



# 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 22, 2017

## Readings

*This week:*

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b

Matthew 22:15-21

*Next week:*

Exodus 22:20-26

1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10

Matthew 22:34-40

## Psalm

Give the Lord glory and honor. (*Psalm 96*)

## Today

Today's presider is Fr. Daniel Kiriti.

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

Where there is a deep, simple, all-embracing love of man, of the created world of living and inanimate things, then there will be respect for life, for freedom, for truth, for justice and there will be humble love of God. But where there is no love of man, no love of life, then make all the laws you want, all the edicts and treaties, issue all the anathemas; set up all the safeguards and inspections, fill the air with spying satellites, and hang cameras on the moon. As long as you see your fellow man as a being essentially to be feared, mistrusted, hated, and destroyed, there cannot be peace on earth.

—*The Nonviolent Alternative*

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*

## ***Altar of Remembrance up next Sunday:***

Next Sunday when you come to Mass, our annual Altar of Remembrance will be up, in front of the Mary altar. It is themed on the Mexican tradition of the Day of the



Dead, when our deceased loved ones are remembered and honored. At St. Thomas Aquinas, we are invited to bring photos of our loved ones whom we want to remember during November and place them on the altar. If you bring pictures, be sure to label them on the back with your name and phone number, so they can be returned to you if you forget to pick them up. The altar will be up throughout November, and will be taken down December 2, before Advent begins.

## ***Martin Luther and church reform:***

The year 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Popular legend has it that on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther defiantly nailed a copy of his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle church. The Theses are a list of propositions for an academic disputation that advance Luther's positions against what he saw as abusive practices by preachers selling plenary indulgences. As we know, they changed the course of western religious history. What did Luther hope to accomplish, and how did he succeed? The second evening of discussion on this topic will take place Tuesday, October 24, at 7:00 pm in the St. Albert Hospitality Center, 1095 Channing. Speakers will be Fr. Jose Rubio (well known to the Thomas Merton community) and Rev. Greg Schaefer. Fr. Rubio is currently parochial vicar at St. Mary parish in Gilroy. Rev. Schaefer is the pastor of University Lutheran Church and a graduate of the Graduate Theological Union and San Francisco Theological Seminary.

## ***A thank you from SES School:***

A wonderful evening was had by all at our recent Seton School's Authors Event. Ron Hansen and Tobias Wolff *donated their time* and gave a delightful presentation to support our fundraising efforts. Together we raised close to \$7,000 for our on-site Food Program—*terrific!* Best of all, we had a lovely community gathering with all of you, and an opportunity to thank you for all that you do to support our school. We are very blessed to have continued help from our local church communities. Next: Tamales at Christmas.

—Carmel Caligaris, Director of Advancement

## ***Kenyan crafts fair today:***

Following Mass today, Kenya Help will offer a variety of craft items from Margo's latest trip to Kenya. Come to the garden after Mass and start your Christmas shopping. You'll find tables filled with fabrics, purses and shopping bags, crèche sets, carvings in wood and stone, Christmas tree decorations, cards, utensils, bowls, and more. Please note this is not a sale. All items are gifts for donations to Kenya Help, the non-profit organization that promotes education for youth in the Naivasha region of Kenya. If you want to view the crafts at another time, contact Margo at (650) 322-0821 or [margo@kenyahelp.us](mailto:margo@kenyahelp.us).



## ***California wildfires:***

*Abridged from an article by Mary Rezac, National Catholic Register, Diocese of Santa Rosa, at [santarosa-catholic.org](http://santarosa-catholic.org).*

*[Bishop McGrath has asked us to take up a special collection this weekend for the California fire victims.]*

While firefighters in northern California are currently battling 17 wildfires in five counties, Bishop Robert Vasa of the Diocese of Santa Rosa, one of the hardest hit areas, is typing updates and messages of support from his car, in between visits to evacuation centers. . . . Much of the area of the Diocese of Santa Rosa has been under mandatory evacuation, including the chancery and the local Catholic Charities office. One of the diocese's Catholic high schools has been almost completely destroyed by fire, and an elementary school has sustained significant damage.

"The sense of great helplessness is palpable," Bishop Vasa wrote. "When people ask how they can help, I answer that I really do not know. I do know that prayers are the greatest source of solace and help."

. . . Christopher Lyford, director of communications for the Santa Rosa Diocese, stopped by St. Eugene's Cathedral, which is being used as an evacuation center coordinated by the Marian Sisters of Santa Rosa and other parishioners. Once there, he found a homeless man named Paul doing his best to comfort the distraught evacuees. "He lives near the cathedral in a creekbed, and he happened by and offered some consolation through his gift of music" by playing the piano inside the shelter, Lyford told journalists.

. . . . As of today, access to power and communications is back, but the fires are still far from contained, another priest noted. Many parishioners have lost everything.

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## **John Arnold:**

Congratulations to John Arnold, awarded the St. Rosalie Rendu Supporter Award, for his work in the St. Vincent de Paul Society, last Sunday at Mass. Sr. Rendu was a Daughter of Charity who lived in France between 1786 and 1856. She spent 50 years serving the poor, opening a free clinic, pharmacy, school, orphanage, childcare center, home for the elderly, and a youth club for young workers. Her good works were instrumental in the founding of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

## **Pope Francis on death penalty:**

*Abridged from an article by Kevin Clarke, October 16, 2017, at americamagazine.org.*

Advocates for the abolition of capital punishment in the United States were cheered by the pope's clear instruction against the continued use of the death penalty on Oct. 11 as "contrary to the Gospel." . . . During ceremonies at the Vatican commemorating the 25th anniversary of the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis reiterated and expanded on the church's rejection of capital punishment. "However grave the crime that may be committed," he said, "the death penalty is inadmissible because it attacks the inviolability and the dignity of the person." . . .

Karen Clifton, the executive director of the Catholic Mobilizing Network, said "this is against the Gospel; he makes it very clear, and it makes our pro-life teaching consistent." . . . The church has taught that the response to a grave harm must be retributive, "but it also has to be restorative," said Ms. Clifton. "The death penalty is not restorative." In fact, it negates the potential of restoration, Ms. Clifton said, a process that can only happen in God's time. "We can still be tough on crime," she added, but the experience of nations around the world has been that society can protect itself without resorting to executions. . . . A recent vote at the United Nations suggests the hard path ahead in changing hearts in the United States. The U.S. voted on Oct. 5 against a U.N. Human Rights Council resolution condemning the use of the death penalty as a punishment for "apostasy, blasphemy, adultery and consensual same-sex relations," apparently fearing the resolution would undermine the institution at home. It was the only Western nation to do so. "That's how wedded we are as a country to the death penalty," Ms. Clifton said. She is eager to take a revitalized message against capital punishment to the broader U.S. public. This is a countercultural message, she allows. But "Jesus always met people where they were at, and he moved them toward healing and wholeness; the Scripture is filled with sinners and God's healing love. We need to meet people where they are and move them toward mercy and away from vengeance," Ms. Clifton said.

## **What would Thomas Merton make of Trump, climate change and Twitter?:**

*Abridged from an article by Andrew Lenoir, October 3, 2017, at americamagazine.org.*

A few days after the U.S. presidential election in November 2016, a record 77% of Americans told Gallup they felt the country was divided. Throughout 2016, as hate crimes rose 20% across the country, headlines from *The Huffington Post*, *Forbes*, *Newsweek* and *The Federalist* asked readers if they were reliving the infamous political and social strife of 1968. Comparisons to Nixon and Watergate were made on either side of the aisle, as were more apocalyptic terms like the warning we were facing "the end of the world."

. . . As if anticipating this collective dark night of the soul, in his 2015 speech to the U.S. Congress, Pope Francis listed four American exemplars of Christian morality for us to learn from, two of whom died in 1968. The first was the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The second was the Trappist monk Thomas Merton.

Francis described Merton as "a man of prayer, a thinker who challenged the certitudes of his time and opened new horizons for souls and for the church. . . a man of dialogue, a promoter of peace between peoples and religions." While all of these labels are fitting, Merton's role as a Catholic voice of compassion and peace is even more remarkable considering the ways conflict touched his personal life.

Born in France in 1915, Merton fled with his family to avoid World War I. By the time he was 16, he had been orphaned, with both parents perishing from cancer. In December 1941, Merton joined the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani (just three days after Pearl Harbor). In April 1942, his younger brother and only living family member, John Paul Merton, was killed in action over the English Channel. Just six months into his novitiate, the 27-year-old was alone and completely severed from secular life. In his position, others might have begun to hate the world. Instead, Merton found he could not leave it alone. Over the course of 27 years, he produced more than 60 works examining the world through the lens of Christian faith. Throughout his journey, he turned his attention to scripture, prayer, spirituality and, most strikingly in the last years of his life, social justice in books like *The Seeds of Destruction* and *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*.

. . . Writing in 1966, Merton expressed his fear that "a loss of respect for being and man" and the essential divinity of both would lead to a cheapening of human life and the destruction of the environment. This "sin of modernity," according to Merton, confuses mechanical progress for human betterment, pursuing personal com-

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## California wildfires, continued:

The overwhelming feeling of the loss of so many is offset by the overwhelming generosity of individuals giving food, bedding, clothes and water. “Pray for us,” he added again. “Pray that the winds die down and the fires can be abated. Pray that we have strength to persevere.”

## Black Elk promoted for sainthood:

*Abridged from an article by Damian Costello and Jon M. Sweeney, October 16, 2017, at americamagazine.org.*

Outside of Pine Ridge Reservation, most people know of Black Elk through *Black Elk Speaks*, first published in 1932. The author, John Neihardt told only part of Black Elk’s story. The Lakota medicine man was a second cousin to Crazy Horse, and was 12 years old when he participated in the Battle of the Little Bighorn, in 1876. He became a ghost dancer and fought in the aftermath of the Massacre of Wounded Knee, in 1890. He spent two years touring Europe with Buffalo Bill Cody. Globally, Black Elk is seen as a teacher of what was lost, an alternative and oppositional voice to the forces of industrialization and colonialism. But most seem unaware that he spent half a century as an active Catholic. . . . In 1904, at the age of 40, he became interested in Catholicism after a Jesuit objected to a healing ceremony Black Elk was conducting. He gave up his medicine practice and converted to Catholicism. Black Elk then learned to read and became known for his ability to memorize Scripture and for his dynamic preaching. He spent decades as a catechist, taking numerous missionary trips to other reservations in what he called “spiritual scalping-tours.”

. . . Today, in the parish where Black Elk did much of his pastoral work, the aura of sainthood is unmistakable. He is credited with bringing 400 people into the Roman Catholic Church. Black Elk also lived a life of unquestioned holiness and experienced the kind of suffering that is often associated with lives of the saints. His first wife died in 1903, son William in infancy, son John of tuberculosis at 12, an infant son and two stepdaughters of tuberculosis in 1910. He himself lived with tuberculosis from 1912. But Black Elk never complained about his suffering and he proclaimed his Catholic faith until the end. “Now my heart is getting sad—but my heart will never turn bad,” he wrote in a letter in 1948. “Ever since Wakan Tanka [the Lakota name for God] gave light to my heart, it stands in light without end.”

## What would Merton make of Trump, continued:

fort and societal approval over living the teachings of Christ. Fifty-one years ago, Merton warned that the failure to enact the Gospel’s social implications would result in an “earthly Hell.” Today, recent studies of rising temperatures, sea levels and the projected effects global climate change will have on populations around the world may prove him right.

. . . In *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, Merton makes an observation about hope and optimism in the context of the Final Judgment. In some sense, we are always facing the end of the world. And yet, this is exactly the kind of crisis Christianity addresses, to which Christ on the cross is our comfort and our salvation.

This is the mystery of the crucifixion and the resurrection—the perfect sacrifice for the whole world. By failing, by failing, suffering and dying, Jesus reverses the Fall of Adam, saving humanity from itself. Christ’s victory saves not just the world but saves us all. Christian optimism, then, is not just the hope that things will turn out all right—it is the complete trust in the truth of God’s plan and the role humans have to play in it.

With this in mind, Merton writes, every moment, especially a crisis, is an opportunity to:

[r]espond now in perfect freedom to the redemptive love of God for man in Christ, that I can now rise above the forces of necessity and evil in order to say “yes” to the mysterious action of Spirit that is transforming the world even in the midst of the violence and confusion and destruction. . . .

Merton teaches us that in our dealings with our fellow citizens, both of the United States and of the planet Earth, we have the chance to hear the voice of God and collaborate as agents of the Holy Spirit. This means entering an active relationship with God by harnessing and contributing “the creative power that he has placed in us.” . . .

“In times of drastic change,” Merton warns, it is easy to lose touch with where one is. We can be thrown off balance and forget whether today is an ending or a beginning, which way things are moving and how it will all end up. In these times, Merton says, “courage is the authentic form taken by love.” Courage, however, becomes certainty in the knowledge of Christ’s victory. We may not always know God’s will. We may stumble and fall along the way, but the path forward is there, and we will find it. We cannot fail to find it if we have faith, in each other, in ourselves and in the truth as Merton saw it. The battle is over. History is already written. It is for us to choose which side we are on, find our role and play it.

Please remember in your prayers this week: Denise Alongi, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Mary Connors, 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.