



# Holy Family

December 31, 2006

## Readings

*This week:*

1 Samuel 1:11, 20-22, 24-28

1 John 3:1-2, 21-24

Luke 2:41-52

*Next week:*

Isaiah 60:1-6

Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12

## Psalm

## Today

Blessed are they, blessed are they, who dwell in your house, O Lord. (*Psalm 84*)

Today's presider is Msgr. Eugene 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

Wednesday, January 3, 7:30 p.m. STA Site Committee, Thomas House basement

## From Thomas Merton

Very few men are sanctified in isolation. Very few become perfect in absolute solitude. Living with other people and learning to lose ourselves in the understanding of their weakness and deficiencies can help us to become true contemplatives. For there is no better means of getting rid of the rigidity and harshness and coarseness of our ingrained egoism, which is the one unbeatable obstacle to the infused light and action of the Spirit of God.

Even the courageous acceptance of interior trials in utter solitude cannot altogether compensate for the work of purification accomplished in us by patience and humility in loving other men and sympathizing with their most unreasonable needs and demands.

There is always a danger that hermits will only dry up and solidify in their own eccentricity. Living out of touch with other people they tend to lose that deep sense of spiritual realities, which only pure love can give.

Do you think the way to sanctity is to lock yourself up with your prayers and your books and the meditations that please and interest your mind, and protect yourself, with many walls, against people you consider stupid? Do you think the way to contemplation is found in the refusal of activities and works which are necessary for the good of others but which happen to bore and distract you?

—*Seeds of Contemplation*

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

### **Food closets need your donated food:**



During these cold winter months we are encouraged to donate more non-perishable food and drop it in the baskets in the vestibule of the church. Staple items are especially welcomed: cereals, canned soups, fruits and vegetables, pasta, rice, beans, canned meat and the like. Foods will be taken by St. Vincent de Paul Society members to local food closets for distribution to needy individuals.

### **Spirituality and Social Change, Jan. 25:**

Come to this interfaith roundtable discussion, presented by the Aurora Forum at Stanford University, to celebrate the publication of *Advocate of the Social Gospel*, volume VI of *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, and to probe the meaning of Dr. King's preaching. The roundtable will focus on the relation of spiritual practice and social change and will be moderated by Rabbi Patricia Karlin-Neumann of Stanford's Office of Religious Life and includes representatives from a range of faith traditions. Location is Kresge Auditorium on the Stanford campus, from 7:30 till 9:00 p.m. No charge.

### **Gratitude to decorators:**

Appreciation and gratitude to the helping hands that transformed our church into its Christmas glory: John Arnold, Sally Benson, Jim Davis, Jean Gill, Michelle Hogan, Barbara Narewski, Judy Washburn, & Kay Williams.

### **It's Envelope Sunday 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!



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, Joseph Kehret, Alicia Kot, Joan Kuhn, Kami Ladd, Carol Locke, Mercedes McCaffrey, Maureen Mooney, Stephanie Mullenix, Joe Narewski, Hank Okonski, Lynne Owens, Pauline (Fr. Marini's cousin), George Peinado, Ramona Rocha, Anne Rush, Norm and Jane Schirle, 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.]

### **Save March 6 to hear Dan Berrigan:**

On Tuesday, March 6, 2007, at 7:00 p.m., Daniel Berrigan will be speaking on the topic "Christian Peacemaking and the War-making State," at Mercy Center, 2300 Adeline Drive, Burlingame. More details later.

### **Correction on Kissinger/Pope connection:**

[TMC member Richard Placone brought this information forward.]

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Benedict XVI does not have a foreign affairs advisory board, and he has not asked former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to become one of his advisers, the Vatican spokesman said.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi said it is true that Kissinger met privately with the pope Sept. 28 and that Mary Ann Glendon, a U.S. law professor and president of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, has invited Kissinger to speak to the academy at the Vatican in late April.

"Those are the only two concrete facts," Father Lombardi told *Catholic News Service*.

Articles in Italian and U.S. newspapers reporting that the pope had asked Kissinger to become an adviser or consultant "are without any foundation," he said Dec. 4. A New York-based correspondent for the Italian newspaper *La Stampa* wrote Nov. 4 that Kissinger had told an "important member of the Italian government" of the papal offer and that "a diplomatic source" at the Vatican had confirmed that "an important dialogue is under way" between the pope and Kissinger.

The rumor has been circulating in newspapers and on the Internet since the newspaper article was published.

—Cindy Wooden

*Catholic News Service* 12/4/06

### **Reach out through Catholic Charities:**

"Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man." Luke 2

**Catholic Charities story:** At Delia Garcia's day care in San Jose, preschool children gain a healthy love of books through our *Raising A Reader* program.

**Catholic Charities opportunity:** Help in the preparation of books and materials, English and Spanish, visit day care centers with annual survey, or assist with workshops and training. *Raising A Reader* program coordinator, Mike Honey, 408-283-6150 x244.

# COMMUNITY FORUM

*Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns*

## ***Sailing from Byzantium:***

Pope Benedict XVI returned to Rome from Turkey last month a virtual conqueror. He had achieved the improbable during his four-day visit: substantive steps toward political, cultural, and religious rapprochement with the East. The pope had pleased his Turkish hosts by indicating a positive attitude toward Turkey's eventual admission to the European Union (EU). He then managed to reassure aggrieved Turkish Muslims of his respect for their faith and their religious and cultural achievements—this barely two months after his ill-conceived remarks at Regensburg had sparked violent demonstrations across the Muslim world.

Finally, he met, prayed with, and offered support for his Orthodox confreres, particularly the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, and the Armenian Patriarch Megrob II. He accomplished all of this with an admirable simplicity and directness that were heightened by his humble demeanor and intellectual sincerity. In so doing, he not only won over many Turks, but furthered one of his chief stated goals as pope: to advance efforts at greater unity with the Eastern churches. Considering that the chances for failure along any one of these fault lines were considerable, and that there had been threats to his physical safety, we can all offer a collective *Deo gratias* for his achievements and for his safe return.

Still, there is more to be done. Benedict and Catholics in general must extend and expand Catholicism's sometimes halting outreach to the Orthodox (who, it should be said, bear responsibility for their own truculence and divisiveness in these matters). Furthermore, not only the church but the West itself must develop greater appreciation and understanding for the broader Muslim world. The pope's visit to Turkey was a good first step. The joint statement of the pope and the ecumenical patriarch was succinct yet managed to address a skein of complex issues, touching on nearly all the neuralgic points raised by the trip. Theologically, it took up the need for Christians-Eastern and Western—to explore the sacramental nature of the church, and thus the ecclesiological significance of community and authority. It called on Orthodox and Catholics alike to "interpret anew"—for the sake of the world—the ancient traditions of Christianity, an acknowledgment that Christians must learn to hear and respond to the moral concerns and the religious needs of a new millennium.

*(Continued on page 4...)*

## ***The peaceful crusader:***

*[New York Times, Dec. 25, 2006]*

Amid all the useless bloodshed of the Crusades, there is one story that suggests an extended clash of civilizations between Islam and the West was not preordained. It concerns the early 13th-century friar Francis of Assisi, who joined the Fifth Crusade not as a warrior but as a peacemaker.

Francis was no good at organization or strategy and he knew it. He accepted the men and women who presented themselves as followers, befriended them and shared the Gospel with them. But he gave them little else. He expected them to live like him: rejecting distinctions of class, forgoing honors of church or king or commune, taking the words of Jesus literally, owning nothing, suffering for God's sake, befriending every outcast — leper, heretic, highwayman — thrust in their path.

In Francis' view, judgment...was none of a Christian's concern.

Francis was not impressed by the Crusaders, whose sacrilegious brutality horrified him. They were entirely too fond of taunting and abusing their prisoners of war, who were often returned to their families minus nose, lips, ears or eyes.

In Francis' view, judgment was the exclusive province of the all-merciful God; it was none of a Christian's concern. True Christians were to befriend all yet condemn no one. Give to others, and it shall be given to you, forgive and you shall be forgiven, was Francis' constant preaching. "May the Lord give you peace" was the best greeting one could give to all one met. It compromised no one's dignity and embraced every good; it was a blessing to be bestowed indiscriminately. Francis bestowed it on people named George and Jacques and on people named Osama and Saddam. Such an approach, in an age when the most visible signs of the Christian religion were the wars and atrocities of the red-crossed crusaders, was shockingly otherworldly and slyly effective.

Symbolic gesture, Francis' natural language, was a profound source he called on throughout his life. In one of its most poignant expressions, Francis sailed across the Mediterranean to the Egyptian court of al-Malik al-Kamil, nephew of the great Saladin who had defeated the forces of the hapless Third Crusade. Francis was admitted to the august presence of the sultan himself and spoke to him of Christ, who was, after all, Francis' only subject.

*(Continued on page 4...)*

*(Peaceful crusader, continued)*

Trying to proselytize a Muslim was cause for on-the-spot decapitation, but Kamil was a wise and moderate man, who was deeply impressed by Francis' courage and sincerity and invited him to stay for a week of serious conversation. Francis, in turn, was deeply impressed by the religious devotion of the Muslims, especially by their five daily calls to prayer; it is quite possible that the thrice-daily recitation of the Angelus that became current in Europe after this visit was precipitated by the impression made on Francis by the call of the muezzin (just as the quintessential Catholic devotion of the rosary derives from Muslim prayer beads). It is a tragedy of history that Kamil and Francis were unable to talk longer, to coordinate their strengths and form an alliance. Had they been able to do so, the phrase "clash of civilizations" might be unknown to our world.

Francis went back to the Crusader camp on the Egyptian shore and desperately tried to convince Cardinal Pelagius Galvani, whom Pope Honorius III had put in charge of the Crusade, that he should make peace with the sultan, who, despite far greater force on his side, was all too ready to do so. But the cardinal had dreams of military glory and would not listen. His eventual failure, amid terrible loss of life, brought the age of the crusades to its inglorious end.

Donald Spoto, one of Francis of Assisi's most recent biographers, rightly calls Francis "the first person from the West to travel to another continent with the revolutionary idea of peacemaking." As a result of his inability to convince Cardinal Pelagius, however, Francis saw himself as a failure. Like his model, Jesus of Nazareth, Francis was an extremist. But his failure is still capable of bearing new fruit.

Islamic society and Christian society have been generally bad neighbors now for nearly 14 centuries, eager to misunderstand each other, often borrowing culturally and intellectually from each other without ever bestowing proper credit. But as Sir Jonathan Sacks, chief rabbi of the British Commonwealth, has written, almost as if he was thinking of Kamil and Francis, "Those who are confident of their faith are not threatened but enlarged by the different faiths of others. ... There are, surely, many ways of arriving at this generosity of spirit and each faith may need to find its own." We stand in desperate need of contemporary figures like Kamil and Francis of Assisi to create an innovative dialogue. To build a future better than our past, we need, as Rabbi Sacks has put it, "the confidence to recognize the irreducible, glorious dignity of difference."

—Thomas Cahill, author of "Mysteries of the Middle Ages: The Rise of Feminism, Science and Art From the Cults of Catholic Europe."

*(Sailing from Byzantium, continued)*

Benedict and Bartholomew next addressed hot-button issues: secularism, human rights, peace in the Middle East, the dignity of migrants, and the religious freedom of minorities. The last is a key issue of concern for Christians living in predominantly Muslim countries, and one Turkey must respond to if it hopes to achieve EU membership. The joint statement explicitly condemned "the killing of innocent people in God's name," a point Benedict had attempted to broach at Regensburg. Finally, the two religious leaders underscored the urgent need for all people to protect the world's environment. . . .

Most commendable in the course of the papal visit was Benedict's personal style—his intelligence and sense of respect—as he reached out

Most commendable...was Benedict's personal style...

to Muslims. His appreciation for their religious commitment in an increasingly secular and religiously skeptical world met with gratitude. At the same time, Benedict did not back down from his challenge to Muslims to show greater tolerance toward the religious minorities in their midst, and he underscored the need for people of all faiths to reject violence and to honor reason in their quest for truth. These are qualities the West and especially Christianity itself have come to learn only with considerable time and after much suffering. While the pope did not say it, these steps have been achieved in large part thanks to the establishment of liberal democratic, constitutional principles and governments that guarantee religious freedom and practice.

In his final homily in Istanbul, Benedict rightly underscored that Catholics desire to live in harmony with others: that they wish to practice their religion without seeking to impose it. Such modesty is a far cry from the often triumphalistic statements of earlier pontiffs. Perhaps it is also a gift the West can increasingly share with others. —The Editors, *Commonweal* 12/15/06

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