



# 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 9, 2017

## Readings

*This week:*

Zechariah 9:9-10

Romans 8:9, 11-13

Matthew 11:25-30

*Next week:*

Isaiah 55:10-11

Romans 8:18-23

Matthew 13:1-23

## Psalm

I will praise your name forever, my king and my God. (*Psalm 145*)

## Today

Today's presider is Fr. Larry Percell.

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

Monday, July 10, 7:00 pm

Liturgy Team, Thomas House

Thursday, July 13, 7:30 pm

TMC Board, Thomas House

## From Thomas Merton

Basically our first duty today is to human truth in its existential reality, and this sooner or later brings us into confrontation with system and power which seek to overwhelm truth for the sake of particular interests, perhaps rationalized as ideals. Sooner or later this human duty presents itself in a form of crisis that cannot be evaded. At such a time it is very good, almost essential, to have at one's side others with a similar determination, and one can then be guided by a common inspiration and a communion in truth. . . . We know that our only ultimate strength is in the Lord and His Spirit, and faith must make us depend entirely on His will and providence. One must then truly be detached and free in order not to be held and impeded by anything secondary or irrelevant. Which is another way of saying that poverty also is our strength.

—*The Courage for Truth*

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*

## **Friday Fish Fest continues:**



All are welcome to the STA Friday Fish Fest on Friday, July 14, at 6:00 pm at the Thomas House (adjacent to St. Thomas Aquinas Church) at 745 Waverley. Come prepared to enjoy fish and chips, tasty Asian coleslaw, beer and wine in an informal setting, getting to know STA Mass attendees and others from Our Lady of the Rosary and St. Albert's (nametags make it easy to strike up a conversation). Sponsored by the STA Site Committee; a \$5 donation would be appreciated but not required. You are welcome to bring a dish or dessert to share. RSVP to Helen Baumann, (650) 327-9236 or hbbaumann@aol.com. (We want to have enough food for all!)

# COMMUNITY FORUM

*Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns*

## **What would Teilhard say? Evolve or be annihilated:**

*Abridged from an article by Franciscan sister Ilia Delio, at [globalsistersreport.org](http://globalsistersreport.org). Sr. Ilia is the Josephine C. Connelly Endowed Chair in Theology at Villanova University and the author of 16 books, including Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology and Consciousness (Orbis Books, 2015).*

In 1953, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin wrote an essay on "The Agony of Our Age: A World That Is Asphyxiating," in which he pointed out that after eons of slow expansion, the human species has entered a phase of compression. Every part of the globe is inhabited by the human species and we are all now confronted by a new reality on this Earth. . . . This flood of sheer humanity, Teilhard wrote, is seeping through every fissure and drowning the rest of us. . . . We find ourselves in a disagreeable closeness of interaction; a continual friction between individuals who are alien or hostile to one another, . . . and the increasing insecurity of daily



life with constant threats of terrorism and violence invading our waking hours. There are too many of us in too little room, Teilhard wrote:

The truth is, it is just like a train in the rush hour—the earth is coming to be a place on which we simply cannot breathe. And this asphyxiation explains the violent methods employed by nations and individuals in their attempt to break loose and to preserve, by isolation, their customs, their language and their country. A useless attempt, moreover, since passengers continue to pile into the railway carriage.

Instead of being exasperated by these nuisances from which we all suffer, or waiting vaguely for things to settle down, would we not do better to ask ourselves whether, as a matter of solid experiential fact, there may not possibly be, first, a reassuring explanation of what is going on, and secondly, an acceptable issue to it?

. . . The fact is, we have not accepted evolution as our story. . . . Politically, we have fiefdoms and kingdoms;

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## **Sr. Simone Campbell on healthcare:**

*Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, is executive director of NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice. She is an attorney, based in Washington, DC. Published in The Hill, June 26, 2017, "a top US political website, read by the White House and more lawmakers than any other site—vital for policy, politics and election campaigns."*

When people hear that I, a Catholic Sister, work on healthcare in Washington, DC, I'm met with mixed reactions. There is no doubt—many Americans have lots of feelings about the myriad issues under the healthcare umbrella. For me, it boils down to making sure that as many people as possible have access to life-saving healthcare coverage.

In 2010, I made sure that Congress knew that passing the Affordable Care Act was part of a pro-life stance, and now, over 20 million more Americans are covered because of this life-saving bill! But now, as Senate Republicans seek to rush through a plan to repeal the Affordable Care Act, I am concerned.

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## **Maybe it's time to reconsider calling priests 'Father':**

*Abridged from an article by Bill Tammeus, June 8, 2017, at [www.ncronline.org](http://www.ncronline.org). Tammeus is a Presbyterian elder and former award-winning Faith columnist for The Kansas City Star.*

A persistent criticism of the Christian church universal—but especially the Catholic Church—is that in many ways it's patriarchal. Which is to say that men, not women, run it. Look at any picture of the College of Cardinals gathered with the pope, and male dominance is embarrassingly obvious, given that it's at least theoretically possible to have female cardinals.

A subtle but effective reinforcement of this men's club image happens every time a Catholic priest is addressed as "Father." Oh, I know calling priests that has a long tradition and in some ways it's a charming personalization of the oversight role priests play. But as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, it's time to consider whether it's time to stop calling priests "Father."

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## ***Make America, America again:***

*Abridged from an article by Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister, June 5, 2017, at [www.ncronline.org](http://www.ncronline.org).*

There's a pall hanging over the country these days. And it's everywhere. It colors every news article, of course. But, it's not only the news that's been tainted by the non-majority election of a president and the appointment of an "alt-right" cabinet. . . . We walk through the world now looking over our shoulders, waiting for the next headline, the next investigation, the next breach of protocol on the slippery slope between democratic government and irresponsible governance. So, should we just give in and let this runaway world run its course? These are questions we never had to ask before. In today's political climate, they underlie the depression of the society.

But Victor E. Frankl in his classic, *Man's Search for Meaning*, reminds us, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

. . . The very meaning of politics itself may be in danger. Where once politics was seen as "the art of the possible," it has become the gross art of the power grab. One extra congressional seat is enough now to smother the voice of the minority party. Party politics become more important than national politics, and half the country goes unrepresented as a result. . . . And so, clean air, world health research, global cooperation and the preservation of the planet become suspect as we plan to go our own way for our own profit in a world where, metaphorically, "no [country] is an island."

. . . We have gone from government "of the people, by the people, for the people" to government "of the rich, by the rich, for the rich." . . . In a government where "America first" means "me first," the poor, the sick, the illiterate, the homeless—the marginalized citizens of America—are the shadow society of life, yes. But these people are the unseen and unknown whose lives, in the end, will really define this country's standard of living, its social climate, its economic future and the quality of its soul for decades to come.

Of course, the temptation is to withdraw from it all. . . . Indeed, the delusion is that we can simply give up, turn our backs on the resistance, bury the "American dream." The poet Langston Hughes. . . writes that we should "hold fast to dreams" because "life is a broken-winged bird" without them, unable to fly and a "barren field frozen with snow." The point is that we do not have the luxury of depression, of withdrawal or of surrender to our lesser selves as human beings. . . . As Dorothy Day is credited with saying, "No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do." And so, rise up, resist, and get on with it.

## ***Sr. Simone Campbell, continued:***

able Care Act in the most secretive manner, I want to call their bluff on their proclaimed pro-life stance.

I am outraged to see allegedly pro-life Republicans put forward a healthcare bill that will strip millions of people of their healthcare. Not only that, but this bill preys on the most vulnerable! This is antithetical to any faith. . . . It used to be very difficult for women to find insurance coverage for pre-natal and maternity care. Under current law, maternal health (pregnancy and postpartum services) is an essential benefit, which insurers must offer without charging extra. This is a pro-life benefit—but the GOP is set to eliminate the essential health benefits, including maternity care, for millions of expecting mothers. But what many don't know is that 45% of births in the United States are paid for by Medicaid.

. . . Even worse, the Republicans plan to cut and cap Medicaid funding for people with disabilities and those living below the poverty level in our nation

. . . Further, Medicaid dollars benefit seniors residing in nursing homes, including many Catholic Sisters who have served their entire lives tending to the most vulnerable. It also affects people with disabilities, whose care can be too expensive for a family to manage. But, Republican efforts to cut Medicaid funding arbitrarily will jeopardize their lives and well-being. Taking money away from seniors, people in poverty and people with disabilities is wrong. Everyone has a right to live in dignity.

I fight for healthcare because I fight for the lives of our people. But, I am angry that by moving ahead with their American Health Care Act spin-off, Republican Senators are only concerned with lining the pockets of the wealthiest and are doing so at the expense of Medicaid and our most vulnerable people. If Republicans are truly pro-life, then they will place people, not corporate interests, at the center of their decision-making. And, when people are healthier, we all do better.

So my pro-life colleagues: Listen up. To be pro-life requires us to care about ALL of life, not just birth or death.

. . . This means that we must not cap individual or state expenditures for Medicaid or remove services from the defined benefits. It also means that we must not block grant Medicaid to the states or institute a per capita cap. As the richest nation on earth, we can care for all of life if we choose. All other developed nations have accomplished it. Do we have the will to put our people over yet more tax cuts for the 1%? As a person of faith, I say that we must. It is a mandate of my faith and a call to the common good. So Senators, please, reject the so-called "Better Care Reconciliation Act," and let's have a real conversation that *doesn't* include 23 million Americans losing their healthcare.

### ***What would Teilhard say?, continued:***

socially, we have tribes and cults. Religiously, we have hierarchy and patriarchy. There is nothing that sustains, supports or nurtures human evolution. . . .To live in evolution is to let go of structures that prevent convergence and deepening of consciousness and assume new structures that are consonant with creativity, inspiration and development.

. . .The challenge of evolution is essentially stifled by two main systems: religion and education. Religiously we have faith systems confined to old cosmologies and entrenched doctrines. In education, we are still operating on the scientific principles of the German university, where objective knowledge and specialization are not to be confused or mingled with subjective experience or spirituality. We are educated to think as closed-system specialists, and we are religiously sheltered by medieval dogma. From these two main systems arise all other systems in the world. If we are thinking out of old boxes and praying to old Gods, it is no wonder that evolution frightens us and we resist its forces.

. . .There is a greater sense among the post-millennial generation that things can change, that the world can become a better place and that we must use our gifts to help create this new world. . . .Yet, evolution is pressing in the direction of convergence and globalization and the political forces of the world are resisting this change at a high price. Anti-evolutionists want to remain stable, fixed, tribal and nationalistic. They want to avoid convergence, which includes shared space, shared resources, shared policies and shared power. Teilhard warned that we must converge by way of evolution or we will annihilate ourselves. . . .Our moment of evolution requires revolution, and one of the main forces that must make a complete turnaround is religion.

. . .Not much has changed among world religions. . . .The fact is we still profess the Nicene Creed composed in the fourth century. Today, the church suffers from internal forces of resistance, as Pope Francis seeks to update the church's presence in the world.

We are all complicit in the present forces of devolution by which we are thinning out our resources and draining our energies to converge. . . .And the price to pay for this sin will be high because the tension of our current political situation is such that, at some point, the rope tautly drawn between big money and corrupt power structures will snap. We will not be able to hide in our glass houses because we will all be gasping for the little air left to breathe.

Thomas Berry summed up the problem of our age in a single sentence: "We will go into the future as a single sacred community or we will all perish in the desert." . . .

### ***. . .Calling priests 'Father,' continued:***

brate Father's Day this month, maybe it's time for Catholics to reconsider the practice.

Because of the church's celibacy requirement, priests are not allowed to be fathers in the same way that I'm one. I'm also stepfather to four adults with whom I have a fatherly relationship, though we know our connection is spiritual through love, not physical by origin. (None of these six people calls me "Father," however. I'm "Dad," "Bill" or "Hey, you." And our eight grandchildren apply various names to me, none of them "Grandfather" and none, despite my persistent instructions, "Your Grace.") So to call a priest "Father" is to use a metaphor that seems in odd tension with church teaching about celibacy. Beyond that, it is a drip-drip-drip reminder that the church forecloses the possibility of ordaining women. . . . I'm well aware that the Catholic practice of calling priests "Father" is deeply ingrained in church culture and would be difficult to change. That said, just having a conversation about such a change might prove to be enlightening and even liberating. I bet that here and there one might even find some priests who would be glad to be rid of the title. It might even be possible to find a parish priest who would be bold enough now to ask church members to call him something other than "Father." But what? In many fields, the title applied to people says something about their duties, as in "General," "Professor" or "Doctor." Such a title is quite available and has been used regularly through much of Christianity: "Pastor." Lutherans and Baptists, especially, often refer to "Pastor Collins" or, more informally, "Pastor Jim." That works.

The title "Reverend" is applied to both Catholic and Protestant pastors, of course, and sometimes Protestants will call their pastors by that title, as in "Reverend Haley, would you please open this meeting with prayer?" So that's an option, but it's sort of stilted, which is why with some pastors the title gets shortened to "Hey, Rev." But "Pastor" is more, well, pastoral. Each time it's used to address a minister, it reminds him or her of a key assigned task. The congregation is full of people who need pastoral care, whether to help heal broken relationships or overcome grief. It's softer and humbler than "Father," which carries with it the implication that the person to whom it's applied holds authority and should be obeyed. . . .Well, look, my idea comes to you from a Presbyterian with precious little skin in the Catholic-priest-title game. So, of course, you're free to incinerate it. But I think that calling priests "Father" is one of those rarely challenged practices that should be held up to the light now and then to see if it still serves a useful purpose.

P.S.: I usually call my pastors Paul and Kristin.