



32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 6, 2016

Readings

This week:

Sirach 35:12-14,16-18

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

Luke 18:9-14

Next week:

Wisdom 11:22–12:2

2 Thessalonians 1:11–2:2

Luke 19: 1-10

Psalm

The Lord hears the cry of the poor. (*Psalm 34*)

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).

**Daylight
Savings Time
ended
last night!**

Calendar

Thursday, November 10, 7:00 pm

TMC Board, Thomas House

From Thomas Merton

In primitive societies, where [people] are just beginning to read and have nothing to read but propaganda, we can say that they are its innocent victims. But in an evolved society there are no innocent victims of propaganda. Propaganda succeeds because [people] want it to succeed. It works on minds because those minds want to be worked on. Its conclusions bring apparent light and satisfaction, because that is the kind of satisfaction that people are longing for. It leads them to actions for which they are already half prepared: all they ask is that these actions be justified. If war propaganda succeeds it is because people want war, and only need a few good reasons to justify their own desire.

—*Confessions of a Guilty Bystander*

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 FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Prayer for the elections:

In a time of anger and anguish
Of noise and negativity, of doubt and dismissal,
Of chaos and concern,
We pray for our nation
As our citizens prepare to vote.

We pray that all members of this society
Take the time to reflect on the positive values
That have served as guiding stars
For the American “experiment in democracy.”

We pray that all Americans take time
To be fully and accurately informed
From a wide variety of sources
About the many complex issues that we face.

We pray that all citizens spend time
In thoughtful and respectful dialogue,
And in careful discernment of the common good
That we are challenged to create.

We pray that all informed citizens
Take the time to vote,
And that the voting environment
Is safe and secure,
With voting rights for all members
In this multicultural society.

In this time of rage and reaction,
Of compassion and contempt,
Of fervor and furor,
We pray we find some way
Of mending our broken family.
May God bless us all
As we move into our future
Through this election.

—Jane Deren, Education for Justice

The Food Closet never closes:

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 both food donations, and dollars too!

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, 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.

Altar of Remembrance is up:

Throughout November, all Christians remember their beloved dead. Our Altar of Remembrance here at St. Thomas Aquinas Church is themed on the Mexican tradition of the Day of the Dead. You are invited to bring pictures of your loved ones (no larger than 8x10”), with your name and phone number on the back, and place them on the altar throughout the month of November. On December 3 we will take down the altar and put up Advent decorations. Remember to pick up your photos on the last Sunday of November (the 27th) before the altar is dismantled.



Remembering our veterans:

Lord Jesus, with gratitude, we honor all veterans who have served their fellow Americans.

We ask your blessing for them. In sorrow, we honor the more than 6,800 men and women in the U.S. armed forces who have recently died in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In sorrow, we acknowledge the horror and destruction of war. We ask your forgiveness for our failure to be peace-makers.

We pray for all the victims of war, all children of God:
We pray for mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, daughters,

and sons in the U.S. who mourn the deaths of loved ones.

We pray for U.S. soldiers who are returning home emotionally and physically traumatized by these wars.



We pray for U.S. soldiers who are still in the Middle East. Protect them, keep them safe, and bring them home soon.

We pray for civilians in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria who live with daily terror and destruction.

We pray for our leaders: give them wisdom and discernment to bring life and peace where there is death and conflict.

May we honor all those who have served in the military by creating a just and peaceful world for the generations to come. Guide us, O Lord.

COMMUNITY NOTES

News Announcements Requests

Final thoughts before the election:

Abridged from an article by Pat Perriello, October 28, 2016, at www.ncronline.org.

The debates are over. The awkward Al Smith dinner has passed. Polls show Hillary Clinton with a substantial lead in both the popular vote and the Electoral College. Both candidates crisscross a few battleground states, and everybody agrees that they can't wait until this election is history. . . . Yet, there are so many elements that remain undetermined in this race. Speculations differ on what the turnout might be. Some believe voters will be disgusted and stay home. Others feel the nature of this elec-



tion is going to drive voters of both parties to the polls. I tend to believe the turnout will be strong, as voters want to make a statement about where they stand after this controversy-fraught election. . . . What about a late October or even November surprise? Wikileaks continues to suggest further revelations about Hillary Clinton campaign e-mails are likely. Yet they have already released several batches, and frankly there is not much there. There are some embarrassing e-mails showing disagreements among Clinton staff members, but you would likely find this as part of any political campaign.

Certainly anything can happen that could conceivably change this campaign dramatically even in these last days. The latest significant issue that has arisen is the dramatic rise in premiums for the Affordable Care Act. This is troubling and gives Trump new ammunition to hammer away at, but it is unlikely to change the overall trajectory of the campaign. Actually, it could be an argument for changing the health care program rather than repealing it.

It is also worth noting that early voting has already begun in earnest. At this point the early voting seems to be favoring Democrats. This fact could help blunt any change in the trajectory of this race even if it were to occur. . . . Enormous questions remain after this election regardless of who wins. Assuming a Clinton victory, will Trump concede? How much trouble will he make and for how long? Will Republicans refuse to work with President Clinton? Will House Republicans be interested in nothing but continued investigations into the Clintons? Will the liberal wing of the Democratic Party push Clinton beyond what she can deliver?

There will be much to talk about concerning the election of 2016 for a long time to come.

Contemplative prayer:

Abridged from an article by Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI, October 25, 2016, in The Valley Catholic.

. . . Contemplation is prayer without images and imagination, that is, prayer without the attempt to concentrate one's thoughts and feelings on God and holy things. It is a prayer so singular in its intention to be present to God alone that it refuses everything, even pious thoughts and holy feelings, so as to simply sit in darkness, in a deliberate unknowing, within which all thoughts, imaginations, and feelings about God are not fostered or entertained, as is true for all other thoughts and feelings. In the words of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, it is a simple reaching out directly toward God.

In contemplative prayer, classically understood, after a brief, initial act of centering oneself in prayer, one simply sits, but sits inside the intention of reaching out directly toward God in a place beyond feeling and imagination where one waits to let the unimaginable reality of God break through in a way that subjective feelings, thoughts, and imaginations cannot manipulate.

And it is precisely on this point where contemplative prayer is most often misunderstood and criticized. The questions are: Why shouldn't we try to foster and entertain holy thoughts and pious feelings during prayer, isn't that what we're trying to do in prayer? How can we be praying when we aren't doing anything, just sitting? . . .

I will let the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* reply to this:

It would be very inappropriate and a great hindrance to a [person] who ought to be working in this darkness and in this cloud of unknowing, with an affective impulse of love to God himself alone, to permit any thought or any meditation of God's wonderful gifts, kindness, or his work in any of his creatures, bodily or spiritual, to rise up in his mind so as to press between him and his God, even if they be very holy thoughts, and give him great happiness and consolation. . . .

In essence, the idea is that we may never mistake the icon for the reality. God is ineffable and consequently everything we think or imagine about God is, in effect, an icon, even the words of scripture itself are words about God and not the reality of God. Admittedly icons can be good, so long as they are understood precisely as icons, as pointing to a reality beyond themselves; but as soon as we take them for the reality, our perennial temptation, the icon becomes an idol.

The difference between meditation and contemplation is



The church needs a new morality:

Abridged from an article by Pat Perriello, October 11, 2016, at www.ncronline.org. Perriello is a retired educator from the Baltimore City Public Schools and a former seminarian from St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore.

Pope Francis has given us a beautiful message as to how a pastor should serve those in his care. In a rather extensive airplane interview on his return trip from Azerbaijan, Francis spoke of the need to focus on morality as it applies to case-by-case situations. He spoke of his own work with a transgender individual and with homosexuals. He noted that there is no way Jesus would have turned these individuals away. "Jesus will surely not say: 'Go away because you're homosexual.'"

Francis tells the story of a transgender individual who is condemned by his new pastor. Publicly the pastor tells him that he will go to hell. Yet the old retired pastor continues to work with the individual and encourage him to confess and receive the Eucharist. . . .

Pope Francis understands that rules are one thing, but morality can not be determined by a set of rules. Morality is determined on a case-by-case basis as one explores the realities in an individual's life. Thomas Aquinas understood this fact as circumstantial ethics. Although this insight of Francis moves the discussion forward considerably, I'm still not convinced that it actually goes far enough. The other day I was listening to an old 1950s rock-and-roll song. Some of the lyrics were, "Now we're together nearly every single day, singing doo wa diddy, diddy dum diddy do." (They don't write songs like they used to.) The song went on to say something like, "She looked fine, wedding bells are going to chime."

. . . The point is, you don't hear any popular music about high school kids getting married today. They still fall in love, but it is seen as a first love, an experience to help them on their way. It is essentially seen as practice for future sexual relationships and eventual marriage. I know there are still Christian evangelicals who abstain from sex before marriage. Maybe there are even a few good Catholic kids who do so as well. But clearly this is not the norm. The sexual mores have changed, and I don't know anyone who is seriously suggesting that we go back to marriage out of high school. . . . There is no evidence, however, that the church has any recognition that times have changed.

. . . Sexual and cultural mores do matter. The pope is right to say we must all make our moral decisions as they come to us, but we should not have to make them all in the face of rigid and out-of-date principles that are not applicable today. . . . It is way past time for the church to develop a new sexual morality that takes into account the lives of real people who are trying to live the Gospel day to day.

Recessional: God's counting on me:

"There will be a human race here in a few hundred years if you and I work together in some way, and find a way to teach others to work together." This was Pete Seeger's intro to his last single, which was released on election day, November 6, 2012:

When we look and we see things are not what they should be,
God's counting on me, God's counting on you.

Hoping we'll all pull through, hoping we'll all pull through,
Hoping we'll all pull through, me and you.

When there's big problems to be solved, let's get everyone involved.

God's counting on me, God's counting on you.
Hoping we'll all pull through, hoping we'll all pull through,
Hoping we'll all pull through, me and you.

Time to turn things around, trickle up not trickle down,
God's counting on me, God's counting on you.
Hoping we'll all pull through, hoping we'll all pull through,
Hoping we'll all pull through, me and you.

What we do now, you and me, will affect eternity,
God's counting on me, God's counting on you.
Hoping we'll all pull through, hoping we'll all pull through,
Hoping we'll all pull through, me and you.

Contemplative prayer, continued:

predicated on this: In meditation we focus on icons, on God as God appears in our thoughts, imagination, and feelings. In contemplation, icons are treated as idols, and the discipline then is to sit in a seeming darkness, beneath a cloud of unknowing, to try to be face to face with a reality that is too big to grasp within our imagination. Meditation, like an icon, is something that is useful for a time, but ultimately we are all called to contemplation. As the Cloud of Unknowing puts it: "For certainly, he who seeks to have God perfectly will not take his rest in the consciousness of any angel or any saint that is in heaven."

Karl Rahner agrees: "Have we tried to love God in those places where one is not carried on a wave of emotional rapture, where it is impossible to mistake oneself and one's life-force for God, where one accepts to die from a love that seems like death and absolute negation, where one cries out in an apparent emptiness and an utter unknown?"

That, in short, is contemplative prayer, authentic centering prayer, as a discipline.

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