



## Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 26, 2017

### Readings

*This week:*

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6–7, 10–13a

Ephesians 5:8–14

John 9:1–41

*Next week:*

Ezekiel 37:12–14

Romans 8:8–11

John 11:1–45

### Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want. (*Psalm 23*)

### Today

Today's presider is Fr. Xavier Lavagetto, O.P.

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

No TMC meetings this week.

### From Thomas Merton

What does the solitary life mean? It is the same as all monastic life. There is one basic, essential thing in the monastic life and in the Christian life, the thing that we all seek in one way or another, and it is some assurance that it is possible in this kind of life *to put away all care*, to live without care, to not have to care....[T]he life of the world, in the bad sense of the word, is a life of care. It is a life of useless care. And it is a life of self-defeating care, because it is a life which cannot confront the inevitable fact of death....It circles around and around and it cannot escape the fact that death is at the end of it—and then death comes and death is the end, period. A life that has nothing but a straight line towards the grave and a lot of little circular lines to forget the grave as you travel towards the grave is a life of care, and it is life of ever-increasing care and it is a life of frustration and it is a life of futility....

...[The] hermit life is supposed to be the life in which all care is completely put aside. First of all because it is a death. It completely accepts death as a...built-in fact of life. It is a death to society,...to certain kinds of support, and it is a renunciation even of care. ...You go into solitude in order to cast your care upon the Lord.

—“*A Life Free From Care*”

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

### 22nd Annual Seton Scramble for Students:



You're invited! Please join us for our annual fundraising event at the exclusive Stanford Golf Course on **Monday, May 8th, 2017**. A full day of golf that includes Hobee's breakfast, boxed-lunch, a Coupa

Cafe catered reception with wine, beer and beverages throughout the day! Your day of golf will be followed by a fun reception and lively auction.

Come and support St. Elizabeth Seton School students and get the opportunity to play golf at Stanford too! *Be sure to take advantage of the Early Bird Pricing before 4/10/17.*

**Registration** at [www.setonpaloalto.org](http://www.setonpaloalto.org)  
Questions? Contact Carmel Caligaris:  
[Development@setonpaloalto.org](mailto:Development@setonpaloalto.org), 650-326-1258.

### 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—this is TMC.

Thanks to all who contribute.

### March means TMC Membership renewal:



Thomas Merton Center (TMC) membership materials have been sent or given to all current TMC members. *If you would like to become a member of TMC, a membership*

*application form is available in the church vestibule.*

The Thomas Merton Center is a membership-based nonprofit religious education organization required by its bylaws to register its membership annually. Membership fees are minimal—\$15 per individual or \$30 per family. Your choice to become a member helps to keep this Catholic, lay-led, progressive faith community active. Your membership shows your support for sustaining the Sunday 8:45 a.m. Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas church, the adult spiritual education programs, and educational opportunities at St. Elizabeth Seton School in Palo Alto.

Please contact Kay Williams for more information: [kaywill@pacbell.net](mailto:kaywill@pacbell.net), 650-270-4188.

### Seton Summer Book Collection update:

Thanks to all donation site volunteers and parishioners who contributed a total of \$1,438 toward the purchase of new books as well as those of you who donated several new books. The books will be wrapped and presented to each child just before summer vacation. The children always respond very enthusiastically and are grateful for your gifts. Thank you for your continued generosity.

—STA Human Concerns Committee



### "Before the Flood" showing April 8:

Come on Saturday, April 8, at 2:30 pm to the St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center for a showing of a stirring and informative 2-hour video: "Before the Flood," a 2016 documentary film about climate change.



It captures a three-year personal journey alongside Leonardo DiCaprio, Academy Award-winning actor and U.N. Messenger of Peace, as he interviews individuals from every facet of society in both developing and developed nations who provide unique, impassioned and pragmatic views on what must be done today and in the future to prevent catastrophic disruption of life on our planet.

Shown originally on the National Geographic Channel, the video is part of National Geographic's commitment to covering climate change and is widely available. It was shown at OLR some months ago under the auspices of the parish Green Committee. This April 8 showing is sponsored by the STA Site Committee and the TMC Spiritual Education Committee and is free and open to the public.

Spread the word, bring family and friends. Entertaining education in the neighborhood—don't miss it.

Please join us after Mass in the Thomas House for coffee and donuts. We especially encourage newcomers or those passing through town to stop by for food and fellowship.

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# COMMUNITY FORUM

*Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns*

## ***New Camaldoli Hermitage seeking help:***

TMC friend Margaret Mary Rose has reached out to our community on behalf of the Benedictine monks of the New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur. The huge storms in January and February left a dozen monks trapped in Big Sur. The monks have had to cancel all reservations through March, but their spirits remain intact.

The prior, Cyprian Consiglio, wrote on March 1: “Thank you for all of your generosity and concern for our monastic community and Big Sur. At this point we are conserving food and fuel and expect to be able to weather being locked in. We are evacuating one of our elders to town with another monk and a staff member. We have also placed another elder monk, who suffered a heart attack and a fractured hip and had to be air-lifted out last week, in a skilled nursing facility in Monterey. I am attempting to get through the construction zone and back to finalize all those things, but many friends and benefactors on the outside as well as our neighbors here on the central coast have been enormously helpful, for which we are extremely grateful... As we begin the sober season of Lent the monks are all using this time to deepen our monastic practice through silence, solitude and simplicity, feeling very grateful that we have each other and so many others to care for us. – Prior Cyprian”

The storm destroyed dozens of sections of Highway 1 and badly damaged the entrance road to the Hermitage. This storm is historic in terms of the damage it has caused and a true catastrophe for the people and businesses of Big Sur. The roads to the north and south of New Camaldoli could be shut down for months while they are rebuilt. Every business in the affected Big Sur coast will be closed or greatly cut back for the foreseeable future. The Hermitage property is right in the middle of the most fragile part of the highway and so they are totally cut off at several points from all comings and goings. Hospitality is their primary source of income, and they have not been able to receive guests for nearly two months, which is a huge financial blow to the Hermitage. They have now had to cancel all reservations for the month of March, and that may continue into April and May, depending on how fast repairs are done. So, like many here on the coast, they are in a position where they could use some support in getting through this season of storms.

Donate through: <https://www.gofundme.com/newcamaldolirelief>, or contributions, payable to New Camaldoli Hermitage, may be mailed to:  
New Camaldoli Hermitage  
62475 Highway 1  
Big Sur, CA 93920-9533

## ***What is there left for all in which to believe?***

[By Sr. Joan Chittister, 3/16/17]

On what can we possibly rebuild our unity at a time like this? Is there no hope left for solidarity, given these cavernous divides between us, even if we can't all get behind the president as a person right now?

Does the Constitution itself mean enough to us any more to become our beacon back to what Americanism was and wants yet to be?

The question is, do we still believe and support together the principles of free speech? And if so, what kind of free speech do we really want it to be? Is there no way to conduct political rallies any longer under the same concerns for civility and respect for the other that was once the character of American political discourse?

Do we still believe and support together the picture of an America that opens her arms to the tired and the poor, the “huddled masses yearning to breathe free?” And if so, what will it take to welcome them now — and to protect them once they are here?

Do we still believe in the integrity of the presidency itself or are we willing to go on forever saying “he doesn't mean what he says” and letting loose talk and random interpretation substitute for facts? And if so, will we ever know again what we are really voting for?

From where I stand, our political salvation in times like this, may well require that we come together across our separate political filters in groups more concentrated on a recommitment to American values than on our various political agendas or even our political candidates.

Rather than shout the party line, maybe our Congressional representatives should be moderating a series of town meetings on the subject of American consensus. Then maybe they, too, could hear once more what we all want to believe in. Then maybe they, too, would devote themselves to bringing those ideas back to Washington again. Even to the White House itself.

Otherwise, never mind “getting behind the president.” It's already too late for that. It's the preservation of the soul of the country that needs our support. Right now, it's “getting behind the Constitution” that counts — for both sides of the divide. #

**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.]

## What would Merton and Berrigan say about the Benedict Option?

[By James T. Keane, a former associate editor at *America*, and an editor at Orbis Books in Maryknoll, N.Y. In *America Magazine*, 3/15/17]

When the theologian William Stringfellow moved to Block Island, R.I., in 1967 with his longtime partner, the poet Anthony Towne, they named their new home “Eschaton,” or the Last Day, “because *eschaton* means the end of the world coinciding with the beginning of the world as the Kingdom of God.” The home does indeed have an otherworldly quality to it, located high atop a bluff on a sparsely populated island. During the winter, the wind-whipped environs and low stone walls are reminiscent of the Aran Islands, where generations of Irish monastics prayerfully endured harsh conditions in what surely seemed to them the end of the world.

Indeed, Stringfellow biographer Bill Wylie-Kellerman has associated the move to Eschaton with Stringfellow’s own monastic yearnings. “To ‘step off America,’ onto the ferry, and then enter their Island home,” Wylie-Kellerman wrote, “was to shed the anxieties of time-driven existence, to enter a rhythm of prayerful freedom.” That *fuga mundi*, a “flight from the world,” has been part of the Christian tradition since the Desert Fathers imitated Jesus’ scriptural example in the earliest centuries of Christianity, and it persists today. Witness Thomas Merton, in *The Seven Storey Mountain*, relating the moment he entered the Abbey of Gethsemani: “So Brother Matthew locked the gate behind me, and I was enclosed in the four walls of my new freedom.”

Merton’s popularity and social activism would ironically lead him outside Gethsemani’s walls many times over the years, and he hosted a retreat at the abbey in 1964 for a number of civil rights and antiwar activists, including Daniel Berrigan, S.J. Six years later, Berrigan would lead the F.B.I. on a four-month chase after going underground to delay his imprisonment for the Catonsville Nine action, when he and eight others burned draft cards with napalm in protest of the Vietnam War. Berrigan was finally caught on Block Island (Stringfellow and Towne had been sheltering him at Eschaton) by F.B.I. agents posing as birdwatchers; the photo of two stern agents leading away a smiling, handcuffed Berrigan is now an iconic symbol of the anti-war movement.

Berrigan would return to Eschaton regularly over the years, and eventually painted a poem on the wall of the back cottage where he stayed: “Where this house/ dares/ stand/ at Land’s End/ and the sea/ turns in sleep/ ponderous menacing/ and our spirit fails and runs/ — landward seaward askelter—/ we pray You/ protect/ from the Law’s/ clawed/ outreach/ from the second

death/ from Envy’s tooth/ from doom’s great knell/ All/ who dwell here.”

The three men—Stringfellow, Merton and Berrigan—were some of our nation’s harshest critics in the 1960s, not just for America’s wars but for its obsession with idols: money, power, sex, personal autonomy and more. Stringfellow was the least well-known of the three but perhaps the sharpest judge, profoundly critical of a culture he saw as decadent, obsolescent, “a fallen nation,” a “demonic principality,” one superficially Christian and yet endlessly trivializing of the Bible.

Their witness and writings came to my mind numerous times over the last few weeks as various American Christian pundits from across the theological spectrum have debated the need for a new Benedict Option, a retreat (in part or in full) from mainstream culture to more monastic settings where an authentic, orthodox Christianity can be preserved from the corruption and hostile secularism of contemporary American culture. What would, I wonder, these three Jeremiahs have added to the debate?

For Merton and Berrigan, I think the answer is fairly straightforward: however long one might need to go away and rest awhile, for them the vocation of most Christians is to participate in the saving work of God, not just in prayer but in other forms of direct action and life “in the world.” After all, no matter what some of their clueless fans might think, a monk’s vocation is toward God, not a strategic retreat from something else. But it is the acid Stringfellow whose answer is the most surprising, because this ardent critic of both U.S. culture and mainstream Christianity, author of the tellingly titled *An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in a Strange Land*, did not truck with escapist impulses among his peers. In 1967, the very same year he moved to Eschaton, he wrote the following:

If they honored the Bible more highly, they would appreciate that the Word of God will endure demythologizing, that the Word cannot be threatened by anything whatever given humanity to discover and know through any science or discipline of the world.... More than that, if the fundamentalists actually took the Bible seriously, they would *inevitably* love the world more readily, instead of fearing the world, because the Word of God is free and active in this world and Christians can only comprehend the Word out of their involvement in this world, as the Bible so redundantly testifies.

So much for the *fuga mundi*. Stringfellow, like his fellow critics, might have profoundly distrusted many parts of the cultural world in which he lived, but it did not stop him from loving it. #