



Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

March 25, 2018

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 50:4-7

Philippians 2:6-11

Mark 14:1–15:47

Next week:

Acts 10:34a, 37-43

Corinthians 5:6b-8

John 20:1-9

Psalm

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? (*Psalm 22*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. Jack Izzo.

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. See parish bulletin for Holy Week events.

From Thomas Merton

Suffering can only be consecrated to God by one who believes that Jesus is not dead. And it is of the very essence of Christianity to face suffering and death not because they are good, not because they have meaning, but because the resurrection of Jesus has robbed them of their meaning. . . . To know the cross is to know that we are saved by the sufferings of Christ; more, it is to know the love of Christ who underwent suffering and death in order to save us. For to know his love is not merely to know the story of his love, but to experience in our spirit that we are loved by him, and that in his love the Father manifests his own love for us, through his Spirit poured forth into our hearts.

The effect of suffering upon us depends on what we love. If we love only ourselves, suffering is merely hateful. It has to be avoided at all costs. . . . If we love others and suffer for them, even without a supernatural love for other people in God, suffering can give us a certain nobility and goodness. . . . If we love God and love others in him, we will be glad to let suffering destroy anything in us that God is pleased to let it destroy, because we know that all it destroys is unimportant. We will prefer to let the accidental trash of life be consumed by suffering in order that his glory may come out clean in everything we do.

If we love God, suffering does not matter. Christ in us, his love, his Passion in us: that is what we care about. Pain does not cease to be pain, but we can be glad of it because it enables Christ to suffer in us and give glory to his Father by being greater, in our hearts, than suffering would ever be.

—*No Man Is an Island*

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

March is TMC membership month:

The Thomas Merton community is membership-based and is required by its by-laws to register its membership annually. Membership fees are a bargain—\$15 per person or \$30 per family. It's time again to register with us. Your membership shows your support for sustaining the Sunday 8:45 Mass, the adult spiritual education and other programs, this bulletin, and a monthly donation to St. Elizabeth Seton School.

If you haven't received your renewal, or if you would like to join us for the first time, there are membership application forms in the Church vestibule. Or you can also get more information from Kay Williams—e-mail kaywill@pacbell.net or call (650) 270-4188.

Golf for a good cause:

Play golf at Stanford and empower children of low-income families to reach their full potential! Join us for our 23rd Annual Seton Scramble for Students on Monday, May 14, 2018. A full day of golf at Stanford includes a Hobees breakfast, a boxed lunch, and a Coupa Cafe catered afternoon reception (with a lively auction)—plus wine, beer and beverages throughout the day! Tournament prizes too! Non-golfers are also welcome to the afternoon reception and auction starting at 4:00 pm. All proceeds directly support tuition assistance for students at St. Elizabeth Seton School.

Register at www.setonpaloalto.org or contact Carmel Caligaris for more information: development@setonpaloalto.org or (650) 326-1258. There is early-bird pricing if you register before April 15.

Palm Sunday entrance song: Blessings on the King:

Hosannah! Hosannah!
Blessings on the King!
Hosannah! Hosannah!
Song of God, we sing!
Hosannah! Hosannah!
Blessings on the King!
We praise You, we bless You,
our gifts to You we bring.

Help decorate for Easter:

The Liturgy team will be in St. Thomas Aquinas Church next Saturday, March 31, beginning at 9:00 am, to decorate the Church for Easter. This is a major undertaking each year, and we would be delighted to have you come and help. The more hands, the lighter the task for all of us!



Last Sunday of the month:

A Thomas Merton Center envelope is included in the bulletin the last Sunday of each month. Your donation makes possible our monthly contribution to St. Elizabeth Seton School; our spiritual education programs, weekly bulletin, and other publications; and hospitality after Mass and at other meetings.



We need your support—please be generous!

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Francis invites change, but we are the change:

Abridged from an article by Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister, March 10, 2018, at nronline.org.

...Popes and bishops, I have come to realize, are the maintainers of the tradition of the Church. When they move, it is commonly with one eye on the past—the point at which lies safe canonical territory. Only we are the real changers of the Church. It's the average layperson living out the faith in the temper of the times who shapes the future. It is the visionary teacher, the loving critic, the truth-telling prophet that moves the Church from one age to another. It was those who had to negotiate the new economy who came to see fair interest on

continued on page 3

Richard Rohr on the legacy of Thomas Merton:

By Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, at franciscanmedia.org.

I saw Thomas Merton only once. He walked in front of my family and me when we were visiting the Abbey of Gethsemani in early June 1961. I had read *Sign of Jonah* and *Waters of Siloe* in the high school seminary in Cincinnati, and already my youthful mind intuitively knew that this man was a prophet for my soul and for the Church in the world. So, on the day of my graduation and return to Kansas for the summer, I said to my parents, "Let's take the southern route home. I have a place I want you to see." Little did I imagine!

I stood back in awe as he walked two sisters and their

continued on page 3

... We are the change, continued:

investments as the virtue of prudence rather than the sin of usury, for instance. It was those caught in abusive relationships who came to realize that divorce could be a more loving decision than a destructive family situation. And yet, the manner in which popes and bishops move, the open ear they bring to the world, the heart they show, and the love and leadership they model can make all the difference in the tone and effectiveness of the Church. . . . When Jorge Bergoglio, the newly elected Pope Francis, appeared on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, he bowed to the people and asked for a blessing; the faithful roared their approval of a man who knew his own need for our help and direction. When he told aristocratic bishops to "be shepherds with the smell of sheep"—to move among the people, to touch them, to serve them, to share their lives—episcopal palaces and high picket fences lost ecclesial favor. What the people wanted were bishops who would come out of their chanceries, walk with them and come to understand the difficulty of the path. When Francis told priests to deal with abortion in confession, where all the struggles of humanity find solace and forgiveness, rather than treat it as the unforgivable sin, the Church grew in understanding. When he said, "Who am I to judge?" the spiritual quality of the gay community, the Church became a Church again. The fluidity of human nature and the great need for mercy and strength that come with life's most painful decisions became plain. Francis, building on foundations laid by Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, opened hearts and doors to Cuba, regardless of the politics of it, and with the Obama administration eased Cuba's isolation from the modern world. Francis has brought to the world's attention migrants fleeing war and oppressive economic situations; he has spoken up against slaughter in Southeast Asia and central Africa. He has said a definitive no to nuclear weapons and encouraged rethinking so-called just war. Clearly, Francis is an invitation to change our stance in the world. We have a new model of what the Church should look like to others as well as what we ourselves can hope for from it in our own lives. We begin to see the Church as a sign of the love of God rather than the specter of the wrath of God. And yet, at the same time, some things that must change clearly have not changed in these last five years. Instead, there is smoke without fire, commissions promised but not created, questions acceptable to ask, yes, but answers still scarce. The very recognition of a problem, the modern world assumes, is the beginning of its solution. There is promise and possibility galore. But, in too many instances, if nothing happens, more and more people, disappointed,

continued on page 4

... Legacy of Thomas Merton, continued:

driver right in front of us. He was returning them to their car as we approached the old guesthouse. One of the sisters was Mother Teresa of Calcutta. . . . Yes, I believe Thomas Merton was a true prophet, and I use that word in its classic sense, as one who sees at a higher level and thus, in effect, foresees. . . . I am now convinced this is what religious life is meant to structurally allow and even foster—a prophetic and listening stance as opposed to a merely priestly one. . . . Religious life is structurally set up to be "a room with a view," and often a view that the common parish does not have time to inspire or generate. No wonder that the young man raced to a place like Gethsemani with such determination, fervor, and even overexcitement. A prophet intuitively knows that he or she cannot stand alone, but needs the wisdom and protection of a living faith community, and years of the deep listening and loving that many forms of religious life can ideally provide. . . . This man, like almost no one else in our time, put together the mystical depths and the political implications of the Christian message. He did it in a way that confirmed for many of us a kind of "deep Christianity." He wrote things that still now are showing themselves to be true and even central to spiritual truth. I find him read in every country and continent I have taught in, and quoted by sincere seekers of all Christian denominations and even other religions. Things he wrote in the 1950s and '60s do not always feel dated. This surely means we are dealing with big truth and high-level seeing. Although there are so many aspects of the wisdom tradition that he recovered, there is only one that I want to comment on here. I believe that he almost singlehandedly pulled back the veil and helped us see that we all had lost the older tradition of contemplation. It was no longer taught in any systematic way in the Church. Clergy, religious, and laity "recited" prayers and meticulously "performed" liturgies, but the older methods for quieting the mind and heart, and seeing "spiritual things spiritually" (1 Cor 2:13), had been lost in both theory and practice by almost all of us. . . . He has become for many people the person whose writings they turn to for spiritual direction. This is something he did not intend and did not want. He once wrote to a correspondent that he had no disciples. He wanted no disciples. He thought he could be of no help to disciples. Become, he suggested to this correspondent, a disciple of Christ. Yet, whether he wanted it or not, through his many writings, he has directed the spiritual journey of so many people whose names we shall never know. . . .

continued on page 4

A matter of justice in the Catholic Church:

I write concerning a matter of justice in this Roman Catholic Church. Justice is that virtue about which we hear constantly, preached about in homilies, written about in diocesan newspapers, cited as a core value of this Church. The question here is whether justice is practiced as well as it is preached within our Church.

First, some historical background with an excerpt from the document, *Justice in the World*, issued in Rome by the Synod of Bishops in 1971:

While the Church is bound to give witness to justice, she recognizes that everyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes. Hence, we must undertake an examination of the modes of acting and of the possessions and lifestyle found within the Church itself.

Within the Church, rights must be preserved. No one should be deprived of his or her ordinary rights because he or she is associated with the Church in one way or another. We reiterate the recommendations that lay people should exercise more important functions with regard to Church property and should share in its administration.

We also urge that women should have their own share of responsibility and participation in the community life of society and likewise of the Church.

We propose that this matter be subjected to a serious study employing adequate means: for instance, a mixed commission of men and women, religious and lay people, of differing situations and competence.

Powerful words and admirable goals. Based on this document, how can the hierarchy of our Church be truly credible in its call to seek justice for all the people of God as long as it continues to serve the cause of injustice in its own governance of this Church? It is ignoring its own document.

The starkly evident truth is this: Despite the claim to promoting justice for all within the Roman Catholic Church, only the ordained are granted power to govern the institutional Church and make the decisions that affect *all* of its members, clergy and laity alike. As long as only men can be ordained, women are excluded from the opportunity to share in its governance. Their voices are effectively silenced in the halls where decisions are made. Their roles remain under the authority of the men ordained, roles honored perhaps, yet without the authority to participate fully with men on an equal basis in deciding the course of the Church. Thus, women are effectively denied admission to the only roles that can lead to positions of ecclesiastical authority and decision-making in the doctrines and disciplines of the Church.

This reality means that at least half of its membership (perhaps more) are denied any possibility of serving in those roles of authority. The leading question is this: *How can exclusion from any position of governance based solely and only on one's gender be considered*

just? It is quite simply hypocrisy to claim Christian justice is being practiced within the institutional Church as long as women are precluded from any possibility of participating in the decisions that govern the spiritual and moral lives of its membership.

Moreover, we have heard preached in homilies, and in the words of the late Pope John Paul II, that sexism is a sin. Since the only reason given to deny women admission to the ordained roles of deacon and priest is their gender, that is, by definition, sexism. How is that sin—defined as such by an *elected* leader of this Church, now a saint—justified? We are told that it has always been this way in the tradition of the Church—therefore, women cannot be ordained and we cannot discuss it any further. In fact, sadly, Pope Francis has stated that the decision NOT to ordain women has been settled and that door is closed. No more discussion about it. That's justice? That makes the sin of sexism acceptable?

The faulty theological basis on which the hierarchy has anchored its claim that it cannot ordain women appears so thin as to be transparent for those with the eyes to see. In fact, there are Catholic theologians who admit privately that there is no valid theological reason why women cannot be ordained. Did not St. Paul declare that in Christ there is "...neither male nor female...all are one in Christ Jesus"? I fear that our Church hierarchy today does not have the eyes to see or the will to recognize the injustice that surely Jesus Christ Himself would point out if He were to be consulted. Has He?

And please do not use as the reason for this exclusion that Jesus did not ordain women. He did not ordain men either. *He called them to ministry, to discipleship*, as He called Mary of Magdala, Mary the sister of Lazarus, Martha, and the Samaritan Woman at the well. One pertinent question here: to whom did Jesus first appear and speak on that first glorious Easter morning? It was not Peter or the Beloved Disciple. In all three synoptic gospels and in the gospel of John, it is a woman who first hears the good news of the Resurrection and is sent to tell this miraculous news to the others.

Three of the four gospels state that it is the Risen Jesus who is sending her. According to Mark (16: 9-10) Jesus first appeared to Mary of Magdala, and she went and told the others that she had seen Jesus and he was alive. She was not believed. According to Matthew (28: 1-10) Jesus appeared to Mary of Magdala and "the other Mary" to whom he spoke and to whom he gave the mission of going to bring the good news of His resurrection to the other disciples. And, finally, John (20:11-18) tells of Jesus giving this same mission to Mary Magdalene—"Go to my brothers and tell them—and Mary went and announced to them "I have seen the Lord" and told them

... *We are the change, continued:*

drift away from a drifting ship. And so the married couples who lived through abuse, through marriages more toxic than life-giving, wait for the understanding that even though married again, they deserve the right to have the spiritual support the Church offers as they attempt to make more loving marriages. They wait, but the declaration of inclusion in the Church does not come.

A commission on the restoration of the female diaconate is formed, but the Church itself is not included in the conversation, no public reports are ever given, and a very important and long-lived part of Roman Catholic history goes silent again.

The leviathan of child abuse, the most glaring problem facing the Church, continues to raise its hoary head. . . . Unless or until even bishops and cardinals are suspended until charges are resolved, the taint on the integrity of the Vatican itself will continue to undermine the sincerity of the Church's effort to dispel the venom. Meanwhile, an abuse commission itself was formed, allowed to lapse, is now formed again, we're told, but all of that with little or no evidence of palpable response to the problem itself.

The call for women in official positions at higher echelons in the Church is promised—but ignored. This means, of course, that the role of women has not shifted at all yet—despite their educational readiness, their lifetime records of service, let alone the discipleship offered by their baptism. The effect is clear: Women have nothing to do with the theological commissions where decisions are made that affect the spiritual lives of their half of the Church. But Francis says that there is nothing more that can be said about women because his predecessors have spoken.

The question is why this papacy appears to have stalled. Whether situations like this stem from Francis' own lack of commitment to them or as a result of the interminable resistance of the Curia to papal leadership is anybody's guess. But they do mark this papacy. . . .

From where I stand, this papacy has made thinking possible again. It has embraced the idea that change is part of the process of living. But it has not given some major issues significant direction. In cases like this, the promise of action and the absence of results, as the French say, "flatter only to deceive." They give false hope. As a result, in the end, the absence of action is even more disappointing than it would have been if hollow promises had never been made.

St. Paul warned the Church about this kind of unclear leadership centuries ago. He writes in 1 Corinthians 14:8, "If the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?" It is a warning to a papacy that came full of hope and is deeply respected for it. As the Talmud says, "Those who risk nothing, risk much more."

... *A matter of justice, . . . continued:*

what Jesus had told her. A woman given that important mission—to proclaim the good news—was a message in itself, was it not?

How long can the Roman Catholic Church ignore the example of Jesus Himself? We have grown weary of the same tired arguments against the ordination of women. It is quite simply a matter of acting against justice and against the will of the Holy Spirit to ignore and deny the call to priesthood that many good women have felt compelled to answer. How much longer do we have to hear what makes no theological sense in the reasons we are given? It is painful to experience it continuing today. Many writers, far more eloquent and theologically articulate than I, have written a multitude of articles and books on this subject. I write this as a Catholic laywoman out of sheer frustration at hearing again that we need to pray for more vocations because of the shortage of priests. I believe there is no lack of vocations to the priesthood. There is only a blindness to whom is being called to priesthood. Why does the Church refuse these gifts of the Holy Spirit? Open the priesthood to qualified women, and we might not have a crisis in the seminaries or perhaps a lack of priests to minister to the growing number of priest-less parishes in this country alone. It has become a cliché to ask, "What would Jesus do?" in order to make a decision on some moral or ethical issue. In this case, it is more a matter of knowing what Jesus did—and ignoring it.

—Maureen Locke, March 14, 2018

... *Legacy of Thomas Merton, continued:*

John Stier, an American government official who was his host in Sri Lanka, said that Merton made a tremendous impression on him. As they discussed Buddhism, Stier soon learned that Merton was much better informed about this religious tradition than he was. Merton disagreed with him when he expressed the opinion that Buddhism was a negative approach to life.

But, Stier says of him, "He was surprisingly gentle in disagreement. He had a wonderful way about him"—a shrewd observation with which hundreds of his correspondents would express wholehearted agreement.

Board: Vicki Sullivan, vickisullivan@comcast.net, 327-5339

Bulletin: Michelle Hogan (March 25 and April 1), 468-3386

Kay Williams (April 8 and 15), 679-9015

Finance: Helena Wee, 520-7556

Hospitality: Jim Davis, 328-2584

Liturgy: John Arnold, 325-1421, jsaoso@comcast.net;

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

Needs Net: Roberta Kehret, 494-1488, robkehr@yahoo.com

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