



Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 18, 2016

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 7:10–14

Romans 1:1–7

Matthew 1:18–24

Next week:

Isaiah 62:1–5

Acts of the Apostles 13:16–17, 22–25

Matthew 1:1–25

Psalm Today

Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory. (*Psalm 24*)

Today's presider is Fr. Michael Marini.

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, Waverley and Homer Streets, Palo Alto. Members of the Thomas Merton community participate in planning 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, there are return envelopes in the bulletin on the last Sunday of each month for your convenience (donations by check or cash are welcome). The donation basket is in the back of church after Mass or available by the coffeepot after Mass—or you can use the envelope to mail your donation. **Please do not put your TMC envelope in the collection baskets passed during Mass (these are for parish contributions only).**

Calendar

Monday, December 19, 7:00 p.m.	TMC Spiritual Education Meeting
Saturday, December 24, 6:00 p.m.	Christmas Mass
Sunday, December 25	NO 8:45 am Mass

From Thomas Merton

But the Church, in preparing us for the birth of a "great prophet," a Savior and a King of Peace, has more in mind than seasonal cheer. The advent mystery focuses the light of faith upon the very meaning of life, of history, of man, of the world and of our own being. In Advent we celebrate the coming and indeed the presence of Christ in our world. We witness to His presence even in the midst of all its inscrutable problems and tragedies. Our Advent faith is not an escape from the world to a misty realm of slogans and comforts which declare our problems to be unreal, our tragedies inexistent...

In our time, what is lacking is not so much the courage to ask this question as the courage to expect an answer... We may at times be able to show the world Christ in moments when all can clearly discern in history some confirmation of the Christian message. But the fact remains that our task is to seek and find Christ in our world as it is, and not as it might be. The fact that the world is other than it might be does not alter the truth that Christ is present in it and that His plan has been neither frustrated nor changed: indeed, all will be done according to His will. Our Advent is a celebration of this hope.
—*"Advent: Hope or Delusion?"*, 1963

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

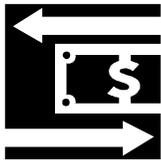
News Announcements Requests

Please note: no 8:45 Mass on Christmas Day:

The Merton-sponsored Christmas Eve Mass at 6:00 pm on Saturday, December 24, fulfills the Sunday Mass obligation for Christmas morning, December 25.

PLEASE NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO MASS AT 8:45 AM ON CHRISTMAS DAY.

TMC seeking volunteer bookkeeper:



After many years of faithful service to the Thomas Merton Center community, Judy Creek has asked the Board to find another volunteer to shoulder her responsibilities as TMC's bookkeeper.

There are two parts to the bookkeeping job for TMC:

Deposits:

1. Pick up checks from TMC basket after Mass on Sundays and from Cambridge Ave. PO box (approx 2 times per week).
2. Make copies of checks and either mail to Wells Fargo or take to bank (approx 3 deposits per month). A small copier comes with the job.
3. There are approx 45 checks to be deposited every month.

Check writing:

1. Write checks to priest presiders, musicians and various vendors weekly and or monthly (approx 13 checks per month).
2. Get checks with envelopes ready for signatures—usually at Sunday Mass.
3. Copies of deposits and check register to TMC treasurer Mike McMahon at beginning of following month.

If you are interested, please contact Judy at (650) 493-5371, grannyjam2@gmail.com or Mike McMahon at (650) 493-7392, m-mcmahon@sbcglobal.net.

Share canned goods with neighbors in need:

Please bring a food item or two to church each Sunday! Most needed are soups, canned meats/tuna, pasta/sauce, beans, peanut butter, rice, powdered milk, crackers, jelly/jam, cereal, & canned fruits/vegetables.

PRAY FOR US: 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, Dean Judd, Hunter Kubit, Dick Jackman, Edna and François Jamati, Alicia Kot, Fr. Bill Leininger, Andre and Alyssa Lippard, 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.

[Add or subtract names by e-mailing Bulletin editors: Michelle Hogan, Kay Williams. See listings below.]

Today's 2nd collection: Retirement Fund for Religious:

The annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection will be held today in the Diocese of San Jose. Now in its 29th year, the appeal is coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) and offers support for senior Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests whose communities lack sufficient retirement funding. Some 33,000 women and men religious past age 70 benefit. The Diocese of San Jose contributed over \$200,000 to the last collection. Women and men religious who serve or have served in the diocese, but whose communities are based elsewhere may also benefit from the annual collection.

Kenyan crafts today in Thomas House:

Come on over to the Thomas House after Mass for a last chance to peruse the charming handcrafted items from Kenya that Margo McAuliffe of Kenya Help will have to show. A donation to Kenya Help will be rewarded with a soapstone dish or a wooden Africa map puzzle, jewelry or shopping bag. That last minute gift for a grandchild or gracious hostess awaits!

Seton School choir—and tamales:



Seton School's children's choir serenaded STAers after the 8:45 and 10:30 Masses on December 11, as a thank-you gift for the generous support of Seton for so many years by STA parishioners

and TMC members in particular. Parents of the children brought 200 tamales to share, and Seton principal Evelyn Rosa and several Seton teachers were present as well, answering questions about their teaching and the needs of the children. We all enjoyed the singing, and the tamales were a welcome addition to doughnuts!

Board: Vicki Sullivan, vickisullivan@comcast.net, (650) 327-5339
Bulletin: Kay Williams (Dec. 18, Jan. 1 & 8) kaywill@pacbell.net
Michelle Hogan (Dec 24, Jan. 15 & 22.) myhogan@comcast.net
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Mary Coady, 650-261-9155, coady_94025@yahoo.com

Bulletin submissions must be e-mailed by Thursday noon or phoned by Thursday, 9:00 pm. Kay, kaywill@pacbell.net, (650) 270-4188. Michelle, myhogan@comcast.net, (650) 493-8452.

Education levels of religions worldwide:

[By Carol Zimmermann, *Catholic News Service*, 12/14/16]

A new study showing the disparity of education levels among religious groups ranks Jews as the faith group with the most formal education and Muslims and Hindus with the least years of formal schooling.

Christians are the second-highest educated religious group in the world, followed by the religiously unaffiliated and Buddhists, according to the global demographic study by the Pew Research Center, released on Dec. 13.

The report also showed differences in educational levels among religious groups in the same region. In sub-Saharan Africa, Christians tend to have higher average levels of education than Muslims—in part because of historical factors that include the work of missionaries.

The study's findings do not match the U.S. picture where Muslims and Hindus are often better educated than the Christian majority. Ninety-six percent of Hindus and 54 percent of Muslims in the U.S. have college degrees, compared to 36 percent of Christians.

The gaps in education in religious groups around the world are partly the result of where these groups live. For example, the majority of the world's Jews live in the United States and Israel...while 98 percent of Hindu adults live in developing countries of India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

The report, using census and survey data from 151 countries, also found large gender gaps in educational levels within some major world religions. Muslim women around the world average 4.9 years of education, compared with 6.4 years among Muslim men which is similar to Hindu women...

The vast majority, 91 percent, of Christian adults ages 25 and older have had some formal education, and one in five has a post-secondary degree. In recent years, gender differences in educational levels among Christians have narrowed...Among younger Christians, more women than men are likely to have received higher education. And in some countries, Christian men have experienced declines in postsecondary education in recent generations.

The data varies by region. Globally, Christians have spent an average of 9.3 years in school. This average ranges from six years of education in sub-Saharan Africa to 12.7 years of schooling in North America...

On the good news front, the report showed that many of the disparities in educational levels seem to be decreasing...Researchers also found that gender gaps also are slightly narrowing...

One takeaway from the study is that even with recent gains by young adults, education around the world lags for many people. The global norm is barely more than a primary education—an average of about eight years of formal schooling for men and seven years for women. At the high end of the spectrum, 14 percent of adults

A Christmas poem:

Christmas Mail

Cards in each mailbox,
angel, manger, star and lamb,
as the rural carrier,
driving the snowy roads,
hears from her bundles
the plaintive bleating of sheep,
the shuffle of sandals,
the clapping of camels.
At stop after stop,
she opens the little tin door
and places deep in the shadows
the shepherds and wise men,
the donkeys lank and weary,
the cow who chews and muses.
And from her Styrofoam cup,
white as a star and perched
on the dashboard, leading her
ever into the distance,
there is a hint of hazelnut,
and then a touch of myrrh.

—Ted Kooser

[Ted Kooser is an American poet. He served as Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004 to 2006. His book *Delights & Shadows* (2005) won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry.]

(Hope, continued from page 4):

righteousness, while less harmful than racial prejudice, is still obnoxious and unhelpful.

It is overwhelming to consider the countless ways one might fulfill the Christian obligation to bring hope to a hopeless world. The knee-jerk response to the scope of our collective problems is often "I cannot do it all," which is a given. The unspoken subtext of this, however, is all too often "so I won't do anything."

We do not need to do it all, though, nor do we need to be perfect in doing what we can. As Irish statesman Edmund Burke is quoted as having said, "Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little."

So, let us all do something. Let us be hopeful, and let us not despair. And let us live in such a way that allows others to do the same.

[Brian Harper is a communications specialist for the Midwest Jesuits. His writing has been featured in *America* magazine, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, the *National Catholic Reporter*, and various other publications. You can find his work at brianharper.net.]

ages 25 and older have a university degree or other kind of higher education... An even larger percentage—19 percent of adults worldwide, or more than 680 million people—have no formal schooling at all. #

Advent Wreath: Fourth Week of Advent:



Loving God, our hearts are filled with great joy as we light the fourth candle of our Advent wreath. For the past three weeks we have been preparing for the great feast of Christmas. Help us to trust you as Mary did. You have a mission for us, too, and we want to say "yes" to your invitation. May we love each other as you ask us to do. We will celebrate Christmas in just a few more days. As we go about making our final preparations, keep us focused on the real reason we are celebrating: Jesus! Amen.

Hope sinks, hope floats:

[By Brian Harper, *National Catholic Reporter*, 12/15/16]

Lately, I have taken to treating despair as a sin. I do this not to pile an additional layer of Irish Catholic guilt upon myself or even out of a misplaced sense of holy masochism. It is simply easier for me to steer clear of desperation when I think of it as something I am forbidden from engaging in, as opposed to an unpleasant emotion I prefer to avoid.

Following this logic, Nov. 9 represented something akin to temptation after 18 months in the desert. Like many, I spent the better part of a year and a half craving relief that, in the end, never came. Certain the finish line could not possibly be worse than the race itself, we collectively anticipated the presidential election's demise. It may have followed one of the most divisive campaigns in recent memory, pitting the country against itself in stark and dark terms, but whatever the result any single person desired, we could at least agree on having hated the process.

When you come out of a desert, you want water, and because the election results offered nothing potable to the many American voters who did not cast a ballot for Donald Trump (they might not have done much to satisfy a good number of people who voted for him either), other springs were required.

The opposite of despair is hope, and many people, political and nonpolitical alike, did their best to provide this balm. Some comforted their friends and followers by outlining the ways they would oppose Trump should he attempt to make good on his promises to deport millions of immigrants, ban Muslims from entering the country, and roll back President Barack Obama's achievements in protecting the environment and expanding access to health care.

Others claimed that it is God, not a political leader, who is in charge and thus the ultimate source of our hope. Yet others hearkened back to dark times past and recalled that we had made it through those disasters and so, too, would survive any impending ones. It will be all right, they exhorted.

And it very well can be ... so long as each of us works to make it that way.

If despair is a real force we must readily oppose, then hope is one we must actively pursue, not simply by casting our fate into the wind, trusting leaders and organizations to give us something to believe in, or putting blind faith in a God who will make sure everything works out. As President John F. Kennedy reminded Americans in his inaugural address, while we ought to ask for God's help and blessing, we must always remember "that here on earth God's work must truly be our own."

Obviously, there is no one single way to do God's work. In some cases, one person's pursuit of God's will might ostensibly be the opposite of another's, though that need not necessarily be a problem. It should go without saying that two people can have political differences and still both be good citizens and good Christians.

That said, there are some issues — among others, racism, sexism and xenophobia — that are simply nonnegotiable. The fact that many of the president-elect's supporters felt compelled to clarify that they are not racist, that they did not condone their candidate's comments about women, Mexicans, Muslims and so many others, strikes me as tacit acknowledgment on their part that his campaign did, in fact, engage in racism, sexism and xenophobia.

So, for those in the "I only voted for Trump because he says he's pro-life" or "I am not racist; I voted for Trump for economic reasons" camps, now would be an excellent time to prove it. We are all called to stand with the oppressed, and since the election, Trump has nominated to his administration people who have a vast, ongoing and unapologetic history of suggesting women and people from religious and ethnic minorities are less worthy in our society.

Those of us who claim not to hold such views must unequivocally oppose those who do, whenever they do. In the final analysis, there is not a lot of daylight between the one who actively engages in bigotry and the one who does not but makes no effort to prevent it.

Having voted for someone other than Trump is also not a free pass to throw up one's hands and say, "It's not my fault." Resisting intolerance is not a duty to be met only once every four years but every time it arises. It is nice not to feel responsible for the president-elect, but self-

(Hope, continued on page 3)