



# 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 20, 2017

## Readings

*This week:*

Isaiah 56:1, 6–7

Romans 11:13–15, 29–32

Matthew 15:21–28

*Next week:*

Isaiah 22:19–23

Romans 11:33–36

Matthew 16:13–20

## Psalm

O God, let all the nations praise you!. (*Psalm 67*)

## Today

Today's presider is Rev. Xavier Lavagetto, O.P.

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, August 21, 7:00 p.m.

TMC Spiritual Education Committee, Thomas House

## From Thomas Merton

The contemplative life applies wherever there is life. Wherever man and society exist; where there are hopes, ideals, aspirations for a better future; where there is love — and where there is mingled pain and happiness — there the contemplative life has a place, because life, happiness, pain, ideals, aspirations, work, art, and other things have significance. If these things have no significance, why waste our time on them? But, if they have significance, then the independent significance of each must converge in some way into a central and universal significance which comes from a hidden reality. This central reality has to be a “catholic” reality, a “divine” reality. The reality central to my life is the life of God. To know this is the contemplative’s objective...[C]ontemplation does not exist only within the walls of the cloister. Every man, to live a life of full significance, is called simply to know the significant interior of life and to find ultimate significance in its proper inscrutable existence...in the Living God.

— “*Honorable Reader*”: *Reflections on My Work*

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*

### ***Stanford Health needs volunteers:***

Are you a compassionate listener? A selfless giver? Empathetic and encouraging? Stanford Medical Center/Stanford Health Care is looking for bilingual volunteers to assist in their Catholic Holy Communion to the Sick in the Spiritual Care Department.

Hours are flexible, and training will be provided. Please consider becoming a volunteer to serve those in the hospital who cannot attend Sunday Mass.

If you are interested, please contact Raksha Patel at (650) 723-5101, spiritualcare@stanfordhealthcare.org for more information.

### ***Interested in Bible study?***

Are you interested in enhancing your spiritual life, or learning more about your faith, or walking closer to God? Would you be interested in joining a small group of your friends for an interactive Bible study?

I've spoken to a few people, here at Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish, that are interested in starting a weekly Bible study. It would be open to those in the community who would like to study more, share more, or understand more, about God's written Word.

If you are interested, or have suggestions for a Bible study, please email Neale Wade: neale.wade@outlook.com.

### ***So. Palo Alto Food Closet needs help:***

Volunteers are needed for South Palo Alto Food Closet. There is a great need for the fourth Monday of the month from 12-2 pm and for the fifth Monday of the month for both 10-12 and 12-2 time slots. Please contact Jane Bernstein at 814-5478, janieb23@gmail.com.

### ***Pope Francis on the "Our Father":***

"Let us not forget that the *Our Father* is the prayer of the poor. Our asking for bread expresses our entrustment to God for our basic needs in life. Everything that Jesus taught us in this prayer expresses and brings together the cry of all who suffer from life's uncertainties and the lack of what they need. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he answered in the words with which the poor speak to our one Father, in whom all acknowledge themselves as brothers and sisters. The *Our Father* is a prayer said in the plural: the bread for which we ask is 'ours,' and that entails sharing, participation and joint responsibility. In this prayer, all of us recognize our need to overcome every form of selfishness, in order to enter into the joy of mutual acceptance."

- Pope Francis, *Message for First World Day of the Poor* (11/19/17)

### ***School supplies for kids:***

East Palo Alto nonprofit Ecumenical Hunger Program is looking for help from the community to address a gap in back-to-school items for local students in need.

At the start of each school year, Ecumenical Hunger Program provides students in East Palo Alto, Palo Alto, Menlo Park and surrounding areas with backpacks, school supplies, new uniforms and new shoes. A Redwood City organization that the nonprofit partners with, "My New Red Shoes," helped Ecumenical Hunger Program donate 460 pairs of new shoes this year, but 150 children still remain in need, the nonprofit said.

"We also have a very long list of children that are in need of help with new clothing for back to school," Charlotte Brown, Ecumenical Hunger Program Resource/Volunteer Coordinator, wrote in an email.

Gift cards and donations can be dropped off at or mailed to: Ecumenical Hunger Program, 2411 Pulgas Ave., East Palo Alto, 94303. Receipts will be sent upon request.

For more information, call 650-323-7781 or go to ehpcare.org.

—*STA Human Concerns Committee*

### ***Thanks from the Hotel De Zink guests:***

Many, many thanks to all the generous, caring folks who donated delicious food to the guests staying at the church shelter during the first two weeks of August. The staff, church members, and guests are very thankful for your help.

—*Ruth Chippendale*

**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.]

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## COMMUNITY FORUM

*Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns*

### ***Spiritual cost of scandal:***

[By Sr. Rita Ferrone, *Commonweal*, 8/14/17]

Shortly after my column on Pope Francis's latest appointment of new cardinals went to press [in mid-June]...I learned that a scandal had broken out concerning one of them. Cardinal-elect Jean Zerbo of Mali was accused by two investigative journalists of embezzling five million euros and hiding the money in a Swiss bank account. He and representatives of his diocese denied the charges in a clumsy, disorganized, and blustering manner.

When I read about this, I immediately assumed he was guilty. I noted my gut reaction with chagrin, but there it was. So pervasive has clerical scandal been in my lifetime, including cases of mismanagement of church funds, it was only too easy to believe him guilty. Easier, in fact, than to imagine he was innocent....I ought to have been more cynical.

Reactions such as this to news of scandal in the Church are, I believe, not uncommon. And a spiritual toll is taken by this sort of inner response. In the aggregate, feelings of being cheated and taken in by our own leaders can make us a more defensive and less generous.

It is part of the total harm caused by scandal in the Church—particularly the sex abuse scandal, but other scandals as well. The cost of scandal cannot be measured only in the number of dioceses driven into bankruptcy, or the number of lawsuits taken to court, or the price of compensation to victims, or even the number of individuals and families and institutions directly harmed. The cost is found also, somewhat more intangibly yet in a real way, in the shifting of the inner pendulum of so many Catholics from trust to skepticism, from a presumption of innocence to a presumption of guilt.

... If we take our theology seriously, we must acknowledge that sin is real and human beings fail us. The Church has always included both saints and sinners. Indeed no one among us is sinless....Something good in our souls is being eroded whenever, in place of fairness, we take refuge in cynicism. This is one of the less-admitted costs of scandal. Even with all the good we have known from, yes, virtuous people in the Church, we cannot forget the ugliness of betrayal displayed in clerical crimes and cover-ups...And so we withdraw—we withhold our trust, we withhold our money from the collection plate, and perhaps our bodies from the pews. This reaction has been provoked by so much truly bad news in recent years that I think it has moved us collectively to a new place. For some, it has moved them straight out of the body corporate. For those who stay, it has given us harder hearts.

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People tend to think of scandal as any public embarrassment that results from misbehavior. ...But the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has a more exacting definition: "Scandal is an attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil" (CCC 2284). Far from being merely a misdeed held up for public opprobrium, a shocker, or a public relations nightmare to be managed, a scandal is specifically a wrongdoing which causes another to stumble and fall. The Greek word "scandalon" from which our English word scandal is derived means a snare of an enemy.

So what evils are incited in others by scandal in the Church? Clerical scandals cause terrible harm, of course, to their direct victims. They are also intertwined with evils of clerical privilege, cover-ups, and winking which are offenses against justice and truth....

But there is another arena of harm here, especially for the laity...It consists of the temptation to despair of the Church as a whole because of such wrongdoing, and to substitute cynicism for fairness.

As I dug through the online reports concerning the alleged financial improprieties of Cardinal-elect Zerbo, I discovered gaps in the story. The Malian journalists' original report was sensationalistic and hostile. They had conducted an ambush interview by sneaking into a church and confronting Archbishop Zerbo after Mass. His flustered and incoherent responses were held up as evidence of guilt. The French journal *Le Monde* was cited in the (few) Italian and American news outlets that carried the story, but the story itself appeared only in the African edition. No evidentiary documents were published. The story had no further corroboration. Tellingly, the Malian government took no action for tax evasion either, even though the sum involved would have been significant. The more I read, the more dubious it seemed.

...*America* magazine reported that Vatican sources did receive information about this and were satisfied with the results. The elevation of Zerbo to the cardinalate went ahead. Yet Zerbo arrived in Rome so ill that he could not take the first place, which he ought to have had, because he could not speak.

What really happened? What was behind the journalists' story? The truth is, we just don't know. But we do know this: if we every time we hear a story of wrongdoing in the Church we credit it because we've been conditioned to expect the worst, we've lost something—not our innocence, but our resistance to cynicism.

Cynicism is a form of evil. It has to be resisted, not by mindless optimism or a Pollyanna-like confidence that "everything will turn out fine," but by a determined effort to be fair. #

Rita Ferrone is the author of several books about liturgy, including *Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Paulist Press).

## ***Charlottesville and Trump: a spiritual exercise for the overwhelmed and exhausted:***

[By Jim McDermott, S.J., *America*, 8/15/17]

Five days after the horrific events in Charlottesville, Va., our country continues to grapple with their significance. As has been true from the start of the Trump administration, each new day finds us inundated with more data, the latest takes and the prospect of another crisis. Simply trying to keep up with it all can be difficult. Gaining a broader perspective seems at times near impossible.

For instance, we have condemned those who marched at Charlottesville in the strongest of terms; they have been outed on social media and excoriated in the press. But stepping back, that seems to be exactly what these groups wanted. Waving Nazi flags, shouting racist, anti-Semitic and homophobic slurs, they certainly were not looking for approbation. No, they wanted a public spectacle of conflict. They wanted to provoke opponents to show up and get in fights with them; they wanted the press and others to mock and abuse them. Those moves serve their argument that the “other side” is just that: another position of equal standing, its supporters just as aggressive and partisan as them.

Each new day finds us inundated with more data, the latest takes and the prospect of another crisis. Yesterday the president of the United States himself expressed this point of view, saying of Charlottesville, “You had a group on one side and a group on the other, and they came at each other with clubs and it was vicious and horrible.” Mr. Trump refused to judge the morality of the protesters’ point of view, even asserting against all facts to the contrary that they “didn’t put themselves down as neo-Nazis.”

It is hard to criticize our society’s fixation on Donald Trump, given comments like this. There is no voice more important in times of crisis, no role more central to the alleviation of social pressures and the affirmation of our shared values than that of the president. But Mr. Trump seems constitutively incapable of performing this key duty; again and again, soothing his own easily wounded ego trumps everything else.

When it comes to anyone classified as “other” within our communities, the same crises keep erupting, and at some point, we are all implicated.

What is more, Donald Trump’s reaction to the violence in Charlottesville and the rise in hate crimes inspired by his election are all just the latest events on a timeline

that includes the deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin and others; attacks on religious institutions like the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., and the Dar Al Farooq Islamic Center in Bloomington, Minn.; ongoing state and federal attempts to disenfranchise minority voters; and many, many other incidents.

“White America, don’t turn away,” I saw one person post on social media this weekend. It is the same sentiment that was offered by many women and people of color after the election.

How do you continue to “bear witness” when every three or four days there is another crisis? But if we are not going to turn away, overwhelmed and exhausted, how are we to sort through this constant barrage of information and raw emotion?

In the Jesuits, we try to end each day with a brief spiritual self-examination. It is a simple prayer; we find a quiet place, take a few moments to breathe and let the day fall away. And then we put a question to God: “Where were you today, Lord? What happened? What do you want me to notice?”

Some days what stands out are the good things, the moments of joy or laughter. Other days it is the things we got wrong, the people we ignored, a way we could do better. Sometimes it is just a couple minutes of rest in the gentle quiet.

Faced with upheaval in U.S. society, with leaders who enable violence and oppression while others stand by silent, an invitation to prayer might sound like the spiritual version of palliative care—an attempt to address the pain but not the disease. But though the news cycle and each new outrage demand constant attention, to see what is really going on and to offer a thoughtful response we need not only to be able to enter in but to step back.

O God, I ask as I sit before CNN, NBC, Fox or my newsfeed: Where are you today? What do you want me to notice? What do you want me to see? #

[Jim McDermott, S.J., is *America*’s Los Angeles correspondent. He studied literature at Marquette and Harvard University and Old Testament and Liturgy at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology. A former teacher at Red Cloud Indian School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and Associate Editor at *America*, Father McDermott recently completed his MFA in Screenwriting from UCLA. For the last three years he has interned in the development department of the AMC network. He recently sold his first TV pilot.]

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.