



Fifth Sunday of Lent

March 25, 2007

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 43:16–21 (36C)

Philippians 3:8–14

John 8:1–11

Next week:

Isaiah 50:4–7

Philippians 2:6–11

Luke 22:14–23:56

Psalm

Today

The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy. (*Psalm 126*)

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

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

Monday, March 26, 7:30 p.m. TMC Liturgy Committee, location TBD

Wednesday, March 28, 7:30 p.m. STA Site Committee, Thomas House basement hall

From Thomas Merton

The Cistercians did not conceive penance as a system of arbitrary and irritating practices by which the abbot could tease and mortify his monks. The penitential life of the White Monk did not consist in a series of athletic feats of endurance or of systematic flagellations, or even of deliberately-staged public humiliations. The Cistercians were basing their life on the Gospel: and the “austerity” of the life that was led and preached by Jesus Christ is the broad, fundamental, searching austerity of labor and poverty. The penance of the Cistercians is essentially the common penance of the whole human race: to “eat your bread in the sweat of your brow” and to “bear one another’s burdens.” There would be plenty of cold and hunger and insecurity. Night after night the monk would go to his simple bed of straw, under the stone vaulting of his unheated dormitory, to rest his aching muscles for a few hours. He would rise in the middle of the night and pray and work for a good long time before he got anything to put into his empty stomach. He would know the heat of the sun. His hands would be hard and rough from field work or building or the exercise of a craft.

—*The Waters of Siloe*

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

Flowers for Easter's altar:

Please help turn the church altar into Easter beauty by donating colored flowers in pots (azaleas, freesias, lilies, etc.). Bring the potted plants to St. Thomas Aquinas church on Saturday, April 7, after 8:30 a.m., when the decorating crew will start working. Stay to help with the decorating if you can.



Nametag refreshment:

The 8:45 a.m. Mass Liturgy Committee is refreshing the nametags traditionally worn by Mass attendees. Everyone is encouraged to **sign up to receive a permanent name badge** that will be kept on a bulletin board in the vestibule. Look at the list of names on the current name badge table. If your name is not on the list, please sign up. During the first two week of April, the name badges will be produced from the list, and on April 15, the name badges will be ready for wearing. Name badges help us feel and act like a community of friends in Christ. Knowing one another by name is an immense help in creating a living, breathing community. In addition, Eucharistic ministers want to be able to offer you the bread and wine and call you by name.



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:

[Cut out this reminder and post it on your refrigerator]

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.

Operation Rice Bowl: fifth week of Lent

We will be collecting Rice Bowl donations on Palm Sunday, April 1, when checks (made out to Catholic Relief Services) will be collected, as well as the actual Rice Bowls with any cash or change in them. Checks will be forwarded directly to CRS, and cash will be converted to check and sent from TMC.



Make the world a better place:

Ever thought: "I know what *I* would do to make the world a better place!" Now's your chance to tell the world. Write a 200-word essay on your idea—by April 20 at 5:00 p.m.

In 200 words or less, email a well-thought-out idea to make the world a better place in any one issue of your concern (how people can live together in peace, how to improve/save the environment, how to end poverty, hunger and homelessness, how to reduce crime, how to make schools better, etc.) Whatever your passion is, share it—telling what you would do about it that is better, or different, from what is being done now. Only send your own idea/s. Include your age if you are a child or a teen, or whether you are an adult or a senior citizen. Responses from a wide variety of people of many ages are sought. The winner, or multiple winners, of each age group will see their ideas in print (with full credit to the author) in a book on "How to Make the World a Better Place" coming out next fall, as well as being part of a growing web site (www.sanjosepby.org/HowToMakeTheWorldABetterPlace.htm) on an event on this topic being planned on October 27th. Email essays and questions to: maketheworldbetter@sanjosepby.org.

Co-sponsored by: The Presbytery of San Jose Hunger Action and Peacemaking Ministries, Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church, The Church of the Resurrection, Santa Clara County Council of Churches, Sunnyvale Cares, Leadership Sunnyvale, Reach and Teach...and more.



Please remember in your prayers this week Elaine, Msgr. Gene Boyle, Chloe Chang, Joanne Claus, Mary Connors, Ken Dias, Joanne Hasegawa, Dick Jackman, François Jamati, Tom Jaworowski, Joseph Kehret, Alicia Kot, Joan Kuhn, Kami Ladd, Carol Locke, Mercedes McCaffrey, Maureen Mooney, Stephanie Mullenix, Joe Narewski, Dorothea Nudelman, Hank Okonski, Lynne Owens, Hayden Pastorini, George Peinado, Pauline (Fr. Marini's cousin), George Peinado, Kay Pulskamp, Ramona Rocha, Anne Rush, George Schardt, Jean Vistica, Dolores Walsh, and T. J. Wooten. [Add or subtract names from this list by e-mailing the three Bulletin editors: Jane Bahr, Michelle Hogan, Kay Williams.]

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 one of the people listed on page 4.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

From Operation Rice Bowl: fifth week of Lent

In this fifth week of Lent, we visit **Fatimé Idi**, who lives in a small village called Malam Tchouloum in Niger, a country in West Africa. The people in her village are farmers, and the crops they grow are their main source of food. For many years there was not much rain, and it was difficult for them to grow their crops without enough water. The pond in their village dried up and the other women and Fatimé had to walk to another village to get water and carry the heavy containers of water back on their heads.

Catholic Relief Services came to their village and showed them how to catch more rainwater to use for their crops, helped them get better health care so that they could protect their children from illnesses, and helped them organize committees so that they could plan how to improve life in the village.

In their committees, they decided that they could improve the village by digging the pond deeper and placing rocks around it so it would hold more water for a longer time. CRS helped them by giving the men in the village food in exchange for the work they did to improve the pond. Now the pond does not dry out as quickly, and they have a supply of water right in our village. CRS listened to their ideas about how to make their village better and helped them to carry out their plans.



Notecards to swell the Kiriti Fund:

On sale today after Mass will be sets of notecards featuring the charming drawings of Kenya artist Kizito Magero. The parish of Fr. Daniel Kiriti in Naivasha, Kenya, is the beneficiary of the profits from the sale of these notecards, which come 10 to a package with 10 different designs for \$20. You will be proud to send a thank-you note on one of these cards—or to give a whole set as a gift to those who should be sending out thank-you notes!

Look for Margo McAuliffe who will be selling the packages of notecards. Or contact Margo at margom-ca2@sbcglobal.net, or 650-322-0821.

Letters from Naivaisha students:

Father Kiriti asked some of the girl high school students to write a testimonial about their lives and educational goals.

“My name is Mary Waithira Ngugi. I was born on 1993 in Naivasha Karai location. I am the third born out of five girls and I don’t have a brother. In 1999 I joined primary school at Karai Primary School where I continued with my education until I was in Class Eight. When I was in Class Eight my father contracted a serious disease. He was taken to hospital where he was admitted and stayed for almost a month. We had no money to pay for him, even our families wanted to help us but they were unable. Even it came a time when we slept without eating food, because we had nothing to do. But my mother tried to seek for

work in farms where she earned little money or she could not even get a job.

In August my father kicked the bucket and we were very worried because he was the breadwinner and also he was paying school fees for my sister who has now finished Form Four. My grandmother now cares for us because my mother cannot be able.

When I finished Class Eight I was not thinking that I can go to a boarding school or even a day school because I saw that my mother was unable to pay the fees.

In December my mother borrowed thousands of money to pay for my fees and my needs, where she pays half of fees assisted by the owner of the school.

I have chosen to be educated because education is shelter for life. Since I passed K.C.P.E. I am also hoping that I will pass K.C.S.E. and I am hoping to join university after secondary. After university my target is to be a journalist. I have dedicated all this to God who will make a way where there seems to be no way.”

...and from Mary Nyaikamba:

“...It is now three weeks since I came to St. Francis Xavier girls secondary school. I am working hard to achieve my goals in the future. Many people told me that I must struggle today so that I can celebrate tomorrow. I want to do my best because I have come from far. I thank the Lord for this chance he had given me in this school. I want to use my time proper, because time wasted is never recovered. I have four good years to make my future bright and brightest....I want to say thank you and may God bless you, keep you strong, healthy, all those who have sponsored me in the side school fees. I usually pray for you day and night....” #

Thinking about fundamentalisms:

[by James Carroll, Boston Globe, 3/19/07]

Nearly a decade and a half ago, this condemnation of fundamentalism was issued: "The fundamentalist approach is dangerous, for it is attractive to people who look to the Bible for ready answers to the problems of life . . . instead of telling them that the Bible does not necessarily contain an immediate answer to each and every problem. . . . Fundamentalism actually invites people to a kind of intellectual suicide. It injects into life a false certitude, for it unwittingly confuses the divine substance of the biblical message with what are in fact its human limitations." This robust denunciation came from the Vatican, in a 1993 document entitled "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church."

The phenomenon of "fundamentalism" has made an extraordinary impact on the world. But what is it? The scholar Gabriel A. Almond defines fundamentalism as "religious militance by which self-styled 'true-believers' attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors." Some fundamentalists pursue openly political agendas (Northern Ireland, Israel, Iran). Some are apolitical (Latin American Pentecostalism). In war zones (Sudan, Afghanistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka), fundamentalism is energizing conflict. Most notably, the warring groups in Iraq have jelled around fundamentalist religion.

These varied manifestations resist being defined with one word, which is why it is better, as Almond suggests, to speak of "fundamentalisms." But they all have something in common, and as the Vatican critique of biblical fundamentalism suggests, it is dangerous. The impulse may begin with good intentions, the wish to affirm basic values and sources of meaning that seemed threatened. The term was born when conservative Protestants in early-20th-century America committed themselves to defend the five "fundamentals" of their faith -- the inerrancy of the Bible, virgin birth and deity of Jesus, doctrine of atonement, bodily resurrection of Jesus, and his imminent return. That movement was a rejection, especially, of the historical-critical mode of biblical interpretation, and of Darwinian science. These characteristics still animate Protestant fundamentalism.

But all fundamentalisms, rejecting a secular claim to have replaced the sacred as chief source of meaning, are skeptical of Enlightenment values, even as the Enlightenment project has begun to criticize itself. But now "old time religion" of whatever stripe faces a plethora of threats: new technologies, globalization, the market economy, rampant individualism, diversity, pluralism, mobility -- all that makes for 21st-century life. Fundamentalisms will especially thrive wherever there is violent conflict, and wherever there is stark poverty, simply because these religiously absolute movements

promise meaning where there is no meaning. For all these reasons, fundamentalisms are everywhere.

Even in contemporary Roman Catholicism, with whose condemnation of fundamentalism we began. Catholic fundamentalists are more likely to be called "traditionalists" and today the Vatican is their sponsor. Instead of reading the Bible uncritically, in search of "ready answers to the problems of life," they read papal statements that way, finding in encyclicals the "false certitude" that the Vatican warns biblical literalists against. The most recent case in point is Pope Benedict's "Apostolic Exhortation," issued last week. What begins as a contemplative appreciation of the Eucharist ends up as a manifesto designed to keep many Catholics from receiving Communion at Mass. The ticket to Communion is an uncritical acceptance of what the pope calls, in a striking echo, "fundamental values," which include defense of human life "from conception to natural death." The key declaration is that "these values are not negotiable."

But culture consists precisely in negotiation of values, and change in how values are understood is part of life. Moral reasoning is not mere obedience, but lively interaction among principles, situations, and the "human limitations" referred to in the 1993 Vatican statement. Take "conception." The great Thomas Aquinas depended on 13th-century notions of biology, and did not believe that human life began at conception. Negotiation followed. Take "natural death." Disagreements over its meaning (including among Catholic bishops) were made vivid not long ago in the case of Terri Schiavo. Negotiation followed. The pope affirms universal and unchanging "values grounded in human nature," as if human nature is fixed, instead of evolving. One detects here, too, a suspicion of Darwin, an invitation to "intellectual suicide."

The various fundamentalisms are all concerned with "fortifying borders," and that is a purpose of today's Vatican. The pope's exhortation concludes by referring to the Catholic people as the "flock" entrusted to bishops. Sheep stay inside the fence. But what happens when Catholics stop thinking of themselves as sheep?

—from *Common Dreams.org News Center, Breaking News and Views for the Progressive Community, 3/19/07*

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