



# 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 5, 2017

## Readings

*This week:*

Malachi 1:14b–2:2b, 8–10

1 Thessalonians 2:7b–9, 13

Matthew 23:1–12

*Next week:*

Wisdom 6:12–16

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

Matthew 24:42a, 44

## Psalm

In you, Lord, I have found my peace. (*Psalm 131*)

## Today

Today's presider is Msgr. John Sandersfeld.

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.

Did you remember to “fall back”?



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, November 8, 7:30 p.m. STA Site Committee

## From Thomas Merton

...[E]very form of oversimplification tends to make decisions ultimately meaningless. We must try to accept ourselves, whether individually or collectively, not only as perfectly good or perfectly bad, but in our mysterious, unaccountable mixture of good and evil. We have to stand by the modicum of good that is in us without exaggerating it. We have to defend our real rights, because unless we respect our own rights we will certainly not respect the rights of others. But at the same time we have to recognize that we have willfully or otherwise trespassed on the rights of others. We must be able to admit this not only as the result of self-examination, but when it is pointed out unexpectedly, and perhaps not too gently, by somebody else.

These principles which govern personal moral conduct, which make harmony possible in small social units like the family, also apply in the wider area of the state and in the whole community of nations. It is, however, quite absurd...to expect these principles to be universally accepted as the result of moral exhortations.

—*New 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

### **Advent retreat Dec. 2 with Fr. Kevin Ballard:**



The TMC Spiritual Education Committee is very happy to present a morning retreat with Fr. Kevin Ballard, S.J. on Saturday, December 2, 9:00 am – 12:00 noon at St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center.

Fr. Ballard will lead us in a consideration of Pope Francis's encyclical, *The Joy of the Gospel*, with the emphasis on "joy." So come prepared for a few short hours of joyous prayer, laughter, and community.

All are invited. Coffee and morning wake-up snacks will be provided. Free will donations gratefully received.

### **Day of the Dead altar for your pictures:**

In November, Catholics and Christians remember their beloved dead. Our Altar of Remembrance here at St. Thomas Aquinas Church is themed on the Mexican tradition of the Day of the Dead. All are invited to display pictures of their deceased loved ones on this altar, which will remain up until Advent begins on Dec. 3. Please label your pictures, limited to 8"x10", please, on the back with your name and phone number, so they can be reunited with you when the altar is dismantled on December 1.

### **Next Fish Fest dinner is November 17:**



All are welcome to the STA Friday Fish Fest on Friday, November 17, at 6:00 pm at the Thomas House next door to the church.

We have our own large, portable convection oven now! And a cart was donated by Paul Deisinger to hold and move the oven. So we are ready for the Fish Fest supper this month.

Come prepared to enjoy fish and chips, tasty Asian coleslaw, beer and wine in an informal setting, getting to know STA Mass attendees and others from Our Lady of the Rosary and St. Albert's (nametags make it easy to strike up a conversation).

Lemonade is gratis; \$2.00 for a glass of wine or a beer. Sponsored by the STA Site Committee, a \$5 donation would be appreciated but not required. You are welcome to bring a bottle of wine or dessert to share. RSVP to Helen Baumann, 650-327-9236, hbbau-mann@aol.com (so ample food is available).

In October, Fish Fest diners were treated to a post-meal informal folk music sing-a-long with guitarist and 8:45 Mass music leader Larry Schemel.

### **Coming soon: Adopt-a-Family**

Once again we'll begin our TMC Christmas Adopt-a-Family project as soon as next Sunday. We will provide tags for specific gifts or gift certificates for members of several Seton families in need. You can pick up a tag or 2 for a gift of about \$40 to help to make someone's Christmas special. This is not connected to the tree we usually have in the back of the church. Thanks for your generosity.  
—Barbara Kent

### **Spirituality Tuesday Assemblies in November:**

#### **November 7th: Planning Your Catholic Funeral.**

Hosted by Father Christopher Bennett for Catholic Cemeteries of the Diocese of San Jose.

We all know what the Gospels say: "We do not know the time or the place" of our passing. It makes sense to be prepared for the physical event and to spare our families needless stress. Please join us for an evening of end-of-life planning. The Vigil, the Funeral Mass, and the Committal each have distinct purposes in the journey toward healing and wholeness. When we experience a death of a loved one, we have rituals and prayers of our church to guide us. This workshop will assist you in making choices about your funeral or that of someone close to you. Come with your questions about the liturgies for the Vigil, Funeral Mass, and Committal Service, as well as the services and options offered at the Funeral Home and the Cemeteries.

#### **November 14th: The Dark Nights, According to St. John of the Cross.** with Father Kevin Joyce, Ph.D.

In the writings of St. John of the Cross, one of the greatest mystics in history, thousands of people have found a path for drawing closer to God. What frees us from the bondage of unhealthy habits and leads to liberation of the human spirit is what St. John of the Cross calls, the "Dark Night." He uses the word "night" to refer to the experience of privation or void. The soul has to be emptied of what is not God in order to be filled with God. The first purification ("the active night of the Senses") is similar to what the 12-step programs call "withdrawal". There are 3 further dark nights that Fr. Kevin Joyce will apply to our personal spiritual journeys. Join us for an inspirational evening!

Both talks will be held at the St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center, 1095 Channing Ave., Palo Alto, from 7:00—8:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

Please join us after Mass in the Thomas House for coffee and donuts. We especially encourage newcomers or those passing through town to stop by for food and fellowship.

Bulletin submissions must be e-mailed by Thursday noon or phoned by Thursday, 9:00 pm. Kay, kaywill@pacbell.net, (650) 270-4188. Michelle, myhogan@comcast.net, (650) 493-8452.

# COMMUNITY FORUM

*Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns*

## **More thoughts on gun control:**

TMC member Mary Connors was particularly struck by this letter to the editor of the *Catholic San Francisco*, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of San Francisco:

October 26, 2017

Gene Valla, San Francisco/Healdsburg

“Here is a perspective on mass shootings.

The perpetrator: To identify the person in advance is highly improbable. The motive: A myriad of explanations that only seem to be evaluated after the shooting. The location: There is almost no limit to the locales. The victims: Any person without consideration. The weapon: Now, this can be controlled.

I have family and friends who hunt. Those who hunt deer do so on foot, tracking and patiently waiting for that buck to appear. They use bolt-action rifles without scopes yet are accomplished and successful hunters. They do have more than one rifle, but not an arsenal.

I expect that the traditional gun owner is respectful of their gun ownership, frankly proud of it; that they exercise safety with respect to all firearms; would be proud to document their gun ownership; and that they, I believe, would advocate for a policy that provides for the elimination of automatic weapons or means to create automatic weapons.

Developing and enforcing such a policy would save innumerable lives and allow our law enforcement to narrow and direct their efforts on the villains.

How do we see such a policy implemented?”

## **Thinking about the tax cut debate:**

[By E.J. Dionne, in *Commonweal*, 11/1/17]

It is a victory for Republicans that the political conversation...is focused on tax cuts. No matter how critical the coverage gets, the sheer amount of attention risks sending a message that taxes are the most important issue confronting the country.

This is entirely wrong, and it's essential to challenge the whole premise of the debate. The U.S. does not need tax cuts now. Reducing government revenues at this moment will do far more harm than good. Conservatives are proving definitively that they don't care in the least about deficits. And their claims that tax cuts will unleash some sort of economic miracle have been proved false again and again and again.

But there is an even bigger objection: The opportunity costs of this obsession are enormous because it keeps

us from grappling with the problems we really do need to solve.

Ever since Trump's election, discussion of the vast divides in our nation between prosperous regions and those battered by economic change have filled our newspapers, websites and airwaves. There is simply no way that shoveling out \$2.6 trillion in business tax cuts in a largely undifferentiated fashion does anything to help places that are ailing.

On the contrary, this farrago of corporate goodies—along with the absurd repeal of the estate tax and various other benefits showered on the well-off—would only aggravate existing inequalities. And by depleting the government's coffers, it would make it much harder to finance public initiatives in education, job training and other spheres to promote mobility for Americans who are lagging behind.

This... is why ending the deductibility of state and local taxes is an especially bad idea. This provision punishes states with more progressive tax structures that ask their best-off citizens to ease the difficulties of their less fortunate neighbors. Shifting the incentives against states willing to spend money to remedy social ills is the not-so-hidden agenda of the anti-tax obsessives who support killing this deduction. They are trying to disable government at all levels by making it harder for states to call on their most affluent citizens to pay a little more of the common load.

All who care about saving liberal democracy should support a reformed market system that responds to the discontents of those now left out.

... It's even more important to show how much damage these tax cuts would do both to programs we already have and initiatives we need. Democrats are already noting that the Republican budget pays for the tax cuts with, among other things, a \$1 trillion reduction to Medicaid and nearly half that amount from Medicare. ...

The tax cut shoves aside other priorities as well. Regional inequities are now so pervasive throughout the West that *The Economist* magazine—as friendly to lightly regulated capitalism as any publication—devoted its cover and a special report last week to steps we need to take to

*(Tax cuts continued on page 4)*

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**PRAY FOR US:** Please remember in your prayers this week Denise Alongi, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Mary Connors, Mike Cummings, Wayne Cummings, Ken Dias, Pat Dietrich, Fr. Thierry Geris, Deonna Gill, Emily Gill, Joanne Hasegawa, Fr. John Hester, Dean Judd, Hunter Kubit, Dick Jackman, Edna and François Jamati, Alicia Kot, Fr. Bill Leininger, Andre and Alyssa Lippard, Deacon Ysidro and Dolores Madrigal, Mary Rose McGuire, Maureen Mooney, Hayden Pastorini, Paul Prochaska, Anne Rush, Priya Smith, Bernice Sullivan, Jean Vistica, Dolores Walsh, Kay Williams, and T. J. Wooten. [Add or subtract names by e-mailing Bulletin editors: Michelle Hogan, Kay Williams. See listings adjacent.]

## ***Let the dead have November:***

[by Clare Coffey, *National Catholic Reporter*, 11/02/17]

The days immediately following Halloween bring with them a common complaint. Overnight, Christmas music starts playing on the radio stations and Christmas-themed displays appear in stores. Christmas creep, it seems, reaches further and further into autumn every year, leaving no time at all for Advent.

The thrust of most of these complaints is that by extending the Christmas season backward in this way, we lose the season of Advent — the fruits of joyful anticipation and preparation for the coming of the Christmas season.

This is certainly true, but there is another, less frequently noticed loser when Christmas starts on Nov. 1: the dead.

Today, Nov. 2, has been designated by the church as the feast of All Souls. The feast composes the second part of Allhallowtide, although, unlike the feast of All Saints, it is not a holy day of obligation.

In the West, the tradition of setting aside a day of prayer and commemoration for the dead dates back to St. Odilo of Cluny, who established it at his abbey in France in the 10th century. From there, the practice spread until it was officially adopted in the 14th century.

Traditions associated with the feast include placing the names of those to be remembered on the altar at Mass, and visiting the cemeteries where dead loved ones lie.

In time, the entire month of November became informally known as the month of the dead.

Twenty-first-century America is not especially comfortable with death. From the hospital to the mortuary, people make their passage out of this world through a series of specialized rooms: clean, spare, sterile and discreetly hidden from the living whom they might discomfit...

The dying are hidden away, and death is made an alien, an abnormal occurrence, a pathogen to be contained. There is nothing familiar or intimate about death in our current approach.

This view of death is not without precedent, of course. The Bible refers to the “angel of death” who visits the houses of the Egyptians and passes over those of the Israelites. Death is truly otherworldly here — not merely a natural process, but an irruption of the judgment of God, destructive and implacable. The separation of the body and soul recalls original sin, and is the pinnacle of all its consequent losses and griefs. It is not something we simply come to terms with; it is violent; it is a curse.

But all the clean, bright, clinical efficiency of our methods of managing death seems to suggest that it is a curse we can escape, an unfortunate accident for which there exists a specialized industry.

Nor is the funeral industry the only one dedicated to containing death. A rapidly burgeoning cohort of lifestyle experts like Amanda Chantal Bacon and Gwyneth Paltrow expounds to an eager audience on all the ways to remove impurities from food, the home, the body; how to

purge and cleanse the taint of decay wherever it appears. If you spend enough money, if you try hard enough, says the promise implicit in the latest crop of wellness literature, you will live forever.

The obsession with clean living and clean eating echoes Levitical purity codes, but has no power to save. It was Christ’s willingness to undergo death — Christ who alone of all humanity had the right to avoid it — that grafted us into his perpetual life. All of us were dead, until, like Lazarus, he called us and we rose up.

It’s easy to see why we should pray for the souls of the dead. It’s less obvious why we should bathe their bodies tenderly and sing over them, why we should sit up with them in the night, why we should inter them with ceremony and visit their graves bearing flowers that they cannot smell.

All human civilizations have their own careful prescriptions regarding the dead — how to honor or pacify them, how to be kept apart from their physical corruption. For Christians, though, extending charity beyond the grave is an imitation of Christ’s mercy, which reached out to us even we were spiritually dead.

Burying the dead is one of the seven corporal works of mercy, but it is also a sign of hope in Christ’s promise. The bodies of the dead are not discarded vessels, but integral parts of a human being that will be reunited on the last day. The separation is temporary, and they are still worthy of our respect and our love.

It may be tempting, during the month of November, to yield prematurely to the flashier and cozier charms of Christmas — to the jingle bells and stars in the east and merry gentlemen. But let the dead have November. Let them have this somber, chilly month, with its purple-gray skies and bare, windy trees. Say a prayer for all the departed during this month, and if you can, visit the resting places of your beloved dead.

We will be reunited in the world to come but, until then, it is good to grieve for the separation. It is good to hold those who have gone before both as objects of mercy and of reverence. To mourn as a Christian is to hold both the fullness of loss and the promise of restoration at once....

### ***Tax cuts (continued from page 3):***

reduce the gap between rich and poor locales....

Meanwhile, ...Sens. Michael Bennet, D-Colo., and Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, have introduced a bill that would dramatically expand the child tax credit to \$3,600 a year per child for those aged zero to five, and \$3,000 a year for those six to eighteen. ...The plan, Matthews writes, would cut child poverty in the U.S. almost in half, from 16.1 percent to 8.9 percent. The cost: roughly \$1 trillion over a decade, as against the \$1.5 trillion Republicans claim will be the net price of their tax cuts after they are done shuffling the tax code around.

Which is the better expenditure? ...Just because the only thing Republicans know how to do is cut taxes doesn’t mean the rest of us have to pretend that this exercise makes any sense at all.

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