



# Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 29, 2017

## Readings

*This week:*

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12–13

1 Corinthians 1:26–31

Matthew 5:1–12a

*Next week:*

Isaiah 58:7–10

1 Corinthians 2:1–5

Matthew 5:13–16

## Psalm Today

Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs! (*Psalm 146*)

Today's presider is Rev. Jack Izzo, S.J.

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

Wednesday, February 1, 5:30 p.m. TMC Speak Out Committee, Thomas House library  
Wednesday, February 1, 7:30 p.m. STA Site Committee, Thomas House library

## From Thomas Merton

When we are constantly in movement, always busy meeting the demands of our social role, passively carried along on the stream of talk in which people mill around from morning to night, we are perhaps able to escape from our deeper self and from the questions it poses....[N]o matter how honest and open we may be in our relations with others, this social self implies a necessary element of artifice. It is always to some extent a mask. It has to be....but do we ever give ourselves a chance to realize that this talkative, smiling, perhaps rough-and-ready personage that we seem to be is not necessarily our real self?...When we are quiet, not just for a few minutes, but for an hour or several hours, we may become uneasily aware of the presence within us of a disturbing stranger, the self that is both "I" and someone else. The self that is not entirely welcome in his own house because he is so different from the everyday character that we have constructed out of our dealings with others—and our infidelities in ourselves.  
—"Creative Silence," in *Love and Living*

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

### ***New TMC bookkeeper Helena Wee:***

Helena Wee has graciously agreed to become the new TMC Bookkeeper (replacing Judy Creek). She has started paying the bills but for a couple of months, Judy will continue making the deposits. Then Helena will be doing the whole job. Judy is very appreciative of her taking over the job. Her cell number is 650-520-7556 and email address is: shhwee@comcast.net.

### ***Your heart is needed:***

The Heart and Home Collaborative, a women's night shelter, is now open for 15 selected homeless women at the University Lutheran church on the corner of Stanford and Bowdoin in Palo Alto. They are providing these ladies a safe, warm place to sleep, support services and nourishment for 6 weeks during the harsh winter nights.

STA's Parish Human Concerns Committee has committed to providing an evening meal for 15 ladies on February 6. If you are able, please send asap any donations to the Pastoral Center, 3290 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto 94306, noting Heart and Home Collaborative, so this meal can be prepared and shared.

A group of Stanford students, specialists in social services and community volunteers have come together to provide this needed service. Additional help is most welcome from the community.

Many thanks to all of you!

*The Human Concerns Committee.*

### ***Sojourners' Jim Wallis speaks January 30:***

You are invited to join Sojourners president Jim Wallis in Sunnyvale for an event on his new book: *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America*.

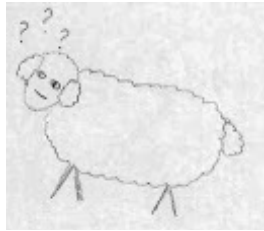
On Monday, January 30th, Jim will be speaking at Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church in Sunnyvale from 7:30-9:00 pm., 728 West Fremont Ave., Sunnyvale.

In *America's Original Sin*, Jim offers a prophetic and deeply personal call to action in overcoming the racism so ingrained in American society. He speaks candidly to Christians, urging them to cross a new bridge toward racial justice and healing.

Jim Wallis is the editor-in-chief of *Sojourners* magazine, a progressive monthly publication of the Christian social justice organization Sojourners. The magazine publishes editorials and articles on Christianity and politics, the church and social issues, social justice, and Christian living.

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.

### ***"The Ewe" is coming February 18:***



Plans for a presentation and discussion with "The Ewe", a perceptive and provocative commentator on the present-day Catholic Church, are proceeding. The TMC Spiritual Education Committee has arranged for the event on Saturday, February 18, from 10:00 am till noon at Mitchell Park Community Center, 3700 Middlefield Road in Palo Alto.

"The Ewe" writes an anonymous blog (www.questionsfromaewe.blogspot.com) on topics that provoke thought and criticism of the Church that she loves. She holds a master's degree in theology from Loyola (Master of Pastoral Studies, M.P.S.). She is not employed by the Catholic Church but is an executive consultant for a large corporation. (She will be introduced by name in person; we recommend a look at her blogs before the presentation.)

### ***TMC donation envelopes today:***



Please use the envelope enclosed in this bulletin to make your monthly contribution to the support of the Thomas Merton Center. Your dollars make possible the sponsorship of the 8:45 Sunday Mass, monthly contributions to Seton School (\$1,000) and the Ecumenical Hunger Program (\$40), spiritual education talks, retreats, and the publication of this bulletin. Lay-led, self-sustaining, self-generating is TMC—thanks to all who contribute.

**PRAY FOR US:** 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, Fr. John Hester, Dean Judd, 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.]

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## God is with even the United States:



[Fr. George Aranha, former pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, celebrated the 8:45 Mass last Sunday, January 22. This is the homily he gave and was kind enough to share—unfortunately without the ad libs.]

First and foremost, even though I will comment on politics this morning, I am not taking sides. I am simply looking to find a connection between the Word of God and current events.

Well, ready or not, it finally happened! Donald J. Trump is the 45th president of the United States. In a newspaper cartoon, among the thousands gathered for the inauguration, someone holds up a sign which reads: “Not my president”. The person in the next seat says: “Hillary, let it go”.

Whether we are interested in presidential politics or not, the next four years will be very interesting and very intriguing. What are your thoughts and feelings since the inaugural last Friday? When a couple of Trump supporters were interviewed by a journalist, they were asked to say one word to summarize how they felt: one said ‘excited’ and the other, ‘hopeful’. Hillary supporters on the other hand may have had a traumatic experience of grief when they first saw the results of the Electoral College giving Donald the presidency. Grief, they say, goes through stages. Are you in denial? Do you have regrets? Are you still in shock? Are you excited about the future? Do you feel included or excluded? Are you sad or hopeful? Do you accept what is and are prepared to move on? Please share with a neighbor next to you or behind you.

In our Tuesday Bible study where we reflect on the Sunday scriptures, because of the call of the disciples in today’s gospel, I asked what I called a controversial question: is Donald Trump called like the first disciples were? The immediate responses were: Was Saddam Hussein called? Was Hitler called? I could feel the shock, the ridicule and the anger in that room. Yesterday, the day after the inauguration, thousands and thousands of women and some men gathered in Washington D.C.--and in more than 600 cities in the U.S. and all over the world--to march and to protest and to say the fight will go on.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said: “Some people come into our lives as blessings; some people come as lessons!” What lessons can we learn from our experience of the last 18 months?

Some people have remarked that we are today more the

Divided States of America than the United States. So in our present reality we can relate to St. Paul’s message to the Corinthians. He had established the Corinthian community about 51 A.D. But several years later he received reports of divisions and factionalism, and openly immoral behavior, in this international coastal city, and aberrations even in the celebration of the Lord’s supper. Every family and every community has issues and problems. The problem of divisions within the church is one of Paul’s major concerns. Some members of the Corinthian church aligned themselves exclusively with a particular teacher or preacher of the good news. St. Paul insists that Christians belong to no one but Christ. Teachers like Peter, Apollos or Paul proclaim the Gospel—but Christ himself is the good news. The good news about America is Americans like you and me. It is not the president or members of his cabinet. They can be held accountable if, as Pope Francis has said to President Trump, they do not commit themselves to human dignity and the common good.

In Isaiah the land belonging to the northernmost tribes of Israel, called Zebulun and Naphtali, were first seized by the Assyrian army in 721 B.C. Despite these powerful Assyrian invaders, Isaiah exhorts God’s people to cease seeking alliances with foreign nations for protection from invasion. Rather, they must ally themselves with the Lord alone. They must trust in the power of the Lord. The deeper lesson in this reading from Isaiah is that God is with us even in our darkness. When we walk in darkness trusting in the Lord we will rise up from our gloom and despair and see with joy the light of salvation. Isaiah describes a future king, the true son of David who will completely and totally rely on the Lord. In later centuries, as we heard in today’s Gospel, the Christian community understood Isaiah’s vision of a coming descendant of David in light of Jesus, the promised messiah

When Jesus begins to preach, his first message is: “repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.” The literal French word for repent is *repenser*: to think again. With the installation of a new president, Americans are called to repent: to think again about leadership, democracy, the economy, the environment and climate change, immigration, health care for all, nuclear weapons, radical Islamic terrorism, world trade and so on. In the end, the United States is not only about the president but about every American called to responsibility and action. Just as the first disciples put aside their nets, boats and even families to follow Jesus, let us also put aside our prejudices, narrow mindedness and divisions for the good of all. In the kingdom of God all are welcome. #

## ***Merton and Muhammad Ali:***

On an afternoon in 1958, near the shopping district at Walnut and Fourth Streets in Louisville, Ky., Thomas Merton was moving about inconspicuously gathering supplies for the Abbey at Gethsemani. The monastery, established in 1848 by the Order of Trappist Cistercians, is in Nelson County, south of Louisville near Bardstown. It is where Merton lived as a Trappist monk beginning in 1941.

Merton's autobiography "The Seven Storey Mountain," published in 1948, and other works on interfaith dialogue, peace and nonviolence had made him an international best-selling author. The *Washington Post* would later call him the most significant Catholic writer of the 20th century. In an address to Congress, Pope Francis described Merton as a thinker "who opened new horizons for souls and for the church" and "a man of dialogue, a promoter of peace between peoples and religions."

That afternoon on Walnut Street Merton had a revelation that, according to his biographer, William H. Shannon, caused him to rethink the separateness of his life at the abbey. Merton experienced "the glorious destiny that simply comes from being a human person and from being united with, not separated from, the rest of the human race." It was as if, Merton himself said, "I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts." Merton would emerge from the confines of the abbey and become a significant figure in the 1960s social justice movement.

Twenty years later, in 1978, Walnut Street was renamed Muhammad Ali Boulevard, after my late husband. In 2008, the intersection at Fourth Street and Muhammad Ali Boulevard was dedicated as "Thomas Merton Square." It would have been difficult to predict in 1958 that the divergent paths of the two men would someday be merged in the permanent markers of the same city street. At the time of Merton's revelation, 16-year-old Muhammad was across town delivering his own revelation to a series of opponents on his way to a gold medal and the World Heavyweight Championship.

But by the 1960s, their voices in support of peace and justice began to merge. Both men had been shaken from their respective sanctuaries of literary and athletic attainment by the harsh realities of a nation deeply divided by war, race and social inequality. In 1968, during his last days, Merton set off for China and India to visit the Dalai Lama and other faith leaders concerned about the conditions of the world. By this time Muhammad was standing by the courage of his convictions in his refusal to go to Vietnam, a position ultimately vin-

dicated in a unanimous decision of the Supreme Court.

It is the convergence of their message of faith that bears noting as we mark what would have been Muhammad's 75th birthday on Jan. 17. Over time, Muhammad's deep, evolving devotion to God, whom as a Muslim he called Allah, came to be rooted in his love of all people. Boxing had taken him around the world and it opened his eyes to the beauty in diversity. Akin to Merton's revelation, Muhammad was fond of saying, "the key to a man's soul is in his heart."

Like Merton, whom he never met, Muhammad was naturally drawn to the power in all faiths and at his direction his memorial service included an imam and an Islamic scholar, two Baptist ministers, two Jewish rabbis, a Roman Catholic priest, a Native American tribal chief and faith leader, and a Buddhist monk. Muhammad famously said, "Rivers, ponds, lakes and streams — they all have different names, but they all contain water. Just as religions do — they all contain truths."

As America stands divided once again in the aftermath of a polarizing election, we would do well to follow the example of Thomas Merton and Muhammad Ali in their approach to diversity, pluralism and faith. Regardless of our differences, we share a common humanity, something that will always bind us to each other. We must find ways to reconnect to each other by developing empathy and by giving back. In truth, America has always faced division in varying degrees. The test for America has always been how she manages her division, how she finds and clings to a common purpose, and how she spins the tapestry of her diversity.

Neither the monk nor the boxer relied on political leaders to set their course in matters of justice, equality and tolerance. Neither man was elected to high office, but their messages in print, in words and in deeds reverberated across the globe and in the highest chambers of power. Although one was a scholar and the other bore no papered credential, they each challenged convention or, as Pope Francis said of Merton, "the certitudes of the time."

Muhammad was fond of the Buddhist expression, "The only constant in the universe is change." He drew on those words to embrace each day and each person he met. Merton said, "we do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone — we find it with another. Happiness is not a matter of intensity but of balance, order, rhythm and harmony."

[By Lonnie Ali, in the *New York Times*, Jan. 17, 2017. Mrs. Ali is a philanthropist and chairwoman of "Ali in All of Us," a campaign to inspire community service.]