



# 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 16, 2017

## Readings

*This week:*

Isaiah 55:10–11

Romans 8:18–23

Matthew 13:1–23

*Next week:*

Wisdom 12:13, 16–19

Romans 8:26–27

Matthew 13:24–33

## Psalm

The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest. (*Psalm 65*)

## Today

Today's presider is Rev. Jack Izzo, S.J.

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, July 17, 7:00 p.m. TMC Spiritual Education, Thomas House Library

## From Thomas Merton

Every moment and every event of every man's life on earth plants something in his soul. For just as the wind carries thousands of winged seeds, so each moment brings with it germs of spiritual vitality that come to rest imperceptibly in the minds and wills of men. Most of these unnumbered seeds perish and are lost, because men are not prepared to receive them: for such seeds as these cannot spring up anywhere except in the good soil of freedom, spontaneity, and love...

It is God's love that speaks to me in the birds and streams; but also behind the clamor of the city God speaks to me in His judgments, and all these things are seeds sent to me from His will.

—*New Seeds of Contemplation*

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

### Hotel de Zink food signups:



Our STA parishioners will be taking food to the Hotel de Zink (homeless shelter) during the first two weeks of August. Please check your calendars to see which date you would be

able to help. Ruth Chippendale will be at the church after Mass to sign people up during the month of July. If you miss her, please call 650-856-6350. Thank you.

### Pivotal players in Catholicism begins July 31:

Who are the “pivotal players” in our Church? Explore the lives of six of the most significant people in the life of our Church: men and women whose friendship with Christ transformed not only their lives but also the world.

Invest 90 minutes a week this summer in a continuation of the CATHOLICISM series, the groundbreaking and visually stunning documentary films created and hosted by Bishop Robert Barron. Who has Bishop Barron chosen? Come and See (Hint: one is patron of our parish)

When: Monday evenings beginning July 31 (Aug. 4, 11, 18 & 25, Sept. 11) - 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Where: Our Lady of the Rosary Hall

Questions: Contact Susan Olsen in the Faith Formation Office - 650-494-2496, x25.

### Travel with Fr. George Aranha to Italy:

Fr. George Aranha, former pastor at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, is traveling again!

Fr. George is hosting the “Best of Italy and Sicily,” September 11-22, 2017. This is a trip lasting 12 days, with stops in Palermo, Agrigento, Siracusa, Taormina, Sorrento, Pompeii, culminating with a Vatican visit to Pope Francis in Rome.

To get a brochure, please email:

Jen@santateresachurch.com or call the office at 408-629-7777 ext. 101 or go to

<http://santateresachurch.com/>

**PRAY FOR US:** Please remember in your prayers this week Denise Alongi, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Mary Connors, Mike Cummings, Wayne Cummings, Ken Dias, Pat Dietrich, Fr. Thierry Geris, Deonna Gill, Emily Gill, Joanne Hasegawa, Fr. John Hester, 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 in adjacent column.]

### Young people worldwide fill out Vatican questionnaire:

The Synod of Bishops on Youth in 2018 will be considering the responses to the Vatican online questionnaire, promulgated to involve young people in preparations for this synod dedicated to them, reports Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops. Already 60,000 answers from young people worldwide have been submitted.

Cardinal Baldisseri made the point in the columns of the Italian Catholic Agency SIR on July 1, 2017. “A few weeks ago we launched a site and we have already had 173,000 contacts and 60,000 answers, numbers that show the public’s interest in this question. We already have the Synod’s preparatory document and at the end there is a questionnaire. With this site we want to reach young people directly and we already have great answers,” specified Cardinal Baldisseri in connection with the forthcoming Synod on Young People, all young people, not only active Catholic young people.

Read more at: <https://zenit.org/articles/2018-synod-already-60000-answers-from-young-people-worldwide/>

NOTE: The questionnaire — available in English, Spanish, French and Italian — can be found on the synod’s official site: [youth.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/it.html](http://youth.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/it.html) and is open to any young person, regardless of faith or religious belief.

### Request from St. Vincent de Paul Conference:



Should you, or someone you know, be planning to stay in a hotel or motel, kindly consider bringing back unused small bottles of shampoo, lotion and soap for those without. Place in the receptacle in your church vestibule along with needed non-perishable foods. Remember we need these items year around. Thank you for your generosity.

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

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# COMMUNITY FORUM

*Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns*

## **What death is trying to tell us:**

[By Patrick T. Reardon, NCR, July 11, 2017]

It may seem odd today, but, at one point, a half century ago, the top-selling popular song in America was made up of lyrics from the Bible — specifically, from the third chapter of the Book of Ecclesiastes.

The song, written in the late 1950s by the great folk-singer Pete Seeger, was "Turn! Turn! Turn! (To Everything There Is a Season)." It wasn't his version that reached No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart on Dec. 4, 1965. It was the rock version by the Byrds, and it began:

To everything (turn, turn, turn)  
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)  
And a time to every purpose under heaven.  
A time to be born, a time to die  
A time to plant, a time to reap.

You might think that all the teenagers like me who were grooving to the song back then would have taken in the import of those words, particularly, "A time to be born, a time to die." But we were young and felt immortal.

I think back on that song today, a year and a half after my brother David, suffering great pain and fearing to lose control of his life, killed himself during a thick shower of rain-snow outside his back door at 3 a.m. on a Friday.

David was a year younger than I, and the two of us were the oldest of 14 children. He had had many difficulties throughout his life, and, for me and my siblings, his suicide wasn't a complete surprise.

It was a shock, nonetheless. He was here, one of us — he and I had talked just a few hours before his death — and then he was gone. There was a finality that slapped us in the face. This brother we loved was gone.

Then, just a couple months ago, my sister Eileen's husband, Bob, was killed in a boating accident. Again, the fabric of our family was ripped. Again, the realization hit us — we would never see Bob again.

Not only that, but, in both cases, there was no escaping the reminder that each one of us, like David and Bob, would one day die.

There is a Latin term for that sort of reminder, *memento mori* ("Remember, you must die"). Back in 1959, Muriel Spark, who blended spiritual depth with a comic sensibility, published a wonderful novel with those Latin words as a title. It was about a bunch of elderly English people, mostly upper-class Londoners, who begin receiving identical telephone calls. When they answer, the caller says, "Remember, you must die." Some are indignant. Some amused. Some disoriented. All are mystified.

However, Jean Taylor, a former companion-maid of one of the ladies and a former lover of one of the men,

doesn't get a call. At 82, she is in a government nursing home, progressively losing the use of her body to arthritis. Jean is very aware of her declining health and approaching death. She seems to find consolation meditating on these subjects, and maybe that's why the caller never bothers with her. One chapter begins: "Miss Jean Taylor sat in the chair beside her bed. She never knew, when she sat in her chair, if it was the last time she would be able to sit out of bed."

You don't have to be 82 to realize that, at any moment, your life could come to an end. Dwelling on that fact may seem desolate, but, in fact, it can be life-affirming. As Americans, we live in a society that continually seeks to deny death. Look at the commercials on TV and the ads in newspapers and magazines and online, and you'd think that staying vibrantly, youthfully alive forever is only a matter of eating a certain diet, ingesting the right pills and having the perfect toys. It's all a sham, though. To pretend that death is not somewhere on the horizon is to dwell in a fantasy existence.

However, if you remember that there is "a time to be born, a time to die," you are constantly aware that life is there to be lived. If you know death is waiting in the wings, you know that each moment we have, each breath we take in, is precious. Each sunrise is one of only a finite number that we will have the opportunity to see. Each gentle rain. Each beautiful snowfall. Each person we meet is a treasure. Each is dying, just as we are.

What the writer of Ecclesiastes tells us — what God is telling us — is that our job on Earth is to show up. To be present. To be alive to the fullness of life, which includes being alive to the fact of death....

God gives us the whirlwind in which to live. We aren't given safe, secure cocoons where we can escape the rough-and-tough of existence. We are given the storm, and we're told to blossom amid all the rain and thunder. That reality is at the heart of last year's exhortation from Pope Francis' *Amoris Laetitia* ("The Joy of Love"). He's writing about marriage, but what he says is applicable to life in general: "Marital joy can be experienced even amid sorrow; it involves accepting that marriage is an inevitable mixture of enjoyment and struggles, tensions and repose, pain and relief, satisfaction and longings, annoyances and pleasures."

Life is that same sort of mixture of joy and sorrow, but you can't taste the joy if you're hiding from the sorrow. Death will come, yes. But, for now, in joy and sorrow, we're called to look at the wonder of the world which God has made for us, and at all these souls sharing that world with us. #

[Patrick T. Reardon is the author of eight books including *Requiem for David*, a poetry collection, and *Faith Stripped to Its Essence*, a literary-religious analysis of Shusaku Endo's novel *Silence*.]

## ***Should the Works of Mercy come with free swag?***

“Purchasing is always a moral—and not simply an economic—act,” said Pope Francis, quoting from Benedict XVI’s 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth).

But what happens when purchasing is the only thing keeping our morals in check?

That’s the reality of the philanthropic trend known as “compassionate consumerism,” a charitable giving model that allows people to be socially conscious while also acquiring a material good. For instance, the shoe company TOMS donates money to charitable causes using funds from consumer purchases. Products featuring the pink ribbon sometimes support breast cancer foundations. (RED) products claim to contribute funding to AIDS research. While these feel-good purchases aren’t necessarily bad, they do beg the question of how Catholics should best practice acts of charity.

David Cloutier, a moral theologian at the Catholic University of America, says that Pope Francis has vividly communicated that the best way to be truly charitable is by face-to-face encounter with those who are struggling—and preferably in our own communities.

“Whenever possible, we should be charitable in and through organizations that embed us in genuine solidarity with others in need,” Cloutier says. “I joke sometimes that the best way for a busy person to be charitable is to move to a poorer neighborhood. Your community will be right there at your door.”

Read more at: <http://www.uscatholic.org/articles/201707/should-works-mercy-come-free-swag-31065>

### ***“Invisible Bestseller” on road to find Bible:***

[A book review by Alexandra Greenwald, *National Catholic Reporter*, July 12, 2017. Greenwald is a freelance religion reporter and writer based in Chicago.]

THE INVISIBLE BESTSELLER: SEARCHING FOR THE BIBLE IN AMERICA, by Kenneth A. Briggs, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 255 pages, \$25

If you haven't read the Bible in a while — or if most of your contact with Scripture doesn't come from the Bible itself — the premise of Kenneth A. Briggs' *The Invisible Bestseller: Searching for the Bible in America* might resonate with you.

As a child, Briggs' world was flush with biblical references and literacy; he remembers being inspired by Bible passages taught and explained to him in church, and feeling as if "practically all" Americans in the post-WWII days of his youth spent Sundays hearing similar lessons.

Times have changed, however, and Briggs writes that the Bible has "largely receded from public view." He has the statistics to back that up — according to the polls he cites, 88 percent of American households own a Bible, but only 53 percent of Americans said they read the Bible more than once or twice a year in 2014. These facts and memories in hand, Briggs is spurred to go on a cross-country, quasi-pilgrimage to "discover what has become of the holy book that Abe Lincoln called the 'greatest gift God has ever given to man,' and where it figures into a contemporary America fraught with restlessness and uncertainty," with the hope it would "inspire discussions of where we go from here."

This sojourn into American Christianity brings Briggs to people and places both expected and surprising, such as the developer of a Bible app that lets the faithful study on the go, discussion of Bible-centric television shows, and the 2012 joint conference between the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Academy of Religion.

Especially memorable among these is his trip to Dayton, Tennessee, home of the Scopes trial in 1925. By Briggs' estimation, the trial, in which John T. Scopes agreed to be tried for violation of a Tennessee law forbidding teachers to lecture on evolution, was central to the creation of the stereotype of backwardness and anti-intellectualism that has dogged conservative Christianity ever since.

Through his empathetic depiction of current Dayton residents who "struggle with doubts" about biblical inerrancy and the role their hometown played in history, Briggs brings out a wider phenomenon of American Christians who may keep their faith private to avoid being dismissed as uneducated or morally overzealous. The crux of Briggs' argument emerges here — that is, Christianity has become associated with socially undesirable traits, and thus the religion and its holy book must find new ways to attract the faithful and fit in.

Briggs, who is a contributor to the *NCR Today* blog, spent his career as a religion reporter for *Newsday* and religion editor for *The New York Times*, and it shows — this chapter, and several others throughout the book, are masterful pieces of reporting that would be right at home on the front page of either publication.

An unfortunate side effect of this excellent reporting, though, is the relative lack of connective tissue between chapters of the book... Readers looking for a heavily researched, scholarly work will be disappointed — this is more of a hybrid of travelogue and memoir.

That said, there's probably no better guide for a journey through contemporary American Christianity than Briggs. His long career of capturing American religiosity comes through on every page, all rendered in truly beautiful prose.

*The Invisible Bestseller* is well worth reading just to watch a master at the height of his craft and to encounter the people and places depicted throughout his narratives. As a portrait of American Christianity and its relationship with the Bible, Briggs' book is a great resource — provided you're willing to decide what it all means for yourself.

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