



# Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 14, 2006

## Readings

*This week:*

Acts 9:26-31

1 John 3:18-24

John 15:1-8

*Next week:*

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

1 John 4:7-10

John 15:9-17

## Psalm

I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people. (*Psalm 22*)

## Today

Today's presider is Msgr. Gene Boyle.

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 meetings this week. Happy Mother's Day!

### From Thomas Merton

A theology of love cannot afford to be sentimental. It cannot afford to preach edifying generalities about charity, while identifying "peace" with mere established power and legalized violence against the oppressed. A theology of love cannot be allowed merely to serve the interests of the rich and powerful, justifying their wars, their violence, and their bombs, while exhorting the poor and underprivileged to practice patience, meekness, longsuffering and to solve their problems, if at all, nonviolently. The theology of love must seek to deal realistically with the evil and injustice in the world, and not merely to compromise with them. . . .

Such a theology could not claim to be Christian if it did not retain at least some faith in the meaning of the Cross and of the redemptive death of Jesus who, instead of using force against his accusers, took all the evil upon himself and overcame that evil by his suffering. . . . Instead of preaching the Cross *for others*. . . we might conceivably. . . study more seriously the practice of nonviolence and humane methods. . . .

—*Faith and Violence*

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*

### ***Free trade and the indigenous:***

Ascension Parish in Saratoga continues its Justice Speakers Forum on Monday, May 22 with Diana Clyne, Justice Coordinator for the Mercy Sisters in Burlingame, speaking on *Free Trade Agreements and the Loss of Lands and Livelihood of Indigenous Peoples*. Registration begins at 7:15 and the program is from 7:30 to 9:00 pm. Admission is free, though a \$5 free-will donation is suggested (refreshments will be served). Call Fr. Charlie at (408) 725-3939 for more info.

### ***Piano needed:***

Do you have a piano that is not being used (or know of one)? John Eke, the director of the Tongan Choir that sings once a month at the 8:45 Mass, is looking for a piano to help teach children to sing in harmony. He needs to borrow one or buy it for a small amount. Please contact Maureen Locke at (650) 854-1539 or molocke@earthlink.net if you can help.

### ***PIA "just healthcare" action:***

The time has arrived for action on health insurance for all low-income residents of Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. A Peninsula Interfaith Action (PIA) sponsored proposal to extend insurance to all low-income adults will be presented at St. Matthew's Church in San Mateo (9th Ave. at El Camino) on Tuesday, May 16, 7:30-8:45 pm. Great progress has been made in both counties in providing health insurance for all children. The new proposal will push to extend insurance to all low-income adults and to expand insurance for children. For more information, call George Chippendale, 856-6350.

### ***Transitions on May 18:***

Transitions (for divorced and separated Catholics) will meet Thursday, May 18, 7:30 pm, at the St. Thomas Aquinas Pastoral Center, 3290 Middlefield Road. Dominican Sr. Rebecca Shinas, who leads Adult Spiritual Formation at St. Simon Parish, will speak on *Transitions in Love and Life*.

Sr. Rebecca graduated from Santa Clara University with a Masters in Pastoral Ministry with an emphasis in Adult Spirituality. Her ministry includes singing and playing her guitar.

Admission is free. Visit <http://paloaltocatholic.org> for more information.

### ***Kaiser to speak June 4:***

Save Sunday, June 4, at 7:00 pm, when journalist Robert Blair Kaiser will speak on *A Church in Search of Itself*, the title of his newest book.



Kaiser examines the most important and divisive issues confronting the Church: the sex abuse scandal, the shortage of priests due to the insistence on a celibate clergy, the ban on contraception, the roles of women and gays, the failure to reach out sincerely to other faiths, and the increased participation of laypeople in Church affairs.

Kaiser spent ten years in the Jesuits before leaving to pursue a career in journalism. He was a religion reporter for *The New York Times*, *Time*, and CBS, and is now a contributing editor in Rome for *Newsweek*. For information, call (650) 261-9155 or go to [information@thomasmerton.org](mailto:information@thomasmerton.org).

### ***Film series concludes:***

The Friday night film series ends May 26 at 7:30 pm with *In Whose Interest* (27 min., 2002), an award-winning film that leads us on an eye-opening journey through the effects of U.S. foreign policy over the past 50 years. A second film, *I Am Sorry I Was Right* (30 min., 2004), documents one of the most fascinating characters of the 20th century, Sen. Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota, best known for his impassioned 1968 campaign against the Vietnam War.

Speakers, discussion, socializing, and drinks/snacks follow the screening. Films are at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 505 E. Charleston, Palo Alto. Suggested donation is \$5-10.

### ***Disarming tea party:***

The San Jose Raging Grannies and WILPF invite you to join a discussion, on Armed Forces Day, of how progressive women might reallocate funds from the U.S. military to more productive uses. Time is 2:00-4:00 pm on Saturday, May 20, and place is Cypress Gardens Community Room, 3555 Judro Way, San Jose. The Raging Grannies will perform and serve tea, savories and sweets. Phone Lois Fiedler at (408) 294-0981 or Joan Bazar at (408) 243-4359 or e-mail [joan@wilpfsan-jose.org](mailto:joan@wilpfsan-jose.org) to reserve a place at this fun event. Donation of \$15 requested, with the funds supporting WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) and Raging Grannies activities.

# COMMUNITY FORUM

*Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns*

## ***Faith of our mothers:***

“My worst fear is coming true—I’m becoming my mother.” That’s the gist of a playful caption on a friend’s coffee mug. More and more lately I remind myself of my mother, but this realization brings no feelings of dread.

Our genetic links are beyond doubt—the same nose, the aging hair (“greyish brown” or “brownish grey,” depending on who’s describing it), the body of sturdy stock (“perfect for childbearing,” someone once remarked; I took it as a compliment). My only regret is that in addition to her physical traits, the faith of my mother couldn’t be transmitted to me, some specific chromosome guaranteeing that I’d be the woman of God that she is.

Hers is a private faith, not a showy display of religiosity. As in all that she does, she lives out her faith in an understated way. Her faith is simple, innocent, straight out of the Gospels. She’s the living version of the works of mercy—visiting the sick, bringing food to the hungry, clothing the naked, instructing the ignorant, praying for the living and the dead—not for her own aggrandizement but for the sake of the Kingdom. As schoolchildren we were urged to dedicate all our written work to God. On the right-hand corner of our papers we’d neatly print the letters J.M.J. (Jesus, Mary and Joseph) or A.M.D.G. (for the greater glory of God). Those were routine gestures, often empty of meaning or motivation, but my mother’s life is one ceaseless A.M. D.G. Now that her children are grown, she has the luxury of almost daily Mass. But even with small children, homebound to care for them, she prayed her way through the day, offering up disappointments and encouraging her children to do the same, reminding us that greater good would come of our temporary sadnesses, since not one sparrow fell to the ground without God’s being mindful of it.

Today, as I watch my mother dedicating herself to her daily tasks at home—changing a grandchild’s diaper, peeling vegetables for a family dinner, canning tomatoes from her garden—I hear her contentedly humming to herself (my father calls it “purring”) and know that in her simple way she’s at prayer. A woman happy and blessed and secure in her faith in the Lord, my mother makes her life a hymn to her creator, her soul magnifying the Lord, her spirit rejoicing in God her savior.

—Abridged from [www.americancatholic.org](http://www.americancatholic.org). The author, Elizabeth Bookser Barkley, is associate professor of English at Mount St. Joseph in Cincinnati, and is the mother of three teenage daughters.

## ***Mother’s day proclamation, 1870:***

After the horrors of the Civil War, abolitionist Julia Ward Howe (composer of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*) focused her activities on the causes of pacifism and women’s suffrage. In 1870 she was the first to proclaim Mother’s Day, with the proclamation below. Where war is being waged, it disproportionately affects women and children. In addition to direct acts of violence, war disrupts home life, food supplies, local infrastructure, the ability to go to school or work. Since this Saturday is Armed Forces Day, her words seem particularly appropriate:

Arise then...women of this day!  
Arise, all women who have hearts!  
Whether your baptism be of water or of tears!  
Say firmly:  
“We will not have questions answered by irrelevant agencies,  
Our husbands will not come to us, reeking with carnage,  
For caresses and applause.  
Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn  
All that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and  
patience.  
We, the women of one country,  
Will be too tender of those of another country  
To allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs.”  
From the voice of a devastated Earth a voice goes up with  
Our own. It says: “Disarm! Disarm!  
The sword of murder is not the balance of justice.”  
Blood does not wipe out dishonor,  
Nor violence indicate possession.  
As men have often forsaken the plough and the anvil  
At the summons of war,  
Let women now leave all that may be left of home  
For a great and earnest day of counsel.  
Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the  
dead.  
Let them solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means  
Whereby the great human family can live in peace...  
Each bearing after his own time the sacred impress, not of  
Caesar,  
But of God.  
In the name of womanhood and humanity, I earnestly ask  
That a general congress of women without limit of nationality,  
May be appointed and held at someplace deemed most  
convenient  
And the earliest period consistent with its objects,  
To promote the alliance of the different nationalities,  
The amicable settlement of international questions,  
The great and general interests of peace.

## ***Rosemary Ruether on the divine feminine:***

It has become a kind of dogma among many feminists interested in spirituality that Judaism and Christianity suppressed all female imagery of the divine. It is also assumed that it was *women* who created female symbols of the divine and that these symbols served to empower women. So, this line of thinking goes, female symbols for the divine were suppressed as a part of a patriarchal disempowerment of women. However, my own research, published in my book *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History*, shows that all these relations are considerably more ambiguous. Men, more so than women, probably shaped much of the classical images of the female divine in the ancient Mediterranean world and elsewhere. Such images served male and upper class interests, at least in their official expressions. The feminine divine was seen as protecting men in power, probably because [it was] believed to be like a great mother whose power is seen as nurturing rather than judgmental. But in truth, female symbols of the divine were never entirely suppressed in Judaism or Christianity. Although they were marginalized, they continued to reappear in renewed forms—and are still with us today.

The root of female images of the divine in Christianity lies in what's known as the Wisdom tradition, which is found in the latter half of the Hebrew Bible, in such books as Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiasticus, and the Wisdom of Solomon. In those texts, Wisdom is described as a emanation of God. . . . Wisdom is seen as a companion of God through whom God creates the world, an orderer and sustainer of the universe, a mediator of divine revelation, the one who calls Israel's sons to repent of their folly and enter the study of wisdom. She is the means of good fortune, the bride of sages and the redeemer of souls. . . .

Wisdom as a feminine aspect of God was developed by scholar-sages in Jerusalem after the return from exile in the late sixth century B.C.E. Earlier Judaism had known of the Goddess Asherah, wife of the Canaanite God El. Since the Hebrew religion identified Yahweh—God—with El, much popular Judaism before the exile continued to assume that Yahweh had a consort, Asherah. Although the reformers of the tradition gradually suppressed this veneration of Asherah, a lingering memory of this tradition may have influenced the scholar-sages as they shaped the idea of Wisdom as a feminine manifestation of God. Later Jewish mysticism spoke of the Shekinah (a term used to refer to the Presence of God) as the feminine consort of the male God. Christianity shaped its understanding of who Jesus is through a synthesis of the two traditions of apocalyptic

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## ***Mother's Day: What does it really mean?:***

On Mother's Day three years ago I had an epiphany. Two months earlier I had spent nine days next to my infant son Alex's hospital bed as he lay there suffering breathing problems and hooked up to IVs and oxygen. I was feeling completely helpless as a mom. For the first month after we came home, we were advised to avoid having him around people, leaving us virtually housebound. As May rolled around, Alex finally began to get stronger.

On Mother's Day, my husband confessed that, because of how hectic our lives had been, he didn't have anything to give me for Mother's Day. It was then that it hit me: I didn't care about store-bought gifts. The best



Mother's Day present I could have asked for was wriggling around in my arms.

So why do I tell that story? Well, I guess because I had come to realize that this holiday has become just an

excuse for increased sales of cards and flowers. And I say that as someone who had griped at my husband for what I felt was his less-than-adequate recognition of my motherly achievements with our first child.

As a mom, I try—and mostly fail—to emulate the epitome of motherhood as far as I'm concerned, the Virgin Mary. In short, when most people these days ask, "What Would Jesus Do?" as a mom I ask, "What would his mother do?"

And it is in that spirit that the holiday of Mother's Day was founded in the first place.

The celebration of Mother's Day dates back all the way to ancient times, but the idea of the celebration was first kicked around in 1870. Julia Ward Howe, author of the words to the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, proposed Mother's Day as a day dedicated to peace.

But it was Ann Jarvis of West Virginia, however, who really pushed for a national day to honor mothers. On the second anniversary of her mother's death, Jarvis asked her mother's church in Grafton, West Virginia, to celebrate a day to honor mothers. Her mother had died on the second Sunday in May. The church obliged and the following year, the city of Philadelphia joined in the celebration. Thanks to a campaign by Jarvis and her supporters, by 1911 almost every state celebrated Mother's Day. In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson made it a national holiday.

Other countries also celebrate Mother's Day, but some on different days. In England, Mothering Sunday is celebrated on the fourth Sunday of Lent.

—By Susan Hines-Brigger, at [www.americancatholic.org](http://www.americancatholic.org)

## Mother's day:

I have spent the week in dialogue with a most unusual woman. In hands that should cradle a child, she holds a crown of thorns. Her fingers are seared as brutally as her son or daughter's flesh was torn. She is the Mother of the Disappeared. While this icon might seem an odd choice for the celebration of Mother's Day, it is appropriate for reasons larger than Hallmark cards and florists' bouquets. Her halo reminds us that the parents of the martyred die inwardly like Mary and are holy like Mary. . . . Meeting this icon, I protested, "I don't want to live with you all week! Your stare condemns my safety and luxury. Why don't you go away and let me enjoy the apple blossoms, my daughter's pastel dresses, the joys of spring?" . . .

She replies, "I participate in Christ's trouncing of the death-dealing forces that stalk all children. Just as the martyrs of El Salvador played their part in bringing an end to the civil war, so I stand implacable as conscience. I call oppressors to

accountability. Furthermore, I challenge you to nurture the life you have been given, for it is fragile and precious."

Her eyes upon me quiet my annoyance with my children, my frustration with their little failures. She reminds me that although I may not understand her particular ordeal, I may confront other problems. Can I bring them to her serenity, her conviction that God is with us both in loving support?

"You still have your children," she reminds me. "Cherish them. Why do you get irritated when they invade your quiet times? I would give anything for such a little invasion. But my arms are empty. My home is silent." Eventually, for me as for her, all the children disappear. They grow up, leave for college, find their own paths. As one mom lamented, sweeping up debris, "First they break your things. Then they break your heart." Sometimes the mothers disappear. My ten-year-old daughter tells me about the little boy in her class who made a Mother's Day card along with the other children, but he didn't know where to send it. Mom left; he lives with his dad.

In such heartbreaking separations, we see into the mystery of God. God says of the beloved people Israel:



## Mother of the disappeared:

### (Madre de los Desaparecidos)

For Catholics of Latin America, the Sorrowful Mother, Madre Dolorosa, is a central image in their lives. Her statue stands in most churches, clothed in black. Mary's bitter experience on Good Friday has made her a sympathetic sister to those whose lives are marked by sorrow. She has shared the lot of the downtrodden and can stand in solidarity with them through all ages.

Tens of thousands of Latin American mothers have had family members abducted—"disappeared"—by death squads. What can these women do when their governments ignore their requests for help? In 1976 a number of Argentinean mothers began a silent protest every week in front of the government offices as a way to release their despair.

Wearing black dresses and white kerchiefs, they carried photographs of their missing loved ones and marched around the plaza. They wore a white rose bud if they hoped their loved one was still alive, and a red rose bud for the dead. From Argentina the march of the mothers spread to El Salvador and other countries.

In this icon by Robert Lentz, Madre Dolorosa wears the white kerchief, and her wine-colored Byzantine garment is almost black. She has no photograph to carry of her son, who was also abducted by a death squad and tortured to death, but she carries his crown of thorns. She wears both red and white rose buds, since she has become mother of all the disappeared.

The white handprint smeared across the side of the icon is the signature of the El Salvador death squads. It is unusual to add such a detail to a Byzantine icon, and the result is shocking: the icon is violated! The hand, however, expresses a deep truth. The death squads violate icons of God every time they abduct and torture a human being. If the truth is not pretty, let it challenge us to action.

—Adapted from [www.mountsaintagnes.org](http://www.mountsaintagnes.org), a Catholic theological center for women



Please remember in your prayers this week Elaine, Msgr. Gene Boyle, Tom Carmody, Chloe Chang, Joanne Claus, Mary Connors, Ken Dias, Joanne Hasegawa, François Jamati, Joseph Kehret, Alicia Kot, Joan Kuhn, Kami Ladd, Chris Lippard & family, Carol Locke, Judy Mendelsohn, Maureen Mooney, Stephanie Mullinex, Joe Narewski, Lynne Owens, George Peinado, Nora Peniata, Ramona Rocha, Anne Rush, Dolores Walsh, T.J. Wooten, Virginia Worthington, and friends of Jean Gill.

## ***Mother's Day Blessing of Women***

Loving God, as a mother gives life and nourishment to her children,  
So you watch over your Church.

Bless these women, that they may be strengthened  
As they nurture others.

Let the example of their faith and love shine forth.  
Grant that we, their loving children, husbands, and friends,  
May honor them always with a spirit of profound respect.  
Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen

### ***Ruether on the divine feminine, continued:***

messianism—a belief in an imminently coming Messiah—and wisdom cosmology, the belief in Wisdom as creator of the cosmos. . . . Jesus is variously seen as a prophet of Wisdom, Wisdom's son, or Wisdom's incarnation. . . . But as the faith developed, the idea of Word (Logos, a male concept) started to be substituted for Wisdom (Sophia, the female concept). Word was identified with Jesus, a male prophet, tending to mask the feminine roots of the Wisdom idea in Christianity. . . . For Hildegard of Bingen, Wisdom (*Sapientia* in Latin) is present in God from all eternity. She is God's bride and the means through which all created things are brought forth. She gives life energy or "greening" power to all things. . . . She is incarnate as Christ through Mary's virginal womb, and she continues to speak through the teachers of the church. She is manifest finally in the redeemed people of God as Mother Church.

For Julian of Norwich, Wisdom is identified with Christ, the second person of the Trinity. She is the one through whom we are created naturally and recreated spiritually. "Thus Jesus Christ who does good against evil is our very Mother. We have our being of him, where every ground of motherhood begins, with all the sweet keeping of love that endlessly follows. As truly as God is our Father," she says, "so truly is God our Mother" (*Revelations of Divine Love*, chapter 59). . . . Thus the feminine aspect of the divine has never disappeared in Christianity. It is continually rediscovered and renewed. Today's interest in the divine Mother is only the most recent expression of a long history. Today we have many groups of women and men who are seeking a feminine expression of God. But they don't have to look to other religions for this idea. A feminine image of God has long been a part of the Christian tradition.

—From *beliefnet.com*. Rosemary Radford Ruether teaches at the Claremont School of Theology, and is author or editor of 42 books on theology and social justice.

### ***Mother's day, continued:***

"How can I give you up?...My heart recoils within me;/ my compassion grows warm and tender" (Hosea 11:8). Jesus, torn from his mother on the way to Calvary, can understand our worst nightmare, and relate to the suffering we most dread. However difficult our experience with our children may be, God participates intimately in the relationship. And that is good news for Mother's Day.

—From an article by Kathy Coffey at [www.americancatholic.org](http://www.americancatholic.org). She is editor for *Living the Good News and lives in Denver with her husband and four children.*

As mothers, we create life. We nurture life. War is the antithesis of mothering. . . . We call upon the United States, along with the world community, to act courageously as guardians of the world our children will inherit. We declare ourselves opposed to military action as a way of resolving differences. We call on other mothers, people of all religions, and elected officials of all nations to join us and heed the call for non-violence that is ringing across America and many other countries. . . . We make this demand for our children, husbands, partners, families, friends, ourselves and our nation. We make this demand for the mothers, families and children we do not know in Iraq, Palestine, Israel, or any place on earth where violent injustice may be perpetrated. . . .

Nations and economies, like children, thrive only in a just peace. There is no greater issue. For the love of our country, our families, and innocents everywhere, let there be no war, anywhere, in our names. . . .

—From *Mission Statement of Mothers Against War*

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