



# Third Sunday of Advent

December 11, 2016

## Readings

*This week:*

Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10

James 5:7-10

Matthew 11:2-11

*Next week:*

Isaiah 7:10-14

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-24

## Psalm

Lord, come and save us. (*Psalm 146*)

## Today

Today's presider is Fr. Larry Purcell.

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

Monday, December 12, 6:30 pm

TMC Liturgy, Thomas House

## From Thomas Merton

Liturgically speaking, you could hardly find a better time to become a monk than Advent. You begin a new life, you enter into a new world at the beginning of a new liturgical year. And everything that the Church gives you to sing, every prayer that you say in and with Christ in His Mystical Body, is a cry of ardent desire for grace, for help, for the coming of the Messiah, the Redeemer.

The soul of a monk is a Bethlehem where Christ comes to be born—in the sense that Christ is born where His likeness is reformed by grace, and where His Divinity lives, in a special manner, with His Father and His Holy Spirit, by charity, in this "new incarnation," this "other Christ."

—*The Seven Storey Mountain*

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*

## **More Kenya crafts to show you:**



We are offering a last chance for you to find the perfect gift/treasure among our Kenyan crafts. Not only were many folks not at mass the day we showed them before, but also, I failed to include several popular items, like soapstone dishes and wooden African map puzzles. We will be in the bride's room of the Thomas House from 9:45 to 11:30 on Sunday, December 18. Please join us.—Margo McAuliffe

## **Rally in King Plaza December 18:**

Peninsula Peace and Justice Center, of which the parish is a member, is one of the sponsors of a rally on Sunday, December 18, 2:00 pm, in King Plaza (in front of city hall, 250 Hamilton) to speak to the Trump administration before it takes office—Stop the deportations! No Muslim watch lists! Black Lives Matter! Hands off our health care, Medicare, and Social Security! Confirmed speakers to date are retired Superior Court Judge and former Palo Alto City Council member LaDoris Cordell, and Zahra Billoo, Executive Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), San Francisco Bay Area chapter. Other speakers and rally endorsers are being lined up, and we hope for a big turnout. Please plan to come!

## **Donations for EPA kids:**

A neighbor of Barbara Kent's who teaches in EPA sent her the following e-mail: "I teach Design and STEAM at the Belle Haven and Brentwood schools. About one third of my students are homeless. Actually, roughly one third of ALL of Ravenswood School District's students (grades K-3) are classified as homeless. That means 587 kids—just across the 101 freeway—are not expecting toys for Christmas. So can you help me surprise them and give them each a toy? We need 587 unwrapped toys for a boy or girl, 5 to 8 years old.

"I need them ASAP—before December 16. You can drop them off at my house: 1231 Woodland Avenue, Menlo Park, CA. Just leave them on the front porch with a note saying which age it's for—and in plastic bag if it's raining. If it is easier to donate funds instead, Ravenswood and SGC Financial have set up 'go fund me' site where Ravenswood can accept donations." Barbara also says she will be happy to pick up donations at church and deliver them to her neighbor.

## **Seton school thank-you today:**

The children and parents of Seton School will be here in the Thomas House after Mass today, selling tamales (the parents) and singing Christmas carols (the children) to us—as a thank you for the continued support of Seton by TMC. TMC members should know that \$1,000 is donated each month as unrestricted funds to Seton School from TMC. This event is the school's thank you to TMC. Do stay today, and remember to buy a tamale or two.



## **Decorating for Christmas:**

The 8:45 Mass Liturgy Team will be decorating St. Thomas Aquinas Church for Christmas on Thursday, December 22, 9:00-11:00 am. We would be happy to have you join the decorating crew that day! No particular skills are needed, but many hands would make the work lighter for all of us. Also, we will need potted flowers or holly—red or white—to supplement the limited number of poinsettias from the parish. Please leave your donations at the back door next Sunday, December 18, or bring them with you when you come to help on the 22nd.



## **Atoms, elements, and the grandeur of God:**

*By Stacy A. Trasancos, a wife and mother of seven who holds a Ph.D. in Chemistry from Penn State and an M.A. in Dogmatic Theology from Holy Apostles College and Seminary. She teaches at Kolbe Academy, Holy Apostles College & Seminary, and Seton Hall, and is author of Science Was Born of Christianity and Particles of Faith: A Catholic Guide to Navigating Science. Published November 1, 2016. at uscath-olic.org.*

I like the word *wayfarer*. It fits us humans. We are all travelers on the road of life. Me? I take wayfaring seriously. I walk daily for a couple of hours, and this time outside has become as essential as food to me. Last winter I walked a total of 166 miles while listening to Robert Inglis narrate *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy on my phone. Treebeard came to life while I wandered, not too hastily, among giant pines. I booted my way through Adirondack foothills in midnight moonlight, alongside my faithful German shepherd, Benny, while I feared for Frodo and Samwise's safety as they journeyed through Mordor into

*continued on page 4*



Loving God, we rejoice today as we light the third candle of our Advent wreath. We know that Jesus your Son is drawing near! Thank you for sending him to save us and to lead us back to you. As we wait for his coming at Christmas, we ask you to help us to live in the way that Jesus taught us. Help us to be kind to everyone, to think of the needs of others, and to help them in whatever ways we can. Take away our sadness and fill us with hope. We trust in your mercy and love: Amen.

## COMMUNITY NOTES

### *News Announcements Requests*

#### ***Atoms. . .and the grandeur of God, continued:***

Mount Doom. . .

There are no hobbits, dwarves, orcs, or spells in the tales of scientific papers, but the data and equations tell of a mysterious realm nonetheless, one made of particles, wayfarers in their own sense. Any chemist will testify that nothing is absolutely motionless. All matter and energy obey intricate laws of nature that can be described on some level with mathematics. As Galileo put it, the universe is like a book:

But the book cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and reads the letters in which it is composed. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one wanders about in a dark labyrinth. (*The Assayer*)

I know the characters in this book well. . . For example, I know that with my every step, be it through mud, across a rain puddle, down a lane, or alongside a corn field, I *change forever* the course of a great many atoms. So do you, all the time. Every choice we make, however small, changes the course of Earth.



As I write, my shoes have brought moisture into my home from the condensation on the grass. The weather is cooling. . . Soon all the leaves will fall and exhale the carbon they breathed via photosynthesis, filling the air with the hardy smell of rot. Then Earth, tilted at 23.4°, will move in its elliptical orbit so that these northern parts are away from the sun, and winter will come.

. . . People look at me funny when I say that the periodic table ought to make one kneel down and weep for joy, . . . but let me ask you something. If you know about those things—those symmetries and precisions happening all around you—how can you *not* be stricken by it all? . . . The language of nature may be mathematical, but the story is a brilliant work beyond the grasp of human imagination. Let me go one step further: *How can anyone not wonder who the Author of all this is?*

. . . Being human is wonderful! We are granted souls with

#### ***Spotlight on refugees:***

*Editorial in the December 5-12, 2016 issue of America magazine at [www.americamagazine.org](http://www.americamagazine.org).*

“Serving and welcoming people fleeing violence and conflict in various regions of the world is part of our identity as Catholics,” Auxiliary Bishop Eusebio Elizondo of Seattle said at the bishops’ annual meeting in Baltimore on November 15. With more than 65 million displaced people in the world today, the head of the bishops’ migration committee pledged that “our 80 dioceses across the country are eager to continue this wonderful act of accompaniment.”

In the wake of the election of Donald J. Trump, it is a message worth repeating. On the campaign trail, the president-elect put Syrian refugees on notice. “If I win, they are going back,” he said in September 2016. While Mr. Trump would not have the authority to send back Syrian refugees who are already here, [he could] bring the number of refugees admitted down to zero.

This has refugee advocates worried. . . Now is the time to lift up the stories of asylum seekers, which more often than not are success stories of individual resiliency and communal solidarity. But it is also incumbent on those who have demonized and stoked fear of refugees to listen. Before January 20, Mr. Trump should meet with Syrian refugees to hear about what drove them from their homeland and what they hope for their families. That should assuage his concern that “they could be ISIS,” and it could help to reassure the refugee population that they need not live in fear for the next four years.

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the powers of intellect and will to create in ways of our own. We journey in this world taking in sensory data and analyzing it abstractly, moving matter in ways in which the Creator allows us, governing the planet. Science would be impossible without rationality and freedom, but science would also be nonexistent without an intelligible universe and order. So as you walk through life, fellow wayfarer, however you do it, never stop striving to learn new things. Among your studies, include the study of creation, for its tale is playing out in the atoms of your every heartbeat and breath right now.