



21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 27, 2017

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 22:19-23

Romans 11:33-36

Matthew 16:13-20

Next week:

Jeremiah 20:7-9

Romans 12:1-2

Matthew 16:21-27

Psalm

Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands. (*Psalm 138*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. Kevin Ballard.

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, August 28, 7:00 pm

Spiritual Education, Thomas House

From Thomas Merton

The Desert Father Ammonas, disciple of St. Anthony, said: "Behold, my beloved, I have shown you the power of silence, how thoroughly it heals and how fully pleasing it is to God. . . .It is by silence that the saints grew, . . .that the power of God dwelt in them, . . .that the mysteries of God were known to them." The prayer of the heart introduces us into deep interior silence so that we learn to experience its power. For that reason the prayer of the heart has to be always very simple, confined to the simplest of acts and often making use of no words and no thoughts at all.

—*Contemplative Prayer*

COMMUNITY NOTES

News Announcements Requests

Interested in Bible study?:

Are you interested in enhancing your spiritual life, or learning more about your faith, or walking closer to God? Would you be interested in joining a small group of your friends for an interactive Bible study? If you are interested, or have suggestions for a Bible study, please e-mail me, Neale Wade, at neale.wade@outlook.com.

Stanford Medical Center is looking for volunteers:

Stanford Medical Center/Stanford Health Care is looking for bilingual volunteers to assist in their Catholic Holy Communion to the Sick program through the Spiritual Care Department. If you are a compassionate listener and would consider becoming a volunteer, please contact Raksha Patel at (650) 723-5101 or spiritualcare@stanford-healthcare.org for more information.

Support our kids:

The Ecumenical Hunger Program (EHP), in East Palo Alto since 1975, assists people through immediate crises and helps them regain stability and independence. It provides food, clothing, furniture, household essentials, support, and advocacy. At present, it needs new shoes and other school supplies for children in that community, many of whom are students at St. Elizabeth Seton School.

Gift cards and donations can be sent to Ecumenical Hunger Program, 2411 Pulgas Avenue, East Palo Alto 94303. Or for more information, you can contact EHP at (650) 323-7781 or go to their website, ehpcare.org.

This is the last Sunday of the month, so the bulletin includes an envelope for your monthly donation to the Thomas Merton Center. We rely on your support to keep this Mass and our programs going!

Please remember in your prayers this week: Denise Alongi, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Mary Connors, 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.

Please keep bringing food for the Food Closet this summer. Donations have been down, and the Food Closet still needs flip-top soups and entrees, as well as small bottles of water, crackers, granola bars, fruit cups, juice pouches. Please continue to be generous with your food donations, and with your dollars too!

500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation:

Abridged from an article by Fr. Thomas Ryan, CSP, May 2, 2016, at Tomryancsp.org. Fr. Ryan directs the Paulist North American Office for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations in Washington, DC.

... The year 2017 is the 500th anniversary of the publication of Martin Luther's 95 theses in Wittenberg, Germany, which eventually gave rise to what has become known as the Protestant Reformation. It will be the first centenary commemoration that takes place in an ecumenical age. A year of events in approach to the anniversary itself opened on October 31, 2016, and will culminate on October 31, 2017.

... The 2017 commemoration will also mark 50 years of Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue in which representatives of both churches have looked afresh at their own theological traditions and practices, recognizing the influences they have had on each other. Past commemorations have been by and large oppositional, intensifying the conflict between the churches and even leading at times to open hostility. This will be the first commemoration marked by a real desire to come together for its observance.

... What is there to commemorate about the Reformation, Catholics may ask? The answer given by the Commission is the genuineness of Luther's spiritual search and its very positive results in re-emphasizing the centrality of God's free grace in the life of the Church and each Christian. In a chapter entitled, 'New Perspectives on Martin Luther and the Reformation,' the report shows how Roman Catholic scholars have come to a very different evaluation of Luther from the traditionally negative one of the Counter-Reformation and the Roman Catholic Church in general up to the time of Vatican II.

... In the mid-16th century, the context was one of hardening mutual alienation. At the end of the 20th century, by contrast, it was one of increasing mutual rapprochement, powerfully aided by an ecumenically committed Pope and a Lutheran commitment to wide-ranging ecumenical dialogue. ... Today Luther's 95 theses would also be accepted from the Roman Catholic side and [Catholics would] share Luther's criticism of the trade in indulgences at that time. And in Augsburg in 1999 the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation signed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, which ... nullified centuries' old disputes between Catholics and Protestants over the basic truths of the doctrine of justification, which was at the center of the 16th century Reformation.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

More than 350 Christian ethicists release statement condemning white supremacy:

By the Web Editors of Sojourners, August 16, 2017, at sojo.net.

More than 300 concerned Christian theologians and ethicists released a statement Monday condemning white supremacy, racism, neo-Nazi ideals, and xenophobic principles as sin against God. The statement came days after white nationalists marched in Charlottesville, Va., to protest removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee, clashing with counter-protesters. The statement reads in part:

White supremacy and racism deny the dignity of each human being revealed through the Incarnation. The evil of white supremacy and racism must be brought face-to-face before the figure of Jesus Christ, who cannot be confined to any one culture or nationality. Through faith we proclaim that God the Creator is the origin of all human persons. . . .

The group also placed blame on the 2016 election and “the ‘America First’ doctrine “ for fueling xenophobia and emboldening hate groups to practice their racist, supremacist, and nationalistic ideals publicly. This statement came before Trump’s recent news conference in which he blamed both sides for their violent actions, equating the actions of the counter-protestors with the neo-Nazis. The statement also called on Christian leaders in every denomination to denounce white supremacy, racism, and white nationalism in their congregations, reminding them that every person is created in God’s image.

The signers of the statement—written by Tobias Winright, Associate Professor of Theological Ethics at Saint Louis University; MT Dávila, Associate Professor of Christian Ethics at Andover Newton Theological School; Anna Floerke Scheid, Associate Professor of Theology at Duquesne University, and Matthew Tapie, Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies at Saint Leo University—pledged to reject white supremacy and other hate-filled ideals through their teaching, writing, and service.

They said:

- *We reject racism and anti-Semitism, which are radical evils that Christianity must actively resist.*
- *We reject the sinful white supremacy at the heart of the “Alt Right” movement as Christian heresy.*
- *We reject the idolatrous notion of a national god. God cannot be reduced to “America’s god.”*
- *We reject the “America First” doctrine, which is a pernicious and idolatrous error. It foolishly asks Americans to replace the worship of God with the worship of the nation, poisons both our religious traditions and virtuous American patriotism, and isolates this country from the community of nations. Such nationalism erodes our civic and religious life, and fuels xenophobic and racist attacks*

NCR editorial: Charlottesville should compel Catholics to expel poison of racism:

By NCR Editorial Staff, August 18, 2017, at ncr.org.

“Unite the Right,” a rally called by white nationalist, white supremacist and alt-right groups in Emancipation Park, Charlottesville, Virginia, Aug. 12 to protest the city’s decision to remove a statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee, turned bloody and violent. Heather Heyer, 32, a paralegal from Charlottesville, died, and at least 19 people were injured after a driver with ties to white supremacists rammed his car into counterprotesters.

... “Racism is a poison of the soul. It’s the ugly, original sin of our country, an illness that has never fully healed,” Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput wrote in one of the most powerful statements from a Catholic leader. “Blending it with the Nazi salute, the relic of a regime that murdered millions, compounds the obscenity.”

Trump’s response was worse than inadequate. He demonstrated a lack of moral leadership and—again—his lack of qualifications to hold this office. But that is not the subject of this editorial. The question we have before us is: What do we, the American Catholic faith community, do next?

As Americans, we must be honest about U.S. history. “The Confederacy was on the wrong side of history and humanity,” said New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu, explaining why he began removing Confederate statues from his city this spring. The Confederacy betrayed our union and fought for a system that enslaved people. Lee and Jackson cannot be equated with Washington and Jefferson. That honesty does not exculpate our Founding Fathers from their sins of racism and sexism, but it allows us to talk about our historical failings and move forward. Yet, what happened in Charlottesville is much more than a dispute about statues and history. Charlottesville reveals the weeping wound of racism that white Americans try mightily to ignore, hide or rationalize. Charlottesville is a visceral reminder that we can’t

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against immigrants and religious minorities, including our Jewish and Muslim neighbors.

- *We confess that all human beings possess God-given dignity and are members of one human family, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or country of origin.*
- *We proclaim that the gospel of Jesus Christ has social and political implications. Those who claim salvation in Jesus Christ, therefore, must publicly name evil, actively resist it, and demonstrate a world of harmony and justice in the midst of racial, religious and indeed all forms of human diversity.*

Finding clarity in meditation:

By Ram Dass, August 15, 2017, at spiritualityhealth.com. Ram Dass (born Richard Alpert) is an American spiritual teacher and the author of the seminal 1971 book Be Here Now.

The nature of a defense mechanism is that most of it is underground and you're not even conscious of it. It's just acting on you, from a deep fear. To me, it's a little bit like skimming soup; when you meditate and get really quiet, and then in the quietness, stuff starts to come up. If you're quiet enough, you sort of skim it off the top as it comes up. You notice the way in which you're offended, or where you're holding prejudices, you notice whatever the mind is doing. This is getting into the subtle stuff of meditating as there are different levels of meditating.

In the deeper levels of meditation, not the deepest, but the deeper, you don't deal with the content of thought at all; you just deal with the mechanics of thought. At the next level up, you deal with the content of thoughts, a defense against suffering [that] has content in it. At the deeper level, it's just another thought you're clinging to; it doesn't matter which one it is; it can be a good thought or a bad thought, anything, it's just a thought.

The game is in pulling your awareness back from identifying with thought. With any thought that comes up, you notice it, and then go back to your breath. You notice and then go back to your breath, and back to your breath, and back to your breath. You keep doing that for years, months, a lifetime, and then pretty soon your mind starts to stay at your breath.

Thoughts don't go away all of the time and other stuff may come up, and you'll start to go to a whole new set of stuff but if you keep having that centering device of meditation, you'll keep cleaning out the Augean stables of all that stuff in your mind. . . . Now there are some times in practice where you start to get clear, and then you see that some stuff comes up which really catches you within the content of the thought forms. You'll see that you're not really effective in having any denial toward it, because you see that to really let something go, you have to acknowledge it. When it comes up, you can't say, "I don't want to look at that. Go away!" You gotta say, "Yeah sure, of course," and then you can go back to your primary object of meditation.

Sometimes the stuff comes up and you can't acknowledge it; it's just too much; and then you find outside help useful. I've gone into therapy for a while at times to have somebody who will mirror for me because I can't do it for myself. . . . A couple of months of this is useful, and then I go back to my meditation practice; so it doesn't all go away at once. And as far as the suffering is concerned, if you're afraid of your heart breaking, so let it break, so here we are. It's an eternally broken heart and within that, here we are.

NCR editorial, continued:

turn away from this. As people of faith, it would be good to talk here about bringing healing to this wound, but the sad fact is that we, as a community, are not yet ready to become an instrument of healing because we have not yet expelled the poison of racism from our own body.

Leaders in the National Black Catholic Congress, which met this summer, informed members that the U.S. bishops are working on a pastoral letter to follow up on their 1979 pastoral letter on racism, "Brothers and Sisters to Us," which condemned racial prejudice as a heresy. At the congress, Bishop Edward Braxton of Belleville, Illinois, explained that the bishops had hoped that their letter would contribute to a process of healing and reconciliation. However, the bishops, Braxton said, were "somewhat chastened" by the awareness that many Catholics haven't heard of the 1979 letter or of a pastoral letter issued by African-American bishops in 1984. "Sadly, they were never read, never discussed, never prayed upon, never acted on... why not?"

In November, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Task Force to Promote Peace in Our Communities, led by Atlanta Archbishop Wilton Gregory, urged the conference to complete the new letter. "A statement from the full body of Bishops on racism is more important than ever," the task force said in its list of recommendations. That list also included some basic and yet vital first steps toward addressing racism in the U.S., such as bishop-led conversations with local communities, parish and diocesan training, and seeking out opportunities for encounter "to see firsthand the challenges within their own and others' communities."

Has the bishops' conference or have local bishops acted on any of these recommendations? Charlottesville shows that the time for excuses, delays and inaction are past. At the very least, the bishops should write and distribute widely—and loudly—a pastoral letter that repudiates racism and supremacism and reminds Catholics of their own social teaching that "human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society."

Newsletter submissions must be e-mailed or phoned by Thursday, 9:00 pm. For Kay, e-mail kaywill@pacbell.net or phone (650) 328-2781; for Michelle, e-mail myhogan@comcast.net or phone (650) 468-3386.

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