



27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 2, 2016

Readings

This week:

Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

Luke 17:5-10

Next week:

2 Kings 5:14-17

2 Timothy 2:8-13

Luke 17:11-19

Psalm

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. (*Psalm 95*)

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 (on St. Francis)

If we loved our poverty more, we would take it a lot better. I want to strive with intellectual and spiritual possessions, but that is not the way to union with God, nor the way to sanctity and perfection of love. "Blessed are the poor in spirit" is to be without talents, or to lose them, or have them frustrated; to be without distinctions, without colors or decorations, without special abilities, or to have them ignored and denied. That can be one way to sanctity, if you accept your emptiness with burning love and gratitude and wait for God to fill you. And when He does, you will get all the rest thrown in with His wisdom.

—*Entering the Silence: Becoming a Monk and a Writer (The Journals of Thomas Merton Book 2)* at www.franciscanqotd.com.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

October 4—Feast of St. Francis of Assisi:

Abridged from an article by Fr. Joseph Nangle, OFM, at educationforjustice.org. Fr. Nangle served as a missionary in Bolivia and Peru. He is the author of Birth of a Church and Engaged Spirituality: The Life in the Heart of the Empire; and co-author of Saint Francis and the Foolishness of God and Say to the Mountains.

Francis of Assisi, arguably the best known and most popular saint in Christian history, could also be described as the least understood. . . . This 13th century saint has a serious and pointed message for us who live eight centuries later. There is no better example of his relevance for



our times than newly discovered details and interpretations of a famous incident in his life: the saint's visit to the Sultan Malik al-Kamil during the Fifth Crusade, which took place from 1217 to 1221.

. . . Initiated by a series of Roman Pontiffs, the objective [of the Crusades] was to reclaim the Christian shrines in the Middle East that had fallen into the hands of Islam. No less a noteworthy figure than St. Bernard of Clairvaux, reformer of the Benedictine monastic movement, encouraged the crusaders early in the 12th Century to go out confidently and repel the foes of Christ. Francis of Assisi, however, had a very different outlook on war in general and the Crusades in particular. . . . In 1219, two years after the conflict began, he sailed from Italy to Egypt, crossed the line from the Christian army to that of the Muslims and approached their leader, Sultan Malik al-Kamil. . . . It turns out that the Sultan himself wished for peace and had made several overtures to the Christian military leader, the pope's delegate, Cardinal Pelagius Galvani. These proposals had been routinely rejected. . . . Francis approached the Sultan with his usual greeting: "the Lord give you peace." In addition he refused to take the gifts of gold, silver and silk garments offered him by the Muslim leader, since he was not there for personal gain. From the beginning there seemed to exist a relationship of respect between the two men. Indeed the Sultan allowed Francis to remain in the Muslim camp for the

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As we move into the cooler days of Fall, please keep bringing food for the Food Closet. 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!

Ballot propositions after Mass today:

The League of Women Voters will present an overview of the major propositions on the November ballot today after Mass, at approximately 10:00 am, in the Thomas House basement. Come on down—coffee and doughnuts will be served in the basement today!

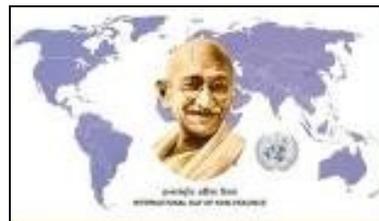
California voters will be asked on November 8 to sort through a list of 17 statewide propositions. Some of the issues we'll be voting on include: Legalization of marijuana; Repeal or speeding up of death penalty enforcement; Extending income tax rates on the wealthy; Gun violence regulations; State-wide ban on single-use plastic bags; Bonds for schools; Three proposals on health care issues; An overhaul of prison parole laws; Repealing the ban on bilingual education; and a Citizens United advisory measure.

This is a great opportunity to gain some insight on the issues. See you downstairs after Mass!



Today is International Day of Nonviolence:

This world has seen its share of bloody wars that ended countless lives and filled many more with grief. No matter what country you go to, there are stories of how someone's greed or lust for power resulted in the killing of innocent people and the destruction of beautiful cities. Even wars that were fought for a good cause, like the Civil War that resulted in slavery being abolished, have been responsible for a great many deaths.



The International Day of Nonviolence is observed today in honor of the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi. Despite being thrown in jail numerous times, nothing ever caused him to abandon his peaceful approach, which eventually resulted in India gaining independence. Gandhi was also interested in building good relationships between people of different religions and ethnicities, expanding women's rights, and reducing poverty.

In 2007, the UN voted to make the anniversary of his birth a day dedicated to spreading the message of nonviolence throughout the world.

COMMUNITY NOTES

News Announcements Requests

St. Francis, continued:

better part of a year—even as the Christian crusaders laid siege to the nearby city of Damietta.

While Francis refused the gifts offered him by al-Kamil, he did take with him on his departure an ivory horn, the instrument used to call for “salat,” the Muslim period of prayer five times each day. This Islamic practice particularly impressed the Saint. In addition, some of Francis’ own written prayers after 1221 in certain ways parallel the well-known ninety-nine names for the Divine in the Qur’an. . . .After Francis returned to Assisi from Egypt, he set down another Rule of Life for his fellow friars in which the saint urged them to “observe the strictest poverty and to be subject to Muslims!”

. . .Liberation Theology calls for us who strive for integrity and an inclusive, Christ-like attitude toward all: “go out toward the encounter” with the stranger, the newcomer, the ones whom we do not as yet know. Saint Francis would greatly approve of this insight.

. . .A real “Islamophobia” has gripped us in the West, particularly in the United States. Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, even the very names, manner of dressing, physical appearance, and customs of middle-eastern-looking people spark feelings of unease and even fear in many people here. . . .St. Francis directly challenges this mindset. His physical, emotional, and spiritual crossover to the world of Islam and his clear acceptance of much that is good in that religious tradition stands as an example for our world, increasingly divided as it is between “them and us.” What is more, the Saint of Assisi causes us to pause before judging who the enemy is today. While the events of 9/11 stand as horrendous acts of terrorism and violence against innocent human beings, we must ask if we in the West are not equally the enemy. One has to think only of Afghanistan, Iraq, drones, oil, and Guantanamo to substantiate this question. . . .All of us harbor prejudices of all kinds. We often see the “others” in our world as suspicious, fearful, even threats—be they “others” by reason of race, religion, sexual orientation, class, or culture. The challenge Francis lays before us as we learn the facts of his contact, dialogue, and friendship with Malik al-Kamil would have us consciously overcome any and all obstacles we place between ourselves and people who are not like us. Liberation Theology. . .calls for people who strive for integrity and an inclusive, Christ-like attitude toward all to “go out toward the encounter” with the stranger, the newcomer, the ones whom we do not as yet know. Saint Francis would greatly approve of this insight. He lived it.

Why I’m a student of Thich Nhat Hanh:

Abridged from an article by Nadia Colburn, in Spirituality and Health, September-October 2016, at www.spiritualityhealth.com.

“All religions and spiritual traditions,” William James famously wrote, “begin with the cry ‘Help!’” Like so many, I began my quest in earnest when I began to heal consciously from an instance of violence in my early childhood and the pain and confusion around it. Why, I wanted—I needed—to know, did bad things happen, not only on the personal level, but all around us in the world? The world is full of injustice and destruction: how are we to understand our present moment and transform it? I needed a larger frame.

. . .Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh (Thay) lived through the Vietnam War and saw immense pain, violence, suffering, and tragedy firsthand. He broke with the established Buddhist leaders and urged greater engagement; together with other young activists, Thay went into the countryside, where the fighting was worst, and provided support—rebuilding towns, schools, villages. He risked his own life many times, and many of his close friends and colleagues were killed.

Exiled from Vietnam in 1968 because of his peace work, Thay settled in France and continued to work steadfastly for peace and to help those displaced and suffering from the war and its aftermath. . . . At the heart of his teachings is the insight that peace starts from within. In the face of the self-righteous conviction of each side in the civil war, in the face of people so sure they are right they are willing to kill or be killed for their ideals, Thay realizes that the only true path to peace is to find and grow peace within each of us, to cultivate compassion and understanding, and to understand how we all are interconnected. Many of Thay’s most moving teachings come in the form of poems. In his poem “Call Me by My True Name,” written in 1978, he remembers with sorrow the many Vietnamese who died trying to escape their country on boats—in a situation not dissimilar from that of many Syrian refugees today. In this poem, Thay explores entering into the experiences of many different beings. . . . In perhaps the most powerful stanza he assumes the roles of both victim and perpetrator:

*I am the twelve year old girl
refugee on a small boat,*

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Church needs better way to select bishops:

Abridged from an article by Robert Mickens, September 26, 2016, at www.ncronline.org. Mickens is editor-in-chief of Global Pulse. He studied theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University before working 11 years at Vatican Radio and then another decade as correspondent for The Tablet of London.

By now it should be clear. Pope Francis really believes there is a serious lack of quality among priests and bishops in the Catholic church. Otherwise, he would not talk so often about the negative traits of certain men in ordained ministry, as he's done again several times in recent days. "The world is tired of lying charmers and—allow me say—of 'fashionable' priests or 'fashionable' bishops," the pope said on September 16 to a group of 94 bishops consecrated in the last two years for dioceses in mission territories. . . . He also cautioned them about too easily accepting seminarians or incardinating already ordained priests into their dioceses. "Don't allow yourselves to be tempted by numbers and quantity of vocations, but rather look for the quality of discipleship. And be careful when a seminarian seeks refuge in rigidity—because underneath this there's always something bad," he said. . . .

Why does Francis feel the need to say all this? Because he obviously sees it as a common problem throughout the Catholic world. "It's a horrible thing for the church when its pastors act like princes," he said just two days earlier at his Wednesday general audience. He was not being hypothetical. He was denouncing something he believes is far too prevalent—that there are Catholic bishops who, in contrast to the people they've been appointed to serve, live more like royalty or wealthy CEOs.

He made that observation in the first weeks after becoming pope at a meeting with papal nuncios, men who play a key role in the selection of bishops. "In the delicate task of carrying out the investigation required prior to making episcopal appointments, be careful that the candidates are pastors close to the people," he told them. "Pastors! We need them! May they be fathers and brothers, may they be gentle, patient and merciful; may they love poverty, interior poverty, as freedom for the Lord, and exterior poverty, as well as simplicity and a modest lifestyle; may they not have the mindset of 'princes'," Francis warned. On that occasion he instructed the nuncios not to be recommending men who are "ambitious"—whether they be priests who are lusting for the episcopate or those already bishops who are angling to be promoted to a more prestigious diocese.

The quality and appointment of bishops is something Pope Francis has also discussed at least two or three times with his group of nine cardinal-advisors, known colloquially as the C9. In fact, it was on the agenda at their most recent meeting (Sept. 12-14). . . . The current system the church uses to seek out and appoint candi-

Thich Nhat Hanh, continued:

*who throws herself into the ocean
after being raped by a sea pirate.
And I am the pirate,
my heart not yet capable
of seeing and loving.*

They tries to see every side, every being, with understanding and compassion. He continues:

*Please call me by my true names,
so I can hear all my cries and laughter at once,
so I can see that my joy and pain are one.*

. . . How do you cultivate peace and happiness? His answer is to meditate: practice; breathe; pay attention to your breath; pay attention to the present moment; pay attention to the miracle of being alive; wake up; and again come back to your breath. This practice calms the mind and body and develops concentration. And from this concentration, one has the insight to see into suffering and cultivate wise compassion and understanding and appreciation:

*Breathing in, I calm my body,
Breathing out, I smile,
Dwelling in the present moment,
I know this is a wonderful moment.*

In a time of such violence on a global scale, such insecurity and such devastation to the landscape, I think it's important that we all learn to practice peace. We practice not only to eliminate suffering, but to transform on the personal and the social levels, and to wake up so that we are capable of really celebrating the great miracle of life.

dates for episcopal service is far too often based on cronism inherent in an old boys' network. . . .

The apostolic nuncio plays a major role in drawing up the terna (the top three) of candidates for a particular episcopal post. These are then sent to the Vatican. . . [where prelates] then discuss and vote on the candidates, and present the recommendations to the pope, who makes the final decision on the appointment.

However, well before this happens, bishops, in too many cases, have already begun "grooming" someone—perhaps a star seminarian or priest-secretary—to be a future member of their very exclusive club, the episcopal college. (Numbering just over 5,200 men, bishops constitute only .0004 percent of the nearly 1.3 billion Catholics throughout the world.) . . .

Francis says he wants to promote a healthy decentralization of the church. And it is hard to think of anything that currently is more centralized than Rome's appointment of bishops around the world. . . .

As it stands now, the appointment of bishops is all too frequently the result of an incestuous old boys' network of promoting people within its clerical club.