



24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 24, 2017

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 55:6–9

Philippians 1:20c–24, 27a

Matthew 20:1-16a

Next week:

Ezekiel 18:25–28

Philippians 2:1–11 or 2:1–5

Matthew 21:28-32

Psalm

The Lord is near to all who call upon him. (*Psalm 145*)

Today

Today's presider is Rev. Kevin Ballard, 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

No TMC meetings this week.

From Thomas Merton

Contemplation is really simple openness to God at every moment, and deep peace. And when you say “experience the mysteries of Christ,” it just means a deep realization in the very depths of our being that God has chosen and loved us from all eternity, that we really are His children and we really are loved by Him, that there really is a personal bond and He really is present. This is so simple that there is no need to make a commotion about it...

I want to make it quite clear that the whole essence of contemplative prayer is that the division between subject and object disappears. You do not look at God as an object and you don't look at yourself; you are just not interested in yourself. That is the real point.

—Thomas Merton in *Alaska: The Alaskan Conferences, Journals and Letters*.

COMMUNITY NOTES

News Announcements Requests

TMC donation envelopes today:



Please use the envelope enclosed in this bulletin to make your monthly contribution to the support of the Thomas Merton Center.

Your dollars make possible the sponsorship of the 8:45 Sunday Mass, monthly contributions to Seton School (\$1,000) and the Ecumenical Hunger Program (\$40), spiritual education talks, retreats, and the publication of this bulletin. Lay-led, self-sustaining, self-generating—this is TMC. Thanks to all who contribute.

Benefit for Seton School October 11:

On Wednesday, October 11, Seton School presents Ron Hansen and Tobias Wolff, two distinguished award-winning Catholic authors, in conversation.

St. Elizabeth Seton School
1095 Channing Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94301

6:30 p.m. - Welcoming Wine Reception
7:30 p.m. - Ron Hansen and Tobias Wolff
8:15 p.m. - Questions and Answers
8:30 p.m. - Book Signing Opportunity

Tickets: Adults: \$35.00

Teachers, Students and Seton Alums: \$20.00

Purchase tickets online at <http://www.setonpaloalto.org> (<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3081810>).

Make check to "St. Elizabeth Seton School." Tickets will be held at the door.

Questions? Carmel Caligaris, 650-326-1258 or carmelcaligaris@setonpaloalto.org.

Ron Hansen is an American Catholic novelist, essayist and deacon. He is the Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J. Professor in the Arts and Humanities at Santa Clara University in California, where he teaches fiction and screenwriting. He holds a B.A. in English from Creighton University, an M.F.A. in creative writing from the University of Iowa, and an M.A. in spirituality from Santa Clara. He is also a graduate of Creighton Jesuit Preparatory School in Omaha. Deacon Hansen has won a number of book awards and literary prizes, including an award in literature from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

Tobias Wolff was born in Birmingham, Alabama, and grew up in Washington State. He attended Oxford University and Stanford University, where he now teaches English and creative writing. He has received the Story Prize, both the Rea Award and PEN/Malamud Award for excellence in the short story, the Los Angeles Times Book Award, and the PEN/Faulkner Award.

CROP Hunger Walk, Sunday, Oct. 8:

A St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Team has been created to support the CROP HUNGER WALK, on Sunday, October 8 at Nealon Park, 800 Middle Ave., Menlo Park.

Walk with us, make a donation or both! Festivities begin at 1 pm; walks start at 2 pm. Walkers may choose a .6-mile, 2-mile or 5-mile walk and enjoy live bands, food, games and a silent auction. Thanks to our parishioners who raised \$1,140 last year!



CROP Hunger Walk is sponsored by Church World Service, a cooperative

ministry of 37 Christian denominations. Over 5 million walkers have participated in more than 36,000 CROP Hunger Walks in the last two decades alone. This ecumenical effort helps children and families in need to have food for today, while building for a better tomorrow. CROP Hunger Walkers, volunteers, and sponsors put their caring into action, raising funds to help end hunger and poverty at home in the US and around the world.

An important note: One-quarter of funds raised by us will be contributed to the Ecumenical Hunger Program in East Palo Alto for distribution to the needy in our local community.

For information, please call Paul Chestnut, Human Concerns Committee, 650-426-8499 or email pcchestnut@comcast.net. Website to register for walk and donate is <https://www.crophungerwalk.org/menloparkca>.

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 in adjacent column.]

Board: Vicki Sullivan, vickisullivan@comcast.net, (650) 327-5339
Bulletin: Kay Williams (Sept. 24, Oct 8 & 15) kaywill@pacbell.net
Michelle Hogan (Oct. 1, 22, & 29) myhogan@comcast.net
Finance: Helena Wee, 650-323-7987, shhwee@aol.com
Hospitality: Jim Davis, 328-2584
Liturgy: John Arnold, 325-1421, jsaoso@comcast.net
Sally Benson, 408-972-5843, sallymbenson@gmail.com
Membership: Kay Williams, 650-270-4188, kaywill@pacbell.net
Needs Net: Roberta Kehret, 650-494-1488, robkehr@yahoo.com
Adult Education: Jim Davis, 650-704-8002, Jim_Davis@pacbell.net
Mary Coady, 650-261-9155, coady_94025@yahoo.com
SpeakOut: Diana Diamond, 650-323-4787, dianaldiamond@gmail.com

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

A human doing:

[By Amy Morris-Young, National Catholic Reporter, 9/20/17]

In March, I wrote about visiting my father-in-law, Fred, and his wife, Jeanne, both 92 and still living together in their own home.

I shared how though Jeanne could no longer speak much, Fred still engaged her memory and attention by retelling stories from their 45 years together. As he regaled us about their travels around the country and the world — the people they had met, the food they had eaten, the mishaps and accidents — her eyes would sparkle, the sides of her mouth would lift, words would form just behind her lips. I could almost literally see a golden cord of connection between them as his words awakened pictures and movies in her mind.

Tomorrow, my husband, Dan, and I will join Fred and the rest of their family for a memorial service for Jeanne.

Fred cared for Jeanne at their home until the last drops of his strength were spent. Only when he was entirely worn out physically and emotionally did he finally give in and agree with her children to move her into an assisted living facility. Her two daughters helped Fred pack Jeanne's things and make her comfortable in her room there.

According to them, as they unpacked clothes from her suitcase into the dresser, Jeanne settled into the recliner in the corner of her new room, looked up at the ceiling, sighed deeply, and smiled. Fred and her daughters each kissed her smiling face before they left, and promised to come back the next day with more of her belongings.

Not long after Fred arrived home, the phone rang. Jeanne had died.

While Fred was at first devastated — he worried that he had somehow killed her by taking her there — it occurred to me that Jeanne's final smile signaled great peace. His goodbye kiss had finally given her his unspoken permission to let go.

Fred's love had literally been keeping her alive. His strength, his will to live, had supplied her through that golden string of connection. Only after the cord was relaxed could her spirit float away.

I am reminded of the quote that is attributed to St. Teresa of Kolkata (Mother Teresa): "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."

Watching Fred care for Jeanne echoed back to pictures in my mind of Mother Teresa, wiping down beds, washing emaciated bodies, holding dying children. When I think of her, it is her hands and arms I see most.

And now, when I think of Fred, it is the same.

I see his thin, mottled arms pulling her up from her recliner. I see his papery veined hands cleaning the food off her mouth with a napkin. I imagine him rolling her over and changing their bedsheets every night. Putting a clean diaper on her and cleaning her mess off the floor. Collecting up the trails of pieces of diaper padding that she could not seem to stop shredding.

Though their long life together may have started with a grand passion, it ended with tiny details — earthy, stinky, human — those small things of great love.

Fred is not what one would call a man of faith. I have never heard him speak of God. I don't know if he has ever gone to church. He is an American self-made man. Given nothing by no one, Fred worked hard, paid off his home, put money in the bank. He takes care of his car and house and yard himself, and at 92, still helps his neighbors with theirs.

When I read the book then watched the movie "A Man Called Ove," I thought of Fred. Much like his life, that story is to me a great reminder that a person does not have to be religious to be good. It is not so much about what we say, as what we do. It is not the talk, but the walk. And it always comes down to love. Those small things of great love.

We talk about people being heroic human beings. But the ones who really inspire me are human doings. About the worst thing someone can do is to tell me how good they are. Just show me.

Fred is my hero. He loved Jeanne with all he had. His body, his mind, his guts.

And though he may not have the faith upon which to fall back in this time of loneliness, I hope somehow he still feels that golden cord connecting him to Jeanne. I hope the muscle memory in his arms and hands always feels her. Until they hold each other again. Endlessly.

[Amy Morris-Young graduated from and taught writing at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.]

Catholic Education appeal today:

The Annual Catholic Education Appeal is presented today in the parish's Second Collection; it provides financial assistance to many Catholic students who want to receive a Catholic education. This special collection supports the tuition aid program for elementary and high school students in our local Catholic schools (of which one is St. Elizabeth Seton School here in Palo Alto). Your partnership and support of the Annual Catholic Education Appeal are greatly appreciated as we make this a successful campaign for our students.

New Senate health care bill a disaster:

[By E. J. Dionne Jr., in *Commonweal*, 9/18/17]

Before supporters of universal health coverage get all wrapped up debating a single-payer system, they need to focus on a dire threat to the Affordable Care Act likely to come up for a vote in the Senate before the end of the month.

The latest repeal bill is an offering from Sens. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Bill Cassidy, R-La., that would tear apart the existing system and replace it with a block grant to the states. Block grants—flows of money for broad purposes with few strings attached—are a patented way to evade hard policy choices. All the tough decisions are kicked down to state capitals, usually with too little money to achieve the ends the block grant is supposed to realize.

Because Graham and Cassidy are civil interlocutors and have sounded more reasonable than many of their Republican colleagues in talking about health care, there is an unexamined assumption that their proposal must be more sensible than other approaches to repeal.

But it's not. In fact, it would be disastrous. In certain respects, it's even worse than the earlier repeal measures, which at least kept some of the structure of Obamacare's subsidies in place. This bill would simply blow them up.

It would also shift money around in ways that would, on the whole, hurt states that have been trying to get health coverage to their less affluent residents. A report on the bill by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), a think tank devoted to the interests of less-advantaged Americans, concluded:

"In general, over time, the plan would punish states that have adopted the Medicaid expansion or been more successful at enrolling low- and moderate-income people in marketplace coverage under the ACA [Affordable Care Act]. It would impose less damaging cuts, or even raise funding initially, for states that have rejected the Medicaid expansion or enrolled few low-income residents in marketplace coverage."

This should make the bill impossible for two brave Republicans, Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, who stood up against July's repeal effort. Both have said they would not be complicit in undermining health care coverage in their states. The CBPP report showed that Graham-Cassidy would reduce federal funding for health coverage in both Maine and Alaska and cut Medicaid overall.

Oh, yes, and the report also noted, with italicized emphasis, that as currently written, the block grant "would disappear altogether after 2026." What happens then? The bottom line, said Jacob Leibenluft, a senior adviser at the center, is that Graham-Cassidy "punts all the problems to governors while giving them insufficient tools and resources to address them."

This is a matter of urgency because the authority the Senate has to pass Obamacare repeal with just 51 votes expires on September 30. So if the bill comes up, it would likely hit the floor in the last week of this month. All who care about the expansion of health care coverage need to focus their energies on defeating this latest attack on Obamacare. However we eventually arrive at universal coverage, which we must, it will be far easier to get there by building on the ACA.

And assuming the latest repeal effort fails, last week's push for a single-payer system could come to be seen as a useful initiative provided that "Medicare for All," as its supporters like to call it, is treated as a goal, not a litmus test. Defining the left pole of the health care debate is helpful, in part because it shows how fundamentally moderate Obamacare is. It is not, as many conservatives have claimed, anything close to a socialist scheme.

And for those whose objective is single-payer, there are many options available that could gradually open the way for it. As Medicare for All's leading advocate, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., noted in an underappreciated tweet in July: "In the short-term, to improve the Affordable Care Act, we should have a public option in 50 states and lower the Medicare age to 55." Many progressives and moderates who favor universal coverage but are not yet sold on single-payer would embrace options of this sort. Such measures would help a lot of people immediately and make any move to single-payer less disruptive.

What the country cannot afford is to go backward, which is where Sens. Graham and Cassidy would move us. Politics is about priorities, and the priority now must be to stop Congress from ripping health coverage away from millions of our fellow citizens.

[E. J. Dionne Jr. is a syndicated columnist, professor of government at Georgetown University, and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. His most recent book is *Our Divided Political Heart: The Battle for the American Idea in an Age of Discontent* (Bloomsbury Press).]

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.