



Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 22, 2017

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 8:23–9:3

1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

Matthew 4:12-23

Next week:

Zephaniah 2:3, 3:12-13

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Matthew 5:1-12a

Psalm

The Lord is my light and my salvation. (*Psalm 27*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. George Aranha.

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. Members of the Thomas Merton community plan 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 by check or cash, every Sunday there is a donation basket in the back of church or by the coffeepot after Mass—or you can use the envelope in the bulletin the last Sunday of every month to mail your donation. Please do not put your TMC donation in the collection baskets passed during Mass (these are for parish contributions only).

Calendar

No meetings this week.

From Thomas Merton

At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. This little point of nothingness and *of absolute poverty* is the pure glory of God in us....It is like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven. It is in everybody, and if we could see it we would see these billions of points of light coming together in the face and blaze of a sun that would make all the darkness and cruelty of life vanish completely....I have no program for this seeing. It is only given. But the gate of heaven is everywhere.

—*Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* ·

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 FORUM

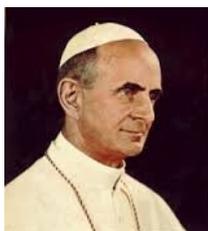
Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Thanks from the TMC Board:

The Thomas Merton Center Board sincerely thanks all who made a generous contribution during the Christmas season. The total amount contributed was greater than the last couple of years, and enables us to enter 2017 in a strong position to fund our ministries and donation to St. Elizabeth Seton school.

Pope Paul VI awards:

The Diocese of San Jose honors liturgical ministers of our parishes who qualify for the annual Pope Paul VI Award. Such service is to have been rendered within the Diocese of San José since its creation in 1981 or within the County of Santa Clara before the establishment of the Diocese.



Many people serve the 8:45 Mass community, but here are the 23 from our community who are being honored this year:

20 years

Marci Ariagno
Ron Ariagno
Ruth Chippendale
Fred Dietrich
Dick Freeman
Ginny Fruin
Roberta Kehret
Maureen Locke
Mike McMahon
Barbara Narewski
Armand Neukermans
Dick Placone
Kathy Schneidwind

KT Schemel Sloan
Judy Washburn
Mary Washburn
Kay Williams
Tom Williams

35 years

Helen Bunje
Jaynie Schemel

40 years

Eliane Neikermans
Larry Schemel

45 years

Edna Jamati

Prayer shawl ministry:

Do you like to knit or crochet? The Prayer Shawl Ministry would love your help creating a simple shawl, one of your own design, for a person in great need of comfort and prayer. Before shawls are wrapped and delivered, they are blessed by a parish priest following a morning Mass with attendees adding their prayers for the creator of the shawl and the future recipient.

Please call Terry (650) 714-2131 or Judi Swope (650) 856-6972 with any questions. Your beautiful warm shawl will provide lots of love and prayers. Knitting might even help you stay warmer this winter!

Name Tag Sunday being reintroduced:

Starting next Sunday—the last Sunday of the month—and every subsequent last Sunday, we will be asking you to fill out a name tag when you come into the church. As



the story below indicates, we celebrate our Sunday liturgy as a community—We are the body of Christ! When we greet each other at

the Sign of Peace, we would like to be able to greet each other by name. And when we come up to communion, the Communion Ministers would like to be able to call us by name.

Why do we stand during the Liturgy of Eucharist?:

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops met in June of 2001 to vote on changes in the communion norms. One of the changes they approved and took back to all the dioceses and to all the priests across America was to have a common posture during the complete Eucharistic Prayer.

This is their reasoning: We come as a community and as church to celebrate and to pray our Sunday liturgy together. We are here to experience the presence of God in ourselves, in each other and in our community. We do many things together during our liturgy. We sing together. We stand together to hear the Gospel proclaimed. We sit to hear the Word broken open by our presider. We stand and hold hands to pray the Lord's Prayer together. We greet each other with the blessings of peace at the same time.

We should feel and experience that we are praying the Eucharistic Prayer together. Although the words come mostly from the presider, it is OUR prayer as a community, as Church. WE are the body of Christ. So we stand to pray our prayer together. The prayer begins with "Pray brethren that our sacrifice may be acceptable to you..." and ends as the last member of our assembled community receives communion.

Please remember in your prayers this week: Denise Alongi, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Sr. Fran Ciluaga, Mary Connors, Mike Cummings, Ken Dias, Fr. Thierry Geris, Deonna Gill, Emily Gill, Joanne Hasegawa, Dick Jackman, François Jamati, Michael Kiriti, Hunter Kubit, Fr. Lavagetto's mother, 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.

COMMUNITY NOTES

News Announcements Requests

You don't do God alone:

Abridged from an article by Bill McGarvey, author of *The Freshman Survival Guide*, at americamagazine.org on October 12, 2016.

... A recent Public Religion Research Institute study, "Exodus: Why Americans are Leaving Religion—and Why They're Unlikely to Come Back," contains grim statistics about the ever-growing religiously unaffiliated population. These so-called nones constitute the single largest "religious group" in the country (25%); among those 18 to 29, they number nearly 40%. The study included interviews about why respondents left their childhood religion. The top three reasons were: no longer believing in their religion's teachings (60%), lack of family religious practice as children (32%) and negative religious teachings about gays and lesbians (29%). This data can be disheartening, and some may even wonder, "How can we reverse this trend?" While those are understandable reactions, perhaps we are asking the wrong questions. The truth is that institutional affiliation has been in decline across the board for decades. This affects not simply religion; people are also not affiliating with political parties, civic organizations and societal institutions like marriage.

... Is our communal life irrevocably dead? Has postmodern man/woman transcended the needs once met by these institutions in favor of an atomized existence? I would argue that the relationship to these communities is not dead but changed and that there is insight to be found here by looking at what I believe is our nation's greatest contribution to religious thought: the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

... AA is expressly not a religion; . . . the genius of AA is that it is a proto-religious fellowship in which people in desperate need somehow rediscover the fire of a foundational miracle. AA's meeting rooms are where postmodern men/women gather regularly, not because they are "supposed to" but because it is a matter of survival. The miracle they rediscover there is that by telling their own story of brokenness and listening to others' stories they are somehow moved toward healing. . . . Core to that experience is the fundamental insight underpinning the 12 steps that I believe is best summed up by the realization, "I am not God." This is the text of any authentic adult religious journey because it compels us to ask the questions: Who is God? Where is God? What is God? Is there a God? One of the co-founders of A.A., Bill Wilson, put it starkly: "We must find some spiritual basis for living, else we die." His co-founding partner, Dr. Bob,

continued on page 4

Tear down this wall: Ecumenical week focuses on overcoming division:

Abridged from an article by Cindy Wooden, *Catholic News Service*, at nronline.org, January 12, 2017.

When a group of German Christians was asked in 2014 to prepare materials for the 2017 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity [January 18-27], their choice of a "wall" as a symbol of sin, evil and division explicitly referred to the Berlin Wall. . . . "The image of the wall is very current today—now more than when they wrote the reflection," said Father Anthony Currer, who coordinates the Vatican contribution to the week of prayer. The U.S. political



discussion of extending the wall along the border with Mexico, Pope Francis' frequent admonitions about building bridges rather than walls, the global refugee crisis—all of that makes the power-

ful symbol of a wall even more potent, said Currer, an official at the Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

... The Faith and Order Commission and the pontifical council alternate identifying communities to choose the Week of Prayer theme, draft a worship service, come up with sub-themes and Bible readings for each day of the octave and describe the ecumenical situation in their local community. . . . The material is sent around the world. . . . The local reflections are meant to be universally accessible and eminently adaptable. . . . The theme for 2017 is: *Reconciliation—The love of Christ compels us.*

... The German group was chosen to write the reflections for 2017 because this year marks the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, an event that tore apart the Christian community in the West.

But, Currer said, "this commemoration of the Reformation acknowledges very much that our history is not just a history of conflict; from the Second Vatican Council and the last 50 years of ecumenical dialogue, it is also a story of coming back together in communion." As Pope Francis showed when he traveled to Sweden in October for ecumenical events kicking off a year-long commemoration of the anniversary, ecumenical prayer and dialogue "is focused on Christ, which is where we unite," he said.

... "The wall separating Christians seems to be equally immovable and entrenched," Currer said. But the continued prayer of Christians is "a way to show our hope and faith that God will bring his church to unity."

You don't do God alone, continued:

framed it in terms of mutual sharing. "The spiritual approach was as useless as any other if you soaked it up like a sponge and kept it to yourself." In other words, you don't do God alone. . . . In the A.A.-inspired *The Spirituality of Imperfection*, Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketchum frame it this way: "Those wrestling with spiritual dilemmas do not need answers but presence—permission to confront the dilemma and struggle with it aloud." Sounds a lot like Pope Francis' vision of "the church as a field hospital after battle."

Reformation anniversary is a chance to move the church forward:

Abridged from an article by Bill Tammeus, a Presbyterian elder and former award-winning Faith columnist for The Kansas City Star, October 26, 2016, at neronline.org.

[In 2017,] Christians around the world commemorate the start of the Protestant Reformation 500 years ago. Commemorate—not celebrate—should be the goal, given all the pain and divisiveness the Reformation ultimately caused. I'm part of a planning group at my Presbyterian church that already is thinking about how to do this. I



**REFORMATION
2017 It's Still All About
Jesus**

hope Catholic parishes will find appropriate ways to mark the occasion, too. Martin Luther. . . did not intend a deci-

sive schism that continues to this day. And that rupture in turn led to an atomization of the Protestant world, which now contains thousands of denominations.

This 500th anniversary offers a good opportunity not just to teach people some important history but also to heal some of the wounds that Catholics and Protestants have both suffered and caused, and to look forward.

. . . It would be foolish to let this important anniversary pass without using it to help people understand their own ecclesial history and to point them toward a more peaceful and productive future. Many Protestants and Catholics know little about the circumstances that led to the Reformation and even less about the Catholic response, which came to be called, first, the Counter-Reformation and later the Catholic Reformation.

. . . Perhaps the most redemptive activity for both Protestants and Catholics would be for each to create a modern 95 theses list aimed not at the other branch of the faith but at what needs attention in their own church. Self-examination, done with clarity and motivated by a spirit of renewal and forgiveness, can move the church from stagnation and slippage to a place where the Holy Spirit might have more of a chance to change hearts.

That would be a true reformation.

Why do priests wear green in Ordinary time?:

Abridged from an article by Victoria M. Tufano, pastoral associate and director of liturgy at Ascension Catholic Church in Oak Park, Illinois, January 17, 2017, at www.uscatholic.org.

Ordinary Time, or the season in the liturgical calendar outside of Advent, Lent, and the Christmas and Easter seasons, is a time when the church focuses on the life and ministry of Jesus. The season celebrates the mysteries of Christ's life and death and looks forward to the salvation and eternal life that he brings. Green represents hope—like the hope we feel when we see the first buds in springtime—and it is thus fitting that green is the liturgical color that marks this season.

Or, at least, that's the rationale the modern church gives for the rule about wearing green during Ordinary Time. In reality, however, the reason might have been much more practical. Ordinary Time is the longest liturgical season, and green plant dyes would have been one of the most widely available kinds of dyes. The color brings to mind the tender, new shoots of spring and the lush grasses and summer crops that sustained animals and people throughout the year. This leads naturally to seeing green as a sign of hope and life.

In the earliest church, most priests probably wore white. The original vesture for Mass in the West was simply the formal attire of Roman gentlemen, which was white. As time went on and Christianity spread, the vestments worn by priests gradually grew more elaborate. The liturgical year developed, and colors came to be associated with different feasts and seasons. These colors varied, however, based on culture, the availability of colored dyes, and local traditions.

It wasn't until the early 13th century that Pope Innocent III established four official liturgical colors: green, white, red, and black. Rose and violet (purple) were added in the 16th century, after the Council of Trent. . . .

In today's church, white is worn for times of great joy, including Christmas and Easter. It is also worn for weddings, baptisms, and other special days of celebration. Red denotes the Passion of Christ, the blood of martyrs, and the fire of the Holy Spirit, and is worn during celebrations such as Pentecost or the commemoration of Christ's death on Good Friday. Violet, the color of penance and preparation, is worn during Advent and Lent.

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