



26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 30, 2018

Readings

This week:

Numbers 11:25-29

James 5:1-6

Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

Next week:

Genesis 2:18-24

Hebrews 2:9-11

Mark 10:2-16

Psalm

The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart. (*Psalm 19*)

Today

Today 's presider is Fr. Xavier Lavagetto.

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

I am more and more impressed by the fact that it is largely futile to get up and make statements about current problems. At the same time, I know that silent acquiescence in evil is also out of the question. I know too that there are times when protest is incapable, even when it seems as useful as beating your head up against a brick wall. At the same time, when protest simply becomes an act of desperation, it loses its power to communicate anything to anyone who does not share the same feelings of despair. There is of course no need to comment on the uselessness of false optimism, or to waste any intentions on the sunlit absurdities of those who consistently refuse to face reality. One cannot be a Christian today without having a deeply conflicted conscience. I say it again: we are all under judgment. And it seems to me that our gestures of repentance, though they may be individually sincere, are collectively hollow and even meaningless.

Why? This is the question that plagues me. The reason seems to be, to some extent, a deep failure of communication.

—*Faith and Violence*

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

Kenya crafts show October 14:

On October 14, 10:00 am until noon in the Memorial Garden adjacent to Saint Thomas Aquinas church, enjoy viewing handicraft items from Kenya. With a donation to support scholarships offered by Kenya Help to high school and college students in the Navasha area of Kenya, you may select from a display of wooden bowls, shopping bags, jewelry, nativity sets, carved wooden ornaments and other unique items selected by Margo McAuliffe during her summer in Kenya—a good start for holiday gifts.

League of Women voters here next Sunday:

Next Sunday, October 7, 10:15-11:15 am, two League of Women Voters representatives—Jean Lythcott and David Springer—will be here to share their insights on the upcoming election. They will cover eleven state propositions as well as one Santa Clara county, to City of Palo Alto and two Palo Alto School District propositions on the November 6 ballot. (No San Mateo County measures will be covered.)

Come over to the Thomas House next Sunday after the 8:45 am Mass, pick up some coffee and a donut, find a seat in the living room, and begin preparing for the November 6 election with us!

CROP hunger walk:

A St. Thomas Aquinas parish team has been created to support the CROP Hunger Walk on Sunday, October 7, at Nealon Park, 800 Middle Avenue, Menlo Park. Festivities begin at 1:00 pm and the walk starts at 2:00 pm. Walkers may choose a .6-mile, 2-mile, or 5-mile walk and enjoy live bands, food, and games. CROP Hunger Walk is sponsored by Church World Service a cooperative ministry of 37 Christian denominations. More than five 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. One-quarter of the funds raised by us will be contributed to the Ecumenical Hunger Program in East Palo Alto. For information please check the CROP Hunger Walk website at www.crophungerwalk.org/menloparkca, or contact Terry of our parish Human Concerns committee at (650) 714-2131.



More than five 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. One-quarter of the funds raised by us will be contributed to the Ecumenical Hunger Program in East Palo Alto. For information please check the CROP Hunger Walk website at www.crophungerwalk.org/menloparkca, or contact Terry of our parish Human Concerns committee at (650) 714-2131.

ical effort helps children and families in need to have food for today while building for a better tomorrow. One-quarter of the funds raised by us will be contributed to the Ecumenical Hunger Program in East Palo Alto. For information please check the CROP Hunger Walk website at www.crophungerwalk.org/menloparkca, or contact Terry of our parish Human Concerns committee at (650) 714-2131.

Kate Hennessey, Dorothy Day author, to speak:

On Sunday October 14, Kate Hennessey, the youngest of Dorothy Day's nine grandchildren and the author of a memoir about her grandmother, will speak at 3:00 pm at the Menlo Park Recreation Center, 700 Alma Street. We will have Kate's book, *Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved by Beauty*, available for purchase after the 8:45 Mass today and for the next two Sundays.



Upcoming clergy abuse sessions:

If you missed Bishop McGrath's listening session on September 22 here at OLR, there are more opportunities—Tuesday, October 2, at 7:00 pm at Most Holy Trinity Parish, 2040 Nassau Drive, San Jose, and Wednesday, October 17, 3:00 pm, at Santa Teresa Parish at 794 Calero Avenue, also in San Jose. These meetings focus on seeking input from us on the pathway to reform, listening to those who have been victimized by clerical sexual abuse either directly are in their families and praying for God's grace to be our only guide. In addition, Stanford will hold its own community discussion today, September 30, immediately following the 10:30 and 4:30 masses on campus.

Synod of Bishops meets October 3-28:

Abridged from an article by Phyllis Zagano, senior research associate-in-residence at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, at ncronline.org, September 22, 2018. Her books include Women Deacons: Past, Present, Future and Holy Saturday: An Argument for the Restoration of the Female Diaconate in the Catholic Church.

As the church worldwide recoils at the renewed wave of sexual abuse, several hundred bishops will soon gather in Rome to talk about young people. The optics are not good. Don't get me wrong. Of the voting members, most—if not all—are upstanding men. Only one is currently under indictment. But, like water dripping on a stone, the same story—from Chile, from the Netherlands, from the United States, with variations on the theme from India and Africa—is wearing people's patience thin.

But the Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment will go on, this time with a new playbook. . . The objective is to gain what *Episcopalis Communio* calls "moral unity" in acceptance of a final synod document, which could become part of the ordinary magisteri-

COMMUNITY FORUM

I d e a s O p i n i o n s R e f l e c t i o n s C o n c e r n s

God is the ocean in which we all swim:

By Patrick T. Reardon, September 18, 2018, at ncronline.org/columns/soul-seeing. Reardon is the author of eight books, including Requiem for David.

I have gotten to a point that I can't go along anymore with Michelangelo's God on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Great art, but, gee, God as an old guy with a long gray beard? No thanks.

For a long time, my wife Cathy has had her own spin on this. At Mass, when the celebrants starts, "Our Father,..." Cathy adds in a loud voice, "...and Mother." That makes more sense, but it still doesn't do the job for me. I am able to think of God like a parent, loving me and wanting what's best for me and providing me with what I need to live a full life and, again like a good parent, giving me the space I need to fail and learn from my failures.

What doesn't work for me is the idea that if something good happens, it's God up in heaven pulling the strings. Say I'm running to the airport, late for a flight, and against all odds, I get on the flight. I can't think that God made that happen. And I can't find it in me to pray to God to make that happen. If I think God is dipping into my life to make it possible for me to get on the flight, what am I to think if I land, get a rental car and, within 20 minutes, I'm in an accident? Did God pull some string to make that happen? Or did God fail to pull the right string?

Things happen in life, good and bad. Good things happen to bad people. Bad things happen to good people. Life isn't fair as anyone knows who has come to the realization, as humans must, that we are born to die. You and I live under a death sentence.

In recent years, Job has become one of my heroes. You know, the guy in the Bible who is afflicted with a whole lot of bad stuff, the guy known for "the patience of Job." Job, however, is anything but patient. He whines to God and complains and says a lot of "woe is me." His faith never wavers—that's where the "patience" comes in—but he browbeats God, demanding why, as a good guy, he has to put up with all these disasters, fires and boils, as well as the dung heap where he lives. Finally, enough is enough, and "out of the storm," sounding more than a little exasperated, God says: "Where were you when I founded the Earth? Tell me, if you have understanding....Have you ever in your lifetime commanded the morning and shown the dawn its place?" God goes on like that for 71 verses, and, basically, God is saying to Job, "Come on, I'm God, and you're not. I understand this stuff, and you don't."

This has been very comforting to me. I don't know about you, but life completely mystifies me. I try to figure it out, and I come up with ways in which to frame things and find meaning. But I'm always adjusting these, and they're never adequate.

What's comforting is that, even if I don't understand life, God does. Just like the flower doesn't understand the storm that is pounding it with rain and buffeting it with wind, I am trying to bloom in the storm of life.

Then, during a recent therapy session in which I was talking about my nephew's widespread cancer and of the deaths that are happening all around me, I was a bit taken aback when my therapist asked, "Where does God fit in all this?" After fumbling around a bit, what I came up with, essentially, is that I see God as the ocean we all swim in. We're all in this ocean whether we realize it or not. We are all connected inextricably because we exist in the same water and find our sustenance in this ocean and everything else we need to live.

So, then, spinning this out, I took the same image and said that religious faith (or any faith in something that gives life meaning) is the ocean in which we all swim, whether we realize it or not. In thinking this, am I thinking that God and faith are the same? I think so.

So then I went to love, meaning the whole array of connections in which we touch each other and are touched—*love* is the ocean in which we all swim. After all, we are individuals, but we exist among others. Even hermits once lived among others, and even as a hermit lives in isolation, he or she breathes the same air and sees the same sun as the rest of humanity.

St. Paul tells us that God is love, so thinking about God and love being the same ocean in which we all swim makes sense—and faith being that ocean too.

Where, the theologically inclined may ask, is God as a person, a foundation of Christianity? My thought is that God is a person and an ocean in a way that I can't understand because, well, I'm not God. None of this, of course, pushes the human being who was and is Jesus off the stage. Jesus is still in the center of faith and love while also being God. Despite 2,000 years of theological theorizing, I think it's safe to say no one understands how Jesus can be a human being and also be God.

So maybe I'm not so crazy to think of God as a person and as an ocean.

Another reflection on Nagasaki:

The TMC Bulletin of Sunday, September 23rd included a reflection on Nagasaki by Jean Vistica. I will expand on that reflection here, make one correction on the number of people killed on the USS Arizona (1,102 sailors plus 2,335 soldiers and 68 civilians on the land), and list the total number of people killed in the Atomic bombings of Hiroshima on August 6 (90,000-146,000) and Nagasaki on August 9, 1945 (39,000-80,000).

In 2005, Jeanne and I spent three weeks touring Japan. We spent two days in Nagasaki that coincided with the 60th anniversary of the bombing. It was amazing to witness a city that appeared to have been left untouched by the war—fully rebuilt within a near forest of fully grown trees. We visited the vast Peace Garden in which every major nation on the planet has a memorial, except the United States. We also spent several hours in the Nagasaki Peace Museum. It was here that we read the document signed by 60 US generals, government officials, national diplomats and more. This was a letter urging President Truman to reconsider his decision to use the Atomic Bomb to end the war with Japan. To do so, they cautioned, would inevitably set off an international nuclear armament race. History shows that letter was ignored. Ground Zero, the point 500 feet over which the bomb suddenly exploded, is now a park for reflection. Remnants of a stone bridge remain on which are the shadows of the children that were playing by the stream when the bomb went off. Chilling.

I was only 12 years old when WWII ended. As an adult I have often pondered over our country's use of the atomic bomb to end a war that was virtually at an end in any event. History shows that nearly all of the major Japanese cities were in complete ruin or nearly so. The country's oil supply was virtually nonexistent. Food was scarce and the population was reduced to extreme hunger. The Japanese navy and the naval air force were defeated and at that point ineffective. Japanese military leaders had made attempts to negotiate a surrender under terms that would preserve the Emperor. These were rejected under the terms of the Allies' Potsdam Agreement, which called for unconditional surrender. It has also been said that President Truman wanted to demonstrate that the U.S. not only had the atomic bomb, but was not hesitant to use it.

Yes, WWII finally came to an end. And Yes, the war of nuclear proliferation is in full swing, with our own stockpile undergoing a one trillion dollar ten-year plan of upgrades. So I ask myself and the reader of this bulletin—What have we learned from being the first and so far the only nation on the planet to have used the destructive force of the nuclear bomb? I believe that with the deci-

Synod of Bishops, continued:

um—the official teaching of the church — if Francis approves it.

As for who will create the document, most voting delegates are bishops. The group representing men religious is sending two brothers—laymen—among its 10 voting delegates. . . . But the women's International Union of Superiors General was not invited to send voting delegates, even though non-bishops can be and are included.

. . . According to Bishop Fabio Fabene, undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops, "As for women, they are already present as observers and participate in the synodal assembly and the small groups and have a right to speak."

What a breakthrough! Women allowed to speak! Male religious superiors who are not bishops (including, remember, two lay brothers) are voting members. Can the authority of female religious superiors, especially the abbesses of territorial abbeys, not be recognized?

. . . Each bishop's conference collated local responses and provided a report. In the U.S., 100 of 194 dioceses, 25 Catholic organizations, and several bishops' conference committees participated. The international *mélange* eventually produced the synod's *instrumentum laboris*—its working document. The working document notes that the synod's March 2018 preliminary meeting, at which young people were able to voice their opinions, found great distance between what the church says and what the church does. It states that the preliminary meeting "gave specific attention to forms of discrimination impacting young women" including in the church. "Therefore," it continues, "young people ask themselves 'what are the places where women can flourish within the Church and society?'" Translation: The young members asked, what's the point? Women have no place in the Catholic Church. It's getting old. In the 19th century, Pius IX tightened the clerical vise on laypeople and especially on women. By the turn of the 20th century, the last two lay cardinals died, and successive Codes of Canon Law legislated that cardinals—papal advisers—had to be priests (1917) and then bishops (1983).

For the synod to bring hope to the people of God, it must include findings that will help Francis give more authority to women. Otherwise, the negative optics will overcome ~~any statement the synod makes.~~

sion to unleash the destructive power of the atomic bombs on a what was essentially a weakened, starving Japanese population, has left a black stain on our collective civil conscience, the ill effects of which we are experiencing to this very day. God help us all!

—Dick Placone