



# Fifth Sunday of Lent

April 2, 2017

## Readings

*This week:*

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Romans 8:8-11

John 11:1-45

*Next week:*

Isaiah 50:4-7

Philippians 2:6-11

Matthew 26:14–27:66

## Psalm

With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption. (*Psalm 130*)

## Today

Today's presider is Fr. Kevin Ballard, SJ.

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).

**Today we recommence distribution of Communion under both species—and can touch hands at the Kiss of Peace and Our Father.**

## Calendar

No meetings this week.

## From Thomas Merton

Indeed, the truth that many people never understand, until it is too late, is that the more you try to avoid suffering, the more you suffer, because smaller and more insignificant things begin to torture you, in proportion to your fear of being hurt. The one who does most to avoid suffering is, in the end, the one who suffers most: and his suffering comes to him from things so little and so trivial that one can say that it is no longer objective at all. ... This is another of the great perversions by which the devil uses our philosophies to turn our whole nature inside out, and eviscerate all our capacities for good, turning them against ourselves.

—*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 NOTES

*News Announcements Requests*

## **Seton Scramble on May 8:**

88% of the children at Seton school need financial support to be able to go to school there. The school's primary fundraiser is the annual golf tournament at Stanford's golf course, on Monday, May 8. You don't have to play golf to support the school at this event. There is a silent auction after the tournament, and the school is collecting donations now, to be auctioned on May 8. These can be old or new treasures from your closet, or a trip or a stay in your Sierra cabin, etc. All proceeds from the golf tournament and auction event benefit the St. Elizabeth Seton Scholarship Fund. Contact the Seton office at [tbarragan@setonpaloalto.org](mailto:tbarragan@setonpaloalto.org), or call (650) 326-9004.

## **"Before the Flood":**

Join Leonardo De Caprio for a look at how climate change affects our environment and what society can do to prevent the demise of endangered species, ecosystems and native communities across the planet. "Before the Flood," a 96-minute documentary will be shown on Saturday, April 8, 2:30 pm, in the St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center. Sponsored by the STA Site Committee and the TMC Spiritual Education Committee, this event is free and open to the public.



# COMMUNITY FORUM

*Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns*

## **Five invitations:**

### **What death can teach about living:**

*By Frank Ostaseski, a Buddhist teacher, an international lecturer, and a leading voice in contemplative end-of-life care. He is the cofounder of the Zen Hospice Project, and founder of the Metta Institute. He has been honored by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and AARP named him one of America's Fifty Most Innovative People. He has offered seminars at Harvard Medical School, the Mayo Clinic, and Heidelberg University, and he teaches at major spiritual centers around the globe.*

... Many people, ordinary people, develop profound insights and engage in a powerful process of transformation near the end of their lives. One through which they emerge as someone larger, more expansive, more essential and real than the small, separate selves they had previously taken themselves to be. This is not a fairy-tale happy ending that contradicts the suffering that came before, but rather a recognition that transformation is possible even in tragedy. The discovery of this capacity regularly occurs for many people in the final months, days, or sometimes even minutes of life.

... Death is not waiting for us at the end of a long road. Death is always with us, in the marrow of every passing moment. She is the secret teacher hiding in plain sight. She helps us to discover what matters most. And the good news is we don't have to wait until the end of our lives to realize the wisdom that death has to offer. ... And so, I want to extend five invitations to sit down with death now, to let her guide you toward living a more meaningful and loving life. ...

**1. Don't Wait.** When people are dying, it is easy for

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## **Five questions for Anne Lamott:**

*By Alma Tassi, in the 2017 March-April issue of "Spirituality and Health," and at [spiritualityhealth.com](http://spiritualityhealth.com). The perfectly imperfect Anne Lamott expounds on the merits of mercy in her new book, Hallelujah Anyway: Rediscovering Mercy. Lamott is a political activist, public speaker, and author of many books.*

### **1. Embracing mercy for some of us can be a long road. What's the essential step to getting there?**

In my experience, any willingness to change our hearts, minds, or habits begins with feeling the pain of staying the way we are. So when it begins to hurt our lives to live without mercy, for others and especially for ourselves, we begin to be willing to be changed—softened, tenderized. But yikes! It's a risk, because people and life can be so dicey.



### **2. What has been a significant moment of mercy for your own self?**

Learning to love and passionately care for this aging, saggy, wrinkly, beautiful body of mine.

### **3. You describe how allowing mercy into your life "opens the drawer" to the treasures you've hid in the past. Can you share a treasure you discovered?**

The most beautiful way to live is with a soft and generous heart, and, like many women, I have found it easy to treat everyone in the world, even scary men, with compassion. But in the drawer, I found a deep, abiding compassion and allegiance with my own self—my own

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## ***Five facts about the assassination of MLK, Jr.:***

*By Joe Carter, a Communications Specialist for The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, at erlc.com. Carter has an MBA from Marymount University and is the editor of the NIV Lifehacks Bible and the co-author of How to Argue Like Jesus.*

This Tuesday marks the forty-ninth anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Here are five facts you should know about the killing of the civil rights leader in Memphis, Tennessee.

1. The killing of King in 1968 was the second attempt on his life. A decade before he was assassinated, King was nearly stabbed to death in Harlem when a mentally ill African-American woman who believed he was conspiring against her with communists, stabbed him in the chest with a letter opener. He underwent emergency surgery, and remained hospitalized for several weeks but made a full recovery. The doctor who performed the operation said, "Had Dr. King sneezed or coughed the weapon would have penetrated the aorta. . . . He was just a sneeze away from death"

2. On April 4, 1968, King was assassinated by #277 on the FBI's Most Wanted Fugitives list. In 1967, James Earl Ray escaped from the Missouri State Penitentiary by hiding in a truck transporting bread from the prison bakery. On the day of the assassination Ray took a room in a boarding house that had a view to the motel.

3. King was on the balcony of the motel when he was shot. . . . Civil rights leader Ralph Abernathy cradled King's head while Marrell McCollough, an undercover Memphis police officer, used a towel to stop the flow of blood. King was taken to St. Joseph's where doctors attempted emergency surgery before pronouncing him dead at 7:05 pm. He was 39 years old.

4. News of King's assassination prompted major outbreaks of looting, arson, and violence, resulting in death and major property damage in more than 100 American cities. Altogether, 43 men and women were killed, approximately 3,500 were injured, and 27,000 were arrested. Not until over 58,000 National Guardsmen and army troops joined local state and police forces did the uprisings cease. As historian Peter B. Levy says, "during Holy Week 1968, the United States experienced its greatest wave of social unrest since the Civil War."

5. After a two-month long, international manhunt, Ray was captured on June 8, 1968 at London's Heathrow Airport. On March 10, 1969, Ray pleaded guilty to King's murder and was sentenced to 99 years in Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary. . . . Later that same year Ray became the #351 on the FBI's Most Wanted Fugitives list after he and six other convicts escaped from the prison. He was recaptured three days later and given another year in prison, bringing his sentence to 100 years. [He died in 1998.]

## ***Women's voices rise up in Rome:***

*Abridged from an article by Gerard O'Connell, March 9, 2017, at [www.americamagazine.org](http://www.americamagazine.org)*

The essential role of women in the work for peace and social justice was the message Sister Simone Campbell brought to the fourth annual celebration of International Women's Day at the Vatican on March 8, jointly organized by Voices of Faith and the Jesuit Refugee Service. A Sister of Social Service and executive director of Network, a U.S. Catholic social justice lobby, Sister Campbell praised Pope Francis' efforts to bring the plight of the poor and the marginalized to the attention of the church.

"We rejoice in *Laudato Si'*, that [says] care for the earth and care for the poor come from the same reality of exploitation of both and that until we learn to end the exploitation, we will not care for those at the margins, we will not care for our earth," she said. Highlighting four virtues young women need to make their voices heard, Sister Campbell said that joy and a holy curiosity to "listen, ask questions and learn from others" were important. She also encouraged women to engage in "sacred gossip," explaining the need to share the stories they have learned from others so that those stories "can multiply" in others. Today, she said, she is seeking to "take the Gospel to Capitol Hill on health care" and emphasized that "the only way forward is that we work together." . . .

Other presenters included four women refugees, among them Dr. Mirelle Twaygira. As a child she had escaped from the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and had, thanks to her grandfather, found refuge in Malawi. There she was educated and was later given a scholarship to study medicine in Beijing. She now works as a doctor assisting refugees in Malawi. Two sisters, Nagham and Shadan, also spoke. After escaping the war in Syria, they made the hazardous crossing by boat from Turkey to Greece and now live in Belgium where they help fellow refugees. The fourth testimony came from Marguerite Barankitse, a Tutsi from Burundi who saved Hutu children during the terrible interethnic killings there, and for this was threatened by both sides. She continues her faith-inspired work helping others. . . .

Flavia Agnes, a Catholic activist and women's rights lawyer from Mumbai, India, and co-founder of the Majlis Legal Centre, told how after experiencing violence in her own marriage she decided to work to break "the cycle of violence" affecting women. She studied and became a lawyer and has since dedicated her life to helping women and girls who suffer violence in various forms, inside and outside their home. "You have to be courageous when you see injustice, you have to stir the waters," said this woman who has helped 50,000 women and girls. . . .

## ***What death can teach about living, continued:***

them to recognize that every minute, every breath counts. But the truth is, death is always with us. Everything is constantly changing. Nothing is permanent. This idea can both frighten and inspire us. Yet, embracing the truth of life's precariousness helps us to appreciate its precariousness. We stop wasting our lives on meaningless activities. We learn to not hold our opinions, our desires, and even our own identities so tightly. Instead of pinning our hopes on a better future, we focus on the present and being grateful for what we have in front of us right now.

**2. Welcome Everything; Push Away Nothing.** In welcoming everything, we don't have to like what's arising or necessarily agree with it, but we need to be willing to meet it, to learn from it. The word *welcome* confronts us; it asks us to temporarily suspend our usual rush to judgment and to be open, to what is showing up at our front door. To receive it in the spirit of hospitality. . . .

**3. Bring Your Whole Self to the Experience.** We all like to look good. We long to be seen as capable, strong, intelligent, sensitive, spiritual, or at least well-adjusted. Few of us want to be known for our helplessness, fear, anger, or ignorance. Yet more than once I have found an "undesirable" aspect of myself—one about which I previously had felt ashamed—to be the very quality that allowed me to meet another person's suffering with compassion instead of fear or pity. It is not only our expertise, but exploration of our own suffering that enables us to build an empathetic bridge and be of real assistance to others. . . .

**4. Find a Place of Rest in the Middle of Things.** . . . There is a Zen story about a monk who is vigorously sweeping the temple grounds. Another monk walks by and snips, "Too busy." The first monk replies, "You should know there is one who is not too busy." The moral of the story is that while the sweeping monk may have outwardly appeared to the casual observer as "too busy," actively performing his daily monastic duties, inwardly he was not busy. He could recognize the quietness of his state of mind, the part of himself that was at rest in the middle of things.

**5. Cultivate "Don't Know" Mind.** This describes a mind that's open and receptive. It is not limited by agendas, roles, and expectations. It is free to discover. . . . The night before my open-heart surgery, my 26-year-old son Gabe and I had a tender conversation. Our sharing was filled with reminiscing, kindness, and laughter. At one point, Gabe became quite serious and asked, "Dad, are you going to live through this surgery?" Now I love my son beyond words, and like any father, I wanted to reassure him that I would be just fine. Then I heard myself say, "I'm not taking sides." My answer surprised us both. What I meant was that I wasn't taking sides with

life or death. Either way, I trusted that everything would be okay. I don't know where the words came from; they spilled from me without censorship. I wasn't trying to appear sage or to be a good Buddhist. Yet we both were reassured by my response. I think it was because we knew we were in the presence of the truth spoken with love.

I view these lessons as five. . . bottomless practices that can be continually explored and deepened. They. . . are five invitations for you to be fully present for every aspect of your life.

## ***Five questions for Anne Lamott, continued:***

gravely imperfect, sometimes annoying self. When we feel this, we are halfway home.

**4. Some would say mercy is a sign of weakness. What is your response?**

This is what we were taught as children, in our homes and in culture, because everyone wanted us to forge ahead, achieve great things, make the family look good, and feel protected by the armor or insensitivity. I believe that a rich, spacious, powerful life, full of immediacy and delight, begins when we take off the armor.

**5. In light of the current state of a divided world, how can mercy be part of the solution?**

Mercy is synonymous with compassion, and grace, and generosity of spirit, which seem to be the solutions to almost all our problems. It's very counterintuitive: giving more of ourselves, our time, our treasures, makes us so much richer. To share with and be of service to the world's poor and marginalized is the greatest fulfillment we can know.

Please remember in your prayers this week: Denise Alongi, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Sr. Fran Ciluga, Mary Connors, Mike Cummings, Ken Dias, Fr. Thierry Geris, Deonna Gill, Emily Gill, Joanne Hasegawa, Dick Jackman, François Jamati, Michael Kiriti, Hunter Kubit, Fr. Lavagetto's mother, 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.

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