ground, if not actual quicksand.

The Church will in time pay for this sin, if it is not already doing so. I invite you to take up the cause of women in this matter, and present the case to our bishop who I believe in his heart of hearts believes this should be done, but is afraid to go against the prevailing wisdom.

—Richard C. Placone

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