



First Sunday of Advent

December 3, 2006

Readings

This week:

Jeremiah 33:14-16

1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Next week:

Baruch 5:1-9

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Luke 3:1-6

Psalm

To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. (*Psalm 25*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. José Rubio.

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

Friday, December 8

Immaculate Conception (Holy Day)

From Thomas Merton

Advent is the "sacrament" of the PRESENCE of God in His world, in the Mystery of Christ at work in History. . . .

This mystery is the revelation of God Himself in His Incarnate Son. But it is not merely a manifestation of the Divine Perfections, it is the concrete plan of God for the salvation of mankind and the restoration of the whole world in Christ.

This plan is envisaged not as a future prospect but as a present *fact*. The "last things" are already present and realized in a hidden manner. The Kingdom of God is thus already "in the midst of us." But, the mystery can only be known by those who enter into it, who find their place in the Mystical Christ, and therefore find the mystery of Christ realized and fulfilled *in themselves*.

—*Seasons of Celebration*

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

Gifts to benefit Fr. Kiriti's girls' high school:

Don't forget to check the gift boutique outside after Mass today—handcrafted items from Fr. Kiriti's neighbors and parishioners in Naivasha, Kenya. Also, consider a gift card to benefit St. Francis Xavier High School for Girls, currently under construction. Gift cards are available for donations of \$10 or more. Cards include the story of the dream for the school and photos of the construction in progress. For cards, see Jean Gill after Mass today, or contact Margo McAuliffe, (650) 322-0821, margomc2@sbcglobal.net.

Movie on consumerism and social justice:

The Fall 2006 Palo Alto Film Series—*Movies That Matter*—continues on December 8 with *Buyer Be Fair: The Promise of Product Certification*, which takes viewers to Mexico, the Netherlands, the UK, Sweden, the U.S. and Canada to explore how conscious consumers and businesses can use the market to promote social justice and environmental sustainability through product labeling, with a focus on Fair Trade coffee and Forest Stewardship Council certified wood. This film was released in 2006 and is 57 minutes long. Movies are at the Unitarian Universalist Church at 505 E. Charleston, at 7:30 pm. Suggested donation: \$5 to \$10 (no one turned away). This series is a joint production of www.worldcentric.org and www.uucpa.org.

Feast of Immaculate Conception this week:

In 1846 the bishops of the United States placed this nation under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her Immaculate Conception. The Second Vatican Council taught that the Blessed Virgin Mary is “a mother to us in the order of grace” and that “by her manifold intercession [she] continues to procure for us the gifts of eternal salvation.” As U.S. Catholics, we turn to her this December 8—160 years later—to seek her intercession for our nation, that God will provide healing where there is conflict, serenity where there is anxiety and courage where life is threatened and in need of protection.

Please remember in your prayers this week Elaine, Msgr. Gene Boyle, Tom Carmody, Chloe Chang, Joanne Claus, Mary Connors, Ken Dias, Joanne Hasegawa, Dick Jackman, François Jamati, Joseph Kehret, Alicia Kot, Joan Kuhn, Kami Ladd, Carol Locke, Judy Mendelsohn, Maureen Mooney, Stephanie Mullinex, Joe Narewski, Hank Okonski, Lynne Owens, George Peinado, Nora Peniata, Ramona Rocha, Anne Rush, Norm and Jane Schirle, Dolores Walsh, and T.J. Wooten.

Advent evening of reflection December 11:



Fr. Tim Meier, SJ, will lead us in prayer, conversation, and music next Monday, December 11, 7:00-9:00 pm, here at St. Thomas Aquinas Church. Reflecting on the theme Hope in Dark Times, Fr. Tim is now serving in the military as a chaplain, so this is a wonderful opportunity to spend some time with him on our way to the light of Christmas.

Migrant posada in San Jose:

The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform, Diocese of San Jose, invites you to a Migrant Posada—*A Journey of Hope*—on December 16 at 6:30 pm, starting at the John 23 Neighborhood Center, 5th and San Fernando in San Jose, to celebrate our faith and cultural diversity. We walk with those who are seeking shelter, posada, today. There is free parking in the 4th Street garage. Please bring your own candle. For more information, contact Daniela Santos at (408) 835-6708.

Please remember to bring food this month:

During November and December—the cold holiday months—please bring nonperishable food and place it in the basket in the vestibule before Mass. Staple items are especially needed: cereals, canned soups, fruits and vegetables, pasta, rice, beans, canned meat. Let's make the Christmas baskets plentiful for our neighbors who are struggling to make ends meet!

Age of Aquinas—December:

Saturdays in December, Age of Aquinas Hike & Coffee. Meet at the Lakeside Cafe in Shoreline Park at 9:00 am. Contact Randy Jones, (408) 739-2881 or age-of-aquinas@paloaltocatholic.org.
Wednesdays in December: Transitions (from couplehood to single-hood) Support Group meets at the Pastoral Center, 3290 Middlefield, at 7:30 pm. Contact Randy.
Thursday, December 14, 6:30 pm: Dining Around The World—Malaysian/Singaporean food at Baba Neo Restaurant, 311 Moffett Blvd. in Mtn. View, sponsored by the Catholic Alumni Club. RSVP to Jim Chinn, (650) 948-1144 or jychinnf@sbcglobal.net by December 13.
Friday, December 15: CSF Regular Monthly Gathering, sponsored by St. Lucy's Christian Singles Fellowship. Location is 2350 Winchester Blvd., Campbell, at 6:45 pm. Contact the CSF event line at (408) 535-0368 or singles@stlucy-campbell.org.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Advent 2007—a look at nonviolence:

For at least the first three Sundays of Advent, we invite you to explore with us what it means to live in a nonviolent way—the “third way” between violence and pacifism. Nonviolent living is a way of life that puts into practice the power of compassion, cooperation, connection, and concerted action, and it does this by creating nonviolent options that are neither compliance nor counter-violence. To open this space in ourselves takes courageous and concerted action.

Nonviolence was the way of Jesus (as the enclosed article reminds us), of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., and many others. We are called this Advent and Christmas to join together to pray, reflect, act, and support one another in the ways of peace and justice. Our Christian faith calls us now more than ever to join with one another to take nonviolent action to end war, to fashion economic and racial justice, to protect the earth, and to champion the well-being and inclusion of all.

Fr. John Dear on the beatitudes:

Recently, I learned that some scholars are rethinking the original Greek translation of the Beatitudes. The passive “Blessed are...” is not accurate, they say. Better the more active phrase: “Walk on! Walk forth!” If true, it rings a different tone, a tone of doggedness, support, encouragement. God cheers us on that we might go the distance in pursuit of justice and peace. Something along these lines:

Walk forth, you poor in spirit, you humble and powerless.
Keep going. Don’t be discouraged by your poverty. The reign of God is yours.

Walk forth, you who mourn the victims of war and hunger.
Keep going. You will be consoled.

Walk forth, you meek and gentle and nonviolent. Inherit the earth and enjoy the blessing of creation.

Walk forth, you who hunger and thirst for justice. Don’t give up. You will be satisfied.

Walk forth, you merciful. Keep showing mercy in a merciless world. Forgive everyone. Be compassionate to everyone. Show mercy to all. Mercy will be yours.

Walk forth, you pure in heart. Keep going. Be filled with the light of peace and see Christ in the poor, in the enemy, in one another.

Walk forth, you who make peace. Keep on going. Speak against war. Organize peace vigils. Become who you are, the children of the God of peace.

Walk forth, you persecuted for justice. Keep going. Don’t give up. You stand on the shoulders of Mahatma Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Dr. King, Archbishop Romero, and Sr. Ita Ford. Your reward will be great.

In other words, take heart. God is leading us into the fullness of life, a life of peace. There really is good news after all.

—Fr. John Dear, S.J.

Gandhi’s conversion experience:

When Gandhi, at age 24, was just starting his law practice in South Africa, he had the experience of being ejected from a train because he was dark-skinned and occupying a first-class seat, and he wouldn’t move to third class. He was left to spend the night sitting in a deserted, cold, unlit railway station in the Natal mountains, and that night he made the decision never to yield to force and never to use force to win a cause. This experience blossomed into the inspiration for mass nonviolent resistance. *Satyagraha*, the name Gandhi gave to this new way of overcoming injustice, means “holding on to truth” or “soul-force.” . . .

Satya and *ahimsa*, truth and nonviolence, became his constant watchwords. The Sanskrit word *ahimsa* does not contain a negative or passive connotation as does the English translation “nonviolence.” The implication of *ahimsa* is that when all violence subsides in the human heart, the state that remains is love. . . .

It is easy, Gandhi used to say, for the strong person to become nonviolent. It is the weakling who finds it impossible. Nonviolence means the capacity to love those who hate you, to show patience and understanding in the face of the most fiery opposition. This is the most difficult discipline one can learn in life. That is why the Bhagavad-Gita says that if you want to see the brave, look at those who can forgive. If you want to see the heroic, look at those who can love in return for hatred.

—Excerpted from *Gandhi the Man* by Eknath Easwaran (Tomales, California: Nilgiri Press, 1997)

My creed of nonviolence is an extremely active force. It has no room for cowardice or even weakness. There is hope for a violent man to be some day nonviolent, but there is none for a coward.
—Gandhi

Alternative gift shopping suggestions:

Catholic Relief Services promotes Fair Trade through its Work of Human Hands program, which brings fairly traded handcrafts, chocolate, and coffee from low-income producers all over the world. See http://www.crsfairtrade.org/index_flash.cfm.

The **Catholic Campaign for Human Development** provides a list of groups involved in CCHD's Economic Development Program that offer gifts and crafts. See <http://www.nccbuscc.org/cchd/edshopping.htm>.

Monastery Greetings is an online web catalog of marvelous products made by monks and nuns around the country. Your purchases support the work of these monasteries and convents. See their website at <http://www.monasterygreetings.com>.

Global Exchange offers an entire catalogue of fair trade products made by people in developing countries for the holidays at <http://store.gxonlinestore.org>.

The **Lion and Lamb** project has a parent-action kit, lists of positive toys, and other resources to help stop the marketing of violence to kids, at www.lionlamb.org.

The **International Fair Trade Association** is a global network of fair trade organizations, designed to improve the livelihoods of disadvantaged producers by linking and promoting fair trade organizations and speaking out for greater justice in fair trade. See <http://www.ifat.org/memberslists/pacificmembers.html>.

SERRV International at <http://www.servv.org> promotes A Greater Gift markets, in which fairly traded handicrafts and foods from around the world can be bought through an online store.

Ten Thousand Villages provides vital, fair income to people in developing countries by marketing their handicrafts and telling their stories. See <http://www.tenthousandvillages.com>.

Equal Exchange offers fair trade coffee and specialty drinks from the developing world, at <http://www.equalexchange.com/products/products.html>.

The **Ministry of the Arts**, by the Sisters of St. Joseph of LaGrange, promotes the unity of creation through art by the sisters. Their online catalogue is at <http://www.ministryofthearts.org>.

The **United Nations** offers books for children about children around the world at <http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/bookstor/Html/children.htm> and at www.unicef.org/publications/index.html.

The **Women's Bean Project** has a delicious assortment of gifts of soups, spreads, and much more. A purchase of these products helps women break the cycle of poverty and unemployment. See <https://www.womensbeanproject.com>.

—Education for Justice

Survey finds requests from working poor rising:

A new survey of Catholic Charities agencies across the country shows requests for help are growing much faster than the money to provide assistance, putting continued strain on social services during the holiday season. The Catholic Charities USA survey this month drew from 88 Catholic Charities agencies across the United States. By a 3-to-1 margin (76%), local agencies believe that it will be harder to meet the needs of those they serve this holiday season because the need is greater. The survey also highlights the fact that the increasing numbers of working poor are going to Catholic Charities agencies in search of assistance (80% of Catholic Charities agencies reported more requests for help from this group).

Below are some key findings in the 2006 survey:

****75%** are seeing more people seeking help in paying utility bills

****72%** of Catholic Charities agencies report an increase in the need for financial assistance

****68%** are finding an increase in requests for aid in making rent or mortgage payments

****64%** report an increase in the need for food

****53%** report an increase in the need for mental health services

****45%** report an increase in the need for prescription assistance

****44%** of the agencies cite an increase in the need for temporary housing

Who is seeking help? Primarily the working poor and other vulnerable populations:

****81%** of agencies cite an increase in the working poor seeking help

****68%** of local agencies report an increase in the number of families coming to them for help

****56%** are seeing more seniors

****55%** report an increase in immigrants needing assistance

****48%** are seeing an increase in the number of homeless seeking help

More survey results are online at <http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/downloads/HolidaySurvey06>.

Board: Anna Jaklitsch, 327-0978, annajak@accesscom.com
Kay Williams, 328-2781, kaywill@pacbell.net

Bulletin: Michelle Hogan (December 3 and 17),
Jane Bahr (December 10 and 24)

Kay Williams (December 31)

Finance: Ed Hannibal, 321-0203, Judy Creek, 493-5371

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Sally Benson, (408) 972-5843, red5@svpal.org

Membership: Mary Washburn, 327-3915

Spiritual Education: Mary Coady, 261-9155, Jim Davis, 328-2584

Newsletter submissions must be e-mailed by Friday noon or phoned by Thursday, 9:00 pm. For Kay, e-mail kaywill@pacbell.net or phone 328-2781; for Michelle, myhogan@earthlink.net or 493-8452; for Jane, BahrJunior@comcast.net or 967-8246.