



26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 25, 2016

Readings

This week:

Amos 6:1a, 4–7

1 Timothy 6: 11–16

Luke 16:19–31

Next week:

Habakkuk 1:2–3; 2:2–4

2 Timothy 1: 6–8, 13–14

Luke 17:5–10

Psalm Today

Praise the Lord, my soul! (*Psalms 146*)

Today's presider is Rev. Larry Percell.

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

Sunday, October 2, 10:00 a.m

League of Women Voters presents the ballot propositions. Thomas House Basement Hall.

From Thomas Merton

It is true, political problems are not solved by love and mercy. But the world of politics is not the only world, and unless political decisions rest on a foundation of something better and higher than politics, they can never do any real good for men. When a country has to be rebuilt after war, the passions and energies of war are no longer enough. There must be a new force, the power of love, the power of understanding and human compassion, the strength of selflessness and cooperation, and the creative dynamism of *the will to live and to build, and the will to forgive. The will for reconciliation...*

The key to this understanding is the truth that “No man is an island.” A selfish life cannot be fruitful. It cannot be true. It contradicts the very nature of man. The dire effects of this contradiction cannot be avoided; where men live selfishly, in quest of brute power and lust and money, they destroy one another. The only way to change such a world is to change the thoughts and desires of the men who live in it. The conditions of our world are simply an outward expression of our thought and desires...

—Preface to the Vietnamese edition of *No Man Is an Island*.

COMMUNITY NOTES

News Announcements Requests

Ballot propositions presented October 2:

The League of Women Voters will present an overview of the propositions on the California ballot on October 2, at 10:00 a.m. in the Thomas House basement hall, immediately following the 8:45 Mass. Coffee and doughnuts will be served in the basement.



Of particular note is the contest between Proposition 62 (abolish the death penalty, replacing it with life sentence without possibility of parole) and Proposition 66 (speed up the delivery of the death penalty). A quick reference right up front: **YES on 62, NO on 66.** You'll learn the difference at the Oct. 2 meeting. (The League of Women Voters of California has taken a position in support of Proposition 62, as have the Catholic bishops of

TMC donation envelope enclosed today:



An envelope for your donation to the Thomas Merton Center is attached here. The Merton Center is a non-profit religious education membership organization, founded in 1995. We rely on your support to make possible this Sunday Mass, spiritual education events and retreats, and publications. Please support our lay-led, progressive, Vatican II-inspired, open membership organization. *Merçi!*

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PRAY FOR US: Please remember in your prayers this week Denise Alongi, George Bouche, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Sr. Fran Ciluaga, Mary Connors, Mike Cummings, Ken Dias, Fr. Thierry Geris, Deonna Gill, Emily Gill, Joanne Hasegawa, Dean Judd, Michael Kiriti, 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 below.]

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.

TMC bulletins online:

The TMC website awaits your perusal. Go to www.thomasmerton.org to find copies of the Sunday TMC bulletins, notices of events, and background on the Merton Center. Web master Jim Davis awaits your submissions: email them to him at jim_davis@pacbell.net.

Save Sat., Feb. 18: Questions from the Ewe:

TMC's Spiritual Education Committee is sponsoring a unique morning on Saturday, February 18, at 10:00 am at the Mitchell Park Community Center. Present will be "The Ewe," bringing a unique view of the Catholic Church today, asking questions from a wise and witty intelligence that invites discussion and sharing. More information will be forthcoming, but save the date now.

STA series Sept. 27: Women in Early Calif.:

In the early 1870s an historian gathered oral histories from the pre-statehood gentry of California. The interviewers collected the stories from the women of the household. These women were Mexicans, residents of pre-US and pre-Gold Rush California, and Catholics. By the time that they were interviewed in the 1870s, they were quite aware that Catholicism had been replaced by Protestantism as the dominant spirituality of California. One of the things that they were trying to do was to figure out how best to maintain their own identity in this changed environment. Fascinating! Please join us!

Professor Rose Marie Beebe Ph.D. teaches Spanish and modern languages, their history and literatures, at Santa Clara University. Professor Robert Senkewicz teaches early American history, concentrating on the colonial, and revolutionary periods. He also teaches the history of California and the American Southwest at Santa Clara University. Last year they presented an insightful view of Saint Junipero Serra. Together they are the authors of *Lands of Promise and Despair: Chronicles of Early California, 1535-1846*, and *Testimonios: Early California through the Eyes of Women, 1815-1848*.

St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center, 1095 Channing Ave., Palo Alto, 7—8:30 p.m. Refreshments, too.

Food Closet never closes:

Keep bringing food for the Food Closet. The needs continue: flip-top soups and entrees, as well as small bottles of water, crackers, granola bars, fruit cups, juice pouches. Your generous donations (including cash) are always welcome, particularly now as the summer winds down when the stores have been depleted. Leave your offerings in the baskets at the back of church as you come into the sanctuary. The Food Closet clients will be grateful.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Hillary Clinton, the media, the common good:

[By Christine Schenk, *National Catholic Reporter*, 9/22/16]

I've been a big fan of Hillary Clinton ever since she fought to expand health care coverage in the 1990s, when I was working as a nurse midwife to low-income families. Too many struggling pregnant women were showing up at my hospital in premature labor because they couldn't afford prenatal care...

So it makes me mad when I hear political pundits say inane things like the 1994 health reform effort failed because Hillary and her staff were secretive....

The plan failed for a number of complex reasons, not least of which was opposition from insurance companies who, afraid of reduced profits, scared the public with their infamous "Harry and Louise" ads.

It would take another 16 years of escalating greed before the political climate changed enough to pass the Affordable Care Act.

But Hillary didn't give up. She worked with Sen. Ted Kennedy to pass the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) that provided health care coverage for millions of vulnerable children whose families didn't qualify for Medicaid.

I'm appalled by the unrelenting media bias peddling a false narrative that Hillary Clinton is secretive and untrustworthy. Never mind that Jill Abramson -- an investigative journalist who covered Clinton "scandals" for decades -- finds Hillary "honest and trustworthy." Never mind that *Politifact* rates the majority of Clinton's statements as true or mostly true compared to just 15 percent of Donald Trump's.

Years of politically motivated (and tax payer-funded) investigations from Whitewater to Benghazi to email servers never found one shred of illegal activity on Hillary's part. But some of the mud stuck, and it provides a rich soil for voracious media ever in search of sensational stories and higher ratings.

E.J. Dionne recently called media bias a "new crisis of credibility":

Trump is being held to a much lower standard than is Hillary Clinton, which, in turn, means that while relatively short shrift is given to each new Trump scandal, the same old Clinton scandals get covered again and again.

Recently the *Boston Globe*, *Washington Monthly*, CNN, and other media outlets harshly criticized the Associated Press over its "drummed up" non-story alleging donors to the Clinton Foundation were inappropriately given State Department access on Hillary's watch. Michael Cohen from the *Globe* called the AP story "pure fiction":

The scandal here seems to be that people who gave money to the Clinton Foundation had emails sent to

the Clinton State Department requesting favors that were repeatedly denied. Still, evidence has never been the key ingredient of a Clinton scandal. Optics and the appearance of scandal are always where the action has been.

No wonder Trump has seemed impervious to fact checking. Our journalists are failing us. Ordinary people trust the media to provide accurate information, but when even the Associated Press grossly distorts the facts, whom can you trust?

Why is there such vicious opposition to this good woman who has given her life to public service and to the marginalized among us?

Are heavy-hitting financial interests really so fearful that she will succeed in narrowing the gap between the haves and the have-nots? Are Hillary haters impervious to fact checking themselves? Or do people just hate (or fear) smart, competent, "uppity" women?

As someone of a certain age who lived through the "women's lib" movement, I've seen a fair amount of sexism in my time -- starting with my Catholic high school when the class valedictorian had to be a boy even though nine girls had better grade averages than he did. (I know, because I was one of those girls.)

Matt Lauer's penchant for repeatedly interrupting Hillary Clinton while allowing Donald Trump to natter on unchallenged is a good example of (presumably) unconscious sexism. He also asked Clinton more challenging questions and questioned her statements more often....

In a 2014 study, Adrienne Hancock of George Washington University found if a man's conversational partner was female he interrupted her significantly more often than if he was speaking with another man. Women were less likely to interrupt men than they were other women.

On the plus side, I suppose it is good that latent sexism is being brought to light. But we are also seeing racism; bigotry, blatant lies, and xenophobia crawl out from Donald Trump's dark side. And he validates that darkness in others like him.

But it is even scarier when media professionals abandon their responsibility to the truth and/or imply there is any moral equivalence whatsoever between these two candidates.

At election time, Catholics are guided by Catholic social teaching:

It is imperative that no one, out of indifference to the course of events or because of inertia, would indulge in a merely individualistic morality. The best way to fulfill one's obligations of justice and love is to contribute to the common good according to one's

(Clinton, continued on page 4)

In defense of suffering:

[By Bill McGarvey, *America*, September 26, 2016]

It was an interesting first date. A few months back, I got together for dinner with a woman I'd met at a party. She was an attractive, intelligent, successful 36-year-old, and we had a lot in common. As our entrees arrived, she asked how I had gotten involved in writing about the intersection of secular culture and faith. I cheekily told her that I'd been immersed in the former my whole life and that my connection to the latter had been formed by a deep commitment to an esoteric school of thought I had developed called "Life's Fist, My Face."

I explained a little more seriously that, in my experience, evolving beyond the religion we are taught as children to a more mature faith as adults is intimately tied to how we deal with the suffering that all of us inevitably encounter in our lives. "I completely disagree," she told me. "I don't think suffering is inevitable." I tried to clarify that this wasn't a Western, Judeo-Christian bias or a masochistic, Irish-Catholic predisposition; Buddhism also discusses suffering at great length. But she held firm to her conviction, and the debate that followed over the next 45 minutes was one of the strangest conversations I'd had in a long time. It was as if she were allergic to the notion of suffering.

I heard a similar resonance when the Gold Star father Khizr Khan rebuked Donald Trump, saying at the Democratic convention in late July, "You have sacrificed nothing." When Trump later responded, "I think I've made a lot of sacrifices. I work very, very hard," it sounded as though the nominee did not fully understand the concept.

Have we become tone deaf to the concept of sacrifice and suffering? We live in an age in which helicopter parents measure their love in direct proportion to their ability to insulate their child from pain. That insularity can be self-imposed as well; we are all capable of endlessly distracting ourselves with our screens and getting our nourishment through highly personalized "feeds." In this ephemeral reality, I wonder if the language of suffering has become as remote and dead as Aramaic, buried under mountains of diversion and cheaply bought self-esteem.

If so, it is a tremendous loss that robs us of an essential aspect of our humanity: our ability to empathize.

It is through suffering that we are broken down and made to confront our own weakness and vulnerability. This can be a transformative moment, in which we recognize at some deeper level that we are not the center

of the universe. It is a moment that either opens us up to a journey in which we move beyond ourselves to see a profound connection between our suffering and the suffering of others, or it marks the beginning of a desperate attempt to reclaim our centrality in the universe.

In light of the harshness, suspicion and demonization of our current national discourse, could it be that we are experiencing a crisis of empathy on some level?

"In some way, suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of a sacrifice," wrote Viktor Frankl in *Man's Search for Meaning*. Frankl, a Viennese psychiatrist, wrote movingly about his time in Nazi concentration camps, out of which grew his own theory of psychotherapy that posits that human beings' primary motivational force in life is not pleasure (Freud) or power (Adler) but the striving to find meaning. "The true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world rather than within man or his own psyche, as though it were a closed system," he wrote. For Frankl, the meaning of life is found in "the self-transcendence of human existence," which is focused outside the self. "The more one forgets himself... the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself."

The lesson that suffering was not an end in itself but that it came imbued with a sense of responsibility was brought home to me during a particularly dark time in my own life. "Simon, behold Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat," a Jesuit spiritual director read back to me from Luke's Gospel, "but I have prayed that your own faith may not fail." Jesus does not tell Peter that he will be spared suffering, only that he will not be alone in it. But once the tests are over, Jesus' admonition is simple and direct: "Go back and help your brothers."

[Bill McGarvey, a musician and writer, is the author of *The Freshman Survival Guide* and the owner of CathNewsUSA.com. Twitter: @billmgarvey.]

(Clinton, continued from page 3)

means and the needs of others, and also to promote and help public and private organizations devoted to bettering the conditions of life. (Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, article 30)

I'll leave it to you to decide which candidate has contributed more to the common good.

[St. Joseph Sr. Christine Schenk served urban families for 18 years as a nurse midwife before co-founding FutureChurch, where she served for 23 years. She holds master's degrees in nursing and theology.]