



Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 6, 2018

Readings

This week:

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

1 John 4:7-10

John 15:9-17

Next week:

Acts 1:15-17, 20a, 20c-26

1 John 4:11-16

John 17:11b-19

Psalm

The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving pow'r. (*Psalm 98*)

Today

Today's presider is Msgr. John Sandersfeld.

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

No meetings this week.

From Thomas Merton

God has left sin in the world in order that there may be forgiveness: not only the secret forgiveness by which He Himself cleanses our souls, but the manifest forgiveness by which we have mercy on one another and so give expression to the fact that He is living, by His mercy, in our own hearts.

. . . In the holiness of God, all extremes meet—infinite mercy and justice, infinite love and endless hatred of sin, infinite power and limitless condescension to the weakness of His creatures. His holiness is the cumulation of all His other attribute. . . . Yet the supreme manifestation of God's holiness is the death of Christ on the Cross.

. . . We can have the mercy of God whenever we want it, by being merciful to others: for it is God's mercy that acts on them, through us, when He leads us to treat them as He is treating us. His mercy sanctifies our own poverty by the compassion that we feel for their poverty, as if it were our own.

—*No Man Is an Island*

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

LWV on ballot propositions today:

Today following our Mass (10:15 to 11:15) in the Thomas House, representatives from the League of Women Voters are here to discuss the six propositions that we will be voting on in the June 5 primary. They will give an objective perspective for each proposition, so grab your coffee and donut and come to the Thomas House living room. You'll know more when you leave than when you walked in the door!



ValLimar Jansen this afternoon at OLR:

ValLimar Jansen, a highly regarded speaker, singer, composer, and recording artist, is coming to OLR this afternoon, 1:00-5:00 pm, to lead us in prayer and song on *Our Call to True Discipleship*. ValLimar trained as a Fine Arts major at Howard University in Washington, DC, and she holds masters and doctorate degrees in the arts from California State University, San Bernardino, and the University of California, Santa Barbara.



ValLimar has been the cantor for several jazz liturgies and closing liturgies at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress. She has sung with David Haas, Marty Haugen, Bob Hurd, Tom Kendzia, Jesse Manibusan, and many others. She is a guest artist on Marty Haugen's *Turn My Heart* and Cross Culture's CD of global praise music, *Songs of Faith From Near and Far*. ValLimar and her husband Frank also have a CD, *Catholic Classics: African American Sacred Songs*.

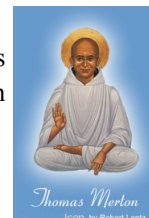
Golf for a good cause:

Play golf at Stanford and empower children of low-income families to reach their full potential! Join us for the 23rd Annual Seton Scramble for Students on Monday, May 14, 2018. A full day of golf at Stanford includes a Hobeys breakfast, a boxed lunch, and a Coupa Cafe catered afternoon reception (with a lively auction)—plus wine, beer and beverages throughout the day! Tournament prizes too! Non-golfers are also welcome to the afternoon reception and auction starting at 4:00 pm. All proceeds directly support tuition assistance for students at St. Elizabeth Seton School.

Register at www.setonpaloalto.org or contact Carmel Caligaris for more information: development@setonpaloalto.org or (650) 326-1258.

TMC Annual Meeting is May 20:

All TMC members are cordially invited to attend the Annual Meeting and brunch of the Thomas Merton Center on Sunday, May 20, 2018, 11:00 am, at the home of Bob and Judy Foley. We will share our vision for our TMC community as we move forward; we will seek guidance on issues for action by TMC in 2018-2019; and we will review the past year's accomplishments in the TMC community. Not a TMC member yet? Look for membership forms in St. Catherine's Corner (the nook outside the church restroom), or contact Kay Williams at kay-will@pacbell.net or (650) 270-4188. Also, there is an online application at www.thomas-merton.org.



Fish Fest returns on May 16:

The STA Site Committee is hosting its monthly Fish Fest supper on May 16 at 6:00 pm in the Thomas House. Enjoy traditional fish and chips, coleslaw, beer and wine—and whatever dessert or side dish you'd like to contribute (definitely not required).

Do not overlook the RSVP instruction below, so we know how much fish to buy! A donation of \$5 per person would be appreciated. Water and lemonade are gratis; beer or wine is \$2 a glass. RSVP to Helen Baumann at hbaumann@aol.com or (650) 327-9236.

PA California People of Faith:

The Palo Alto California People of Faith Chapter meeting scheduled for April 28 has been postponed to May 12. The meeting will start at 10:00 am at the Thomas House. The agenda will include the following:

- * Reflection
- * Update on CA Death Penalty
- * CA Death Row inmate Vicente Benavides: death sentence overturned and released
- * Taking the Pledge to Educate, Advocate and Pray for an end to the death penalty
- * Letter to Gov. Brown to commute CA death sentences.
- * Letter to Santa Clara DA Rosen to end death sentences
- * Letter to San Mateo DA Wagstaffe to end death sentences
- * Action on behalf of Jarvis Masters
- * Diversification of California People of Faith
- * The way forward on abolition brainstorming session June 6, 9:30-11:30 am at Temple Emanu-El, 2 Lake Street, San Francisco.

—Terry McCaffrey

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Gaudete et Exsultate (Rejoice and Be Glad):

The recent apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate (Rejoice and Be Glad)*, describes a . . . holiness that “cannot be lived apart” from the call to recognize Christ in the poor and the suffering (#96), a holiness that is lived out only in human community, “not as individuals without any bond between them” (#6). . . . He locates social issues at the heart of the spiritual life of Christians, using the Beatitudes and other references to the Sermon on the Mount to help us understand what it means to live a fully human holy life in the world. . . . Holiness, he reminds us, is lived for everyone “in their own way,” responding to their own talents and experiences to be a part in the building of the Kingdom (#2). Prayer and prayerful discernment are necessary to see the path before us as we seek to embody Christ’s love for the world. Pope Francis reminds us we must be whole to be holy: “It is not healthy to live in silence while fleeing interaction with others, to want peace and quiet while avoiding activity, to seek prayer while disdain service.” . . . We are called to be contemplatives even in the midst of action, and to grow in holiness by responsibly and generously carrying out our proper mission” (#26). This kind of life will make us fully alive and bring a joy and fulfillment that we cannot glean from a material-oriented, self-involved lifestyle. Pope Francis reminds us that there is a “hierarchy of virtues,” the most important of which is charity, the love of God and the love of neighbor. . . . He makes it very clear that without the love of neighbor we cannot authentically say we love God, and that there is no authentic holiness without the encounter and concern for those who are suffering and at the margin. . . . It is notable and very important that Pope Francis goes on to emphasize that helping one person would “not be enough.” Justice demands “seeking social change” through the transformation of sinful structures and the creation of “just social and economic systems” (#99). . . . Francis goes on to relate that some consider the plight of migrants an issue not as important as bioethical questions, a hierarchy of issues which he rejects. He locates the concern for the stranger in both the Old Testament and in the New, reminding us that Jesus told us that in welcoming the stranger we welcome [Jesus]. “This is not a notion invented by some pope, or a momentary fad,” he states bluntly and forcefully (#103). . . . The final comments in Chapter Three focus on “the worship most acceptable to God,” which is prayerfully living out Christ’s command to love our neighbor and to show mercy in thought, word, and deed. “The best way

Pope Francis, spiritual guide:

By Thomas Reese, SJ, a columnist for Religion News Service and author of Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church. Published by National Catholic Reporter, April 27, 2018, at www.ncronline.org.

Before he was pope, before he was archbishop of Buenos Aires, Francis spent much of his Jesuit life as a spiritual guide to young Jesuits. He was not a great theologian, although he was well read in theology. Nor was he the president of one of our universities. Rather his job was to introduce young men to the Jesuits and help form them in their spiritual lives. He was the director of novices and rector of the community where young Jesuits studied philosophy and theology.

This background and experience helped make Francis the person he is today. It also explains why he naturally felt impelled to write *Gaudete et Exultate*, his recently released apostolic exhortation on the call to holiness. For Francis, all Christians, not just religious and priest, are called to holiness. But as an experienced spiritual guide, he knows that most people are confused about what holiness really is and therefore can easily get lost on their spiritual quest. Francis’ goal was not to write an abstract theological treatise on holiness but to present a practical way to holiness for our time. He does this with a simple style that is full of spiritual wisdom that can enrich any reader, whether a beginner or experienced practitioner of

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to discern if our prayer is authentic is to judge to what extent our life is being transformed in the light of mercy. Mercy is the fullness of justice and the most radiant manifestation of God’s truth.”

. . . The last chapter of Pope Francis’s exhortation. . . calls everyone in the Church to be open to the creativity of the Spirit and to the people of God. [He] reminds us this creativity is realized in God’s time; we are only a part of the great work, and it demands we play our part with generosity and with a willingness to make sacrifices.

Through solidarity for the common good, we can become open to the joy of working and growing in community and thus become co-creators of new life. God does not want to diminish our lives, Pope Francis affirms, but rather “to bring them to fulfillment” so we may flourish and help others to flourish through justice and peace. We are called to “expel fear” and be open to the movement of the Spirit (#176). Like Mary, we are called to live the Beatitudes and to be open to the new things that God calls us to, rejoicing in that which is to be born.

—*Education for Justice*

Pope Francis, spiritual guide, continued:

the spiritual life. Francis begins by reminding us that “no one is saved alone, as an isolated individual. Rather, God draws us to himself, taking into account the complex fabric of interpersonal relationships present in a human community.” Rather than presenting the hermit as the ideal Christian, he invites us to look at the ordinary holiness of our next-door neighbors, especially in the patience and persistence of their lives. Nor does he believe that everyone’s road to holiness is the same. Each person must discern his or her own path to holiness and rather than “hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them.”

“Are you married?” he asks. “Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by laboring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain.” In short, “We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves.” Holiness does not come from grandiose achievements but by “many small gestures.” Quoting Pope Benedict XVI, he explains that “holiness is nothing other than charity lived to the full.”

While recognizing the need for moments of quiet and solitude before God, he argues that “It is not healthy to love silence while fleeing interaction with others, to want peace and quiet while avoiding activity, to seek prayer while disdain service.” Rather, “Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace.”

“Everything can be accepted and integrated into our life in this world, and become a part of our path to holiness,” he writes. He calls this “contemplation in action,” a term well known in Jesuit spirituality. But this action is not frantic. “How can we fail to realize the need to stop this rat race and to recover the personal space needed to carry on a heartfelt dialogue with God?” he writes. “Sooner or later, we have to face our true selves and let the Lord enter.” Quoting the Jesuit cardinal and writer Carlo Martini, he notes “This may not happen unless ‘we see ourselves staring into the abyss of a frightful temptation, or have the dizzying sensation of standing on the precipice of utter despair, or find ourselves completely alone and abandoned.’”

All of this and more Pope Francis relates in just the first chapter of *Gaudete et Exultate* (Matthew 5:12). It is a rich and powerful message easily accessible to the people of our time from the world’s preeminent spiritual guide.

Ousting House chaplain who prayed for those affected by tax bill will not silence the cry for justice:

By Barbara Williams-Skinner, April 30, 2018, at sojo.net. Dr. Skinner was the first female Executive Director of the Congressional Black Caucus (1974-1981) and is currently CEO of the Skinner Leadership Institute, which provides the mechanism for networking, bridge-building and leadership development between congressional leaders, business executives, college students, faith leaders, young professionals, and urban youth.

One of the most disturbing actions of Congress in recent weeks was Speaker Paul Ryan’s firing of House of Representatives Jesuit Chaplain, Father Patrick Conroy, allegedly for praying about the GOP tax bill. Congress has never fired a single chaplain since naming its first one in 1789. . . . Being ousted for praying for fair policies puts those who pressured Ryan to fire Conroy, and the Ryan himself, in direct conflict with biblical teaching rooted in Conroy’s prayer. Father Conroy prayed:

As legislation on taxes continues to be debated, . . . may all members be mindful that the institutions and structures of our great nation guarantee the opportunities that have allowed some to achieve great success, while others continue to struggle. May their efforts these days guarantee that there are not winners and losers under new tax laws, but benefits balanced and shared by all Americans.

. . . While Ryan would not explain why he forced Conroy to resign, it was believed to be related to the Jesuit chap-

lain standing on biblical teaching about justice that offended many Republicans supporting the tax bill.

. . . About a week after his prayer during the tax debate, Father Conroy said he heard from the speaker’s office. “A staffer came down and said, we are upset with this prayer; you are getting too political,” he told *The New York Times*.

. . . At a time of great division in our nation and especially in Congress, further alienation along religious lines is disquieting indeed. Of all of the speculations about the reasons for the firing of Father Conroy, his prayer regarding the GOP tax bill is said to be the primary one. If this is so, one wonders if an emboldened religious right in the Congress has now gained enough power to impose their religious and political agenda over the content of a chaplain’s prayer. Silencing Father Conroy for praying for justice in our nation will definitely not silence the cry for justice. Voices on behalf of immigrants, people of color, low-income citizens, and others, will continue to be raised on behalf of those seeking justice in our land. However, if we have reached a point where prayers for justice in Congress are silenced, may God help our democracy.