



# 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 21, 2016

## Readings

*This week:*

Isaiah 66:18-21

Hebrews 12:22-30

Luke 13: 22-30

*Next week:*

Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29

Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24a

Luke 14:1, 7-14

## Psalm

Go out to all the world and tell the Good News. (*Psalm 117*)

## Today

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. 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

If there is no silence beyond and within the many words of doctrine, there is no religion, only a religious ideology. For religion goes beyond words and actions, and attains to the ultimate truth only in silence and Love. Where this silence is lacking, where there are only the "many words" and not the One Word, then there is much bustle and activity but no peace, no deep thought, no understanding, no inner quiet. Where there is no peace, there is no light and no Love. The mind that is hyperactive seems to itself to be awake and productive, but it is dreaming, driven by fantasy and doubt. Only in silence and solitude, in the quiet of worship, the reverent peace of prayer, the adoration in which the entire ego-self silences and abases itself in the presence of the Invisible God to receive His one Word of Love; only in these "activities" which are "non-actions" does the spirit truly wake from the dream of a multifarious, confused, and agitated existence.

—*Love and Living*

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*

## **Multifaith peace walk and picnic:**

Join together with brothers and sisters of many backgrounds and spiritual traditions as we say “no” to fear and “yes” to friendship by walking together in south Palo Alto to show the way to community and peace.

We will gather on Sunday, September 11, at 1:30 pm at Congregation Etyz Chaim at 4161 Alma Street for a brief service at 2:00 pm, and then walk down Alma, then Charleston, then Middlefield, stopping at Our Lady of the Rosary for another brief service. After the walk we will gather at Mitchell Park for the annual 9/11 Peace Picnic hosted by American Muslim Voice. Shuttle buses are being planned to take folks from OLR and/or Mitchell Park back to their cars.

More details will be available at [www.multifaithpeace.org](http://www.multifaithpeace.org).

Please keep bringing food 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!

## **Peninsula food runners:**

Are you looking for a satisfying but flexible volunteer opportunity? Peninsula Food Runners is a volunteer organization dedicated to alleviating hunger and reducing food waste. We are building our volunteer base in Santa Clara County and invite you to join us.

Peninsula Food Runners volunteers pick up excess perishable and prepared food from participating donors (restaurants, caterers, corporate cafeterias, etc.), and then deliver the food directly to our recipients (shelters, day centers for the elderly, boys and girls clubs, etc.).



We are in urgent need of drivers in the Palo Alto area, as surplus food is available, but we have too few drivers to transport the food to local non-profits. Shifts normally take less than 90 minutes and can work around your schedule. Come join our team of volunteers! Go to [peninsulafoodrunners.org](http://peninsulafoodrunners.org) and register under Volunteer Sign-Up. Questions: e-mail Molly Rhine at [m.rhine@com-cast.net](mailto:m.rhine@com-cast.net).

# COMMUNITY NOTES

*News Announcements Requests*

## **Beginning with yes:**

*Abridged from an article by Fr. Richard Rohr at meditations@cac.org, Friday, August 12, 2016.*

The great wisdom teachers and mystics say in various ways that you cannot truly see or understand anything if you begin with a no. You have to start with a yes of basic acceptance, which means you do not too quickly label, analyze, or categorize things in or out, good or bad. This is Contemplation 101. You have to be taught how to leave the field open. The ego or false self strengthens itself by constriction, by being against, or by re-action; it feels loss or fear when it opens up to subtlety and Mystery. Living out of the True Self involves positive choice, inner spaciousness, and conscious understanding rather than resistance, knee-jerk reactions, or defensiveness. It is not easy to live this way. It often takes a lifetime of prayer and honest self-observation to stop judging and starting with no.

We see what we are ready to see, expect to see, and even desire to see. If you start with no, you usually get some form of no in return. If you start with yes, you are much

continued on page 4

## **There will never be another generation like the Ex Generation:**

*Abridged from an article by, June 28, 2016, at ncronline.org. Smith is the author of eight books, most recently Church Chat: Snapshots of a Changing Catholic Church.*

When Luke, my 8-year-old grandson, called, I expected an inning-by-inning report of his Little League baseball game. Not this time. This time, he asked me why I left the priesthood. . . . “So, Paw-Paw, why did you become a priest and then not want to be a priest anymore?”

“Well,” I said in too many words, “I wanted to be a priest to help people. That’s the way people in our family and neighborhood did it in those days. So I went to school a long time and became one. I’m glad I did. But after seven years I didn’t think being a priest was the best way for me to do all that and be happy anymore, so I asked the pope if I could leave and the pope said yes. And I met Na-Maw and we fell in love and I was happy and your Daddy was born and. . . .”

“That’s OK, Paw-Paw! Thanks. I gotta go.”

. . . Two weeks earlier, Fran and I had driven to Knoxville

continued on page 3

## **. . .Ex Generation, continued:**

for the funeral Mass of her sister Betty, who like her was an ex-nun. Now don't get mad at me—I am using the term “ex” for convenience. I know there are many ways priests and nuns who are no longer recognized as formal church ministers choose to identify themselves. Married priests. Inactive priests. Former nuns. It's all good. No one knows the number of exes in this country, but there will never be another generation of so many of us. There will be no nephew or niece in 50 years who will ask the question Luke asked. And soon no one will ever know the enormous contribution the Ex Generation has made to the church and to humanity. After the Knoxville funeral, about 15 of us gathered on a colleague's deck to honor Betty's remarkable life and legacy. The group included three ex-nuns and two former priests. We were a microcosm of the thousands of others who had left official clerical or religious ministry. . . .Among the five of us, there were teachers, counselors, spiritual directors, authors, and founders of a nonprofit related to mental illness and suicide.

Tom, Betty's brother, got up from a wicker chair and raised a toast: “To Betty, who she was and what she did for others and for the legacy she leaves behind!”

The spirit of that toast wafted on the wind through the hills of Tennessee, and continued to breeze through homes, churches, schools, workplaces and civic organizations throughout the country in honor of the exes everywhere, for their character, seeking, service and commitment to spiritual living. If you listen closely, you may hear it in your heart as well. . . .

Remember the old country song that insists you can take the boy out of the country but you can't take the country out of the boy? It so fits the Ex Generation, boys and girls alike. Sure, there were unreasonable restrictions, crazy conflicts, and multiple good reasons to leave the priesthood or the convent but those who experienced it could not un-experience it or want to. The remnants of that life remain embedded in our souls. We are who we are because we were who we were. . . .Our challenge is to forgive the hurts, acknowledge the disappointments, accept the decisions, face the regrets, confess our sins, and absorb the ongoing transformation inherent in all our life experiences. . . .We cannot find God outside our personal stories because God lives within them.

For me, and thousands of others, that experience includes priesthood and ex-priesthood. I ultimately discovered that my vocation was to lay ministry, not priesthood, and I still live that calling today. Priesthood prepared me for lay ministry both in the church and in the world.

I hope that when Luke calls again, it's not always about baseball.

## **Women deacons? Yes. Deacons? Maybe:**

*Abridged from an article by Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese, a senior analyst for NCR and author of Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church, at ncronline.org, August 11, 2016.*

When I was asked by a reporter last week whether I favored women deacons, I hesitated and finally responded, “If there are male deacons, there should be female deacons.” The media is interested in this issue because Pope Francis appointed a papal commission to study the question of women deacons, including as a member our esteemed *NCR* colleague, Phillis Zagano.

Zagano has shown in her many writings that there were ordained women deacons in the early church. They disappeared in the West around the same time as male deacons. If there were women deacons in the past, the arguments goes, there is no reason we could not have women deacons today.

I find that argument convincing, but frankly, even if there were not women deacons in the past, I would still argue for ordaining women deacons today, just as I would argue for ordaining women priests. True, Jesus did not pick any women for the Twelve Apostles, but he did not pick any gentiles either. We would really have a priest shortage today if the priesthood was limited to Jewish Christians.

The church today does many things that Jesus and the early Christians did not do. For example, they would not recognize the Eucharist as we celebrate it today, nor would they understand why we are doing it in churches rather than in homes, and they would be appalled by all the statues (idols) in our churches. Before statues were accepted, the church went through a very ugly Iconoclastic Controversy. And during the Reformation, this controversy broke out again.

Even today, the Catholic church has a difficult time dealing with change. During the last two papacies, all discussion of serious change was suppressed. Today, the window closed after the Second Vatican Council has been reopened. This does not mean that every new proposal should be accepted, but it does mean that we should be open to serious conversation and debate on change in the church, especially on the role of women in the church.

. . .Back to deacons.

You will notice that I said I hesitated when asked whether I supported women deacons. My hesitancy is not with women deacons, but with the whole idea of deacons as currently practiced in the United States. The renewal of the diaconate was proposed at the Second Vatican Council as a solution to the shortage of native priests in missionary territories. In fact, the bishops of Africa said no, thank you. They preferred to use lay catechists rather than deacons. It was in the United States where

### ***Beginning with yes, continued:***

more likely to get a yes back. Once you have learned how to say a fundamental yes, later no's can be very helpful and are surely necessary. Beginning with yes is the foundation of mature nonviolence and compassionate action.

The Risen Christ is a great big yes to everything (see 2 Corinthians 1:19), even early, incomplete stages. "Transcend and include" is an important principle here. The final, stupendous gift is that your false self becomes the raw material for your unique version of True Self. This is the wonderful metamorphosis we call Resurrection. The Risen Christ is still and forever the wounded Jesus—and yet now so much more. Your ordinary life and temperament is not destroyed or rejected. It is "not ended but merely changed," as the Preface of the funeral liturgy puts it. "This perishable nature will put on imperishability, and this mortal body will put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15: 52-54)—one including the other, not one in place of the other. Picture the nesting dolls that keep including smaller dolls inside of ever larger ones.

Importantly, the Risen Christ is beyond any limits of space and time, as revealed in his bilocation (Luke 24:32-39); passing through doors (John 20:19); and shape-shifting into a gardener (John 20:14-18), a passer-by (Luke 24:13-35), and a wounded man that can only be recognized when Thomas touches the wounds (John 20:27f). The Risen Christ reveals a universal presence that is truly intimate with and connected to everything. The one and the many have become One in him. He reveals that we can operate as a part of the biggest ecosystem or force field possible. Paul's metaphor for this is "The Body of Christ," where even the "weakest members are the most indispensable ones . . . and are clothed with the greatest care." This is an utterly new and upside-down universe that is revealed in the Risen Christ! For the True Self, there is nothing to hate, reject, deny, or judge as unworthy or unnecessary. It has "been forgiven much and so it loves much." Compassion and mercy come easily once you live from inside the Big Body of Love. The detours of the false self were all just delaying tactics, bumps in the road, pressure points that created something new in the long run, as pressure does to carbon deep beneath the earth. God uses everything to construct this hard and immortal diamond, our core of love. Diamonds are the hardest substance on earth. The strong diamond of love will always be stronger than death. Diamonds, once soft black carbon, become beautiful and radiant white lightning under pressure. The true pattern, the big secret, has now been revealed and exposed, "like a treasure hidden in a field." You did not find the Great Love except by finding yourself too, and you cannot find your True Self without falling into the Great Love.

### ***Women deacons?, continued:***

the diaconate took off. Of the approximately 45,000 permanent deacons in the world, around 18,500, or about 40% , are in the United States. . . . Most U.S. deacons are part-time ministers and/or unpaid. I find this odd. The U.S. church has lots of paid lay ministers working full time while at the same time it has ordained deacons working part time, most of whom make a living doing secular work. Why are we ordaining part-time ministers and not full-time ministers? . . .

The truth is that we have deacons for the same reason we have auxiliary bishops, because they get more respect. Clericalism is so engrained in the Catholic soul that people will give greater deference to a deacon than a layperson; priests and people will give greater deference to an auxiliary bishop than to a priest, even if the priest is a vicar general. Ordination gives status beyond the actual competence of the person.

There is, however, one way to save the diaconate. Give it a ministry that serves a real need, one that laypeople cannot do—anointing of the sick. Today, if someone in your family is dying and you call the parish office after hours, you are more likely to get voicemail than a priest. Your chances of being anointed on your deathbed are minuscule in America. If you are lucky, you might be in the hospital when the priest makes a periodic visit. Or you might live in a parish that anoints elderly or sick people once a month at a weekday Mass. Otherwise, good luck. Allowing deacons to anoint the sick would give them a sacramental ministry that meets an important pastoral need in our country.

There is not much historical evidence that male deacons anointed the sick, but interestingly, there is evidence that women deacons anointed sick women, just as women deacons anointed women at baptism. "Epiphanius says it, and Jean Danielou, among others, affirms it," according to Zagano.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the historical actions of women deacons provided the precedent for allowing both male and female deacons to anoint the sick? This is another reason I hope that the church allows women deacons.

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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.