



# The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

December 30, 2018

## Readings

*This week:*

1 Samuel 1:20–22, 24–28

1 John 3:1–2, 21–24

Luke 2:41–52

*Next week:*

Isaiah 60:1–6

Ephesians 3:2–3a, 5–6

Matthew 2:1–12

## Psalm

Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord. (*Psalm 84*)

## 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

**Wednesday, January 2, 7:30 pm:** STA Site Committee, Thomas House Library

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. They 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 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 NOTES

News    Announcements    Requests

## Thanks to liturgical helpers:



Many community hands made the Christmas altar come to life on December 21. Under the direction of the 8:45 Liturgy Team, creche figures were brought down from the choir loft, poinsettias

were gathered from their storage nooks around the church, and pine boughs were bundled inside from car trunks. Industrious individuals were assigned tasks: prepare the flowers by punching a hole in their foil covers and put them in the plastic saucers; arrange the pine boughs over the roof of the wooden stable frame; hoist the Nativity background mural onto the brackets; climb up on the altar to place the poinsettias on the top level behind the altar. It truly takes a whole community to decorate a church for Christmas! (Look for Judy Washburn above on the left side of the altar!)

## January 1st Mass schedule:

Tuesday, January 1 is the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God and the World Day of Prayer for Peace

The New Year's Day Mass will be at 10:00 am at Our Lady of the Rosary Church. There will be a Rosary for Peace at 9:30 am. We invite you to this prayerful way to begin the New Year.

Although there is no obligation to attend Mass on this Holy Day, we encourage all who are able to join us in this celebration. There is also a Gregorian Latin Mass at 12:00 pm at St. Thomas Aquinas Church. There will be no Masses at 7:15 a.m. or 8:30 a.m. on that day.

**PRAY FOR US:** Please remember in your prayers this week Denise Alongi, Rudy Bahr, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Mary Connors, Mike Cummings, Jim Davis, Ken Dias, Pat Dietrich, Dick Freeman, Fr. Thierry Geris, Deonna Gill, Emily Gill, Joanne Hasegawa, Fr. John Hester, Dean Judd, Hunter Kubit, Dick Jackman, 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 editors: Michelle Hogan, Kay Williams. See adjacent column.]

## TMC donation envelope enclosed today:



Please use the envelope enclosed in this bulletin to make your monthly contribution to the support of the Thomas Merton Center. Your dollars make possible the sponsorship of the 8:45 Sunday Mass, monthly contributions to Seton School (\$1,000) and the Ecumenical Hunger Program (\$40), spiritual education talks, retreats, and the publication of this bulletin. Lay-led, self-sustaining, self-generating—this is TMC. Thanks to all who contribute.

## Thanks from Cassandra Lee:

Last Sunday, Cassandra Lee was offering her handmade twine rosaries in recognition of donations to her fundraiser, mounted to pay for a 2-week trip to Panama organized by FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students): for the 1st week, she will be working with fellow missionaries to do service work in an isolated diocese, and for the 2nd week, participating in World Youth Day 2019 in Panama City.

She writes, "It was so touching to see the enthusiastic response from the St. Thomas Aquinas Parish community – there were so many people who stopped by to wish me safe travels and their prayers for my trip! I am so glad to say that, thanks to this fundraiser, I have just managed to hit my fundraising goal for the trip, and just in time for our deadline! Again, I am so grateful for your help and the support of the entire parish! Please know that I will definitely be carrying the intentions of the parish community with me during my trip."

## Music ministers today:

We welcome back Mary Elaine McEnery and Carol Daly for their second visit to our 8:45 Mass. We are pleased that Mary Elaine and Carol will be leading us musically about once a month in 2019. Sing out!

Please join us after Mass in the Thomas House for coffee and donuts. We especially encourage newcomers or those passing through town to stop by for food and fellowship.

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# COMMUNITY FORUM

*Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns*

## ***The Holy Family teaches us about ourselves:***

[By Rev. Terrance Klein, *America*, Dec. 26, 2018]

One of our many modern culture wars centers on the right of any individual to create his or her own family. Some would argue that this does not even require the consent of a second person, since having any sort of partner is not a requirement for adoption or surrogate parenting. As for the kids, they remain where they always have, without a voice in the decision.

Tommy Orange uses an old template, first employed in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, to depict a thoroughly modern world. In his novel *There There* (2018), a contemporary group of Native Americans are headed to a powwow. We learn their tales as they go.

The story of "Opal Viola Victoria Bear Shield" wryly illustrates how the modern family has changed. We think individuals form families. Our ancestors, of all hues and cultures, would have put it the other way. The family forms us, and not as individuals, but as integral members of one family. Notice how young Opal stands between two worlds, two understandings of family.

"Jacquie's last name is Red Feather, and mine is Bear Shield. Both our dads left our mom. That morning our mom came home beat up, we took the bus to a new house, the yellow house. I don't know how she got us a house. On the bus I moved closer to my mom and put a hand into her jacket pocket.

'Why do we got names like we do?' I said.

'They come from old Indian names. We had our own way of naming before white people came over and spread all those dad names around in order to keep the power with the dads.'

"I didn't understand this explanation about dads. I didn't know if Bear Shield meant shields that bears used to protect themselves, or shields people used to protect themselves against bears, or were the shields themselves made out of bears? Either way it was all pretty hard to explain in school, how I was a Bear Shield, and that wasn't even the worst part. The worst part was my first name, which was two: Opal Viola. That makes me Opal Viola Victoria Bear Shield. Victoria was our mom's name, even though she went by Vicky, and Opal Viola came from our grandma who we never met. Our mom told us she was a medicine woman and renowned singer of spiritual songs, so I was supposed to carry that big old name around with honor. The good thing was, the kids didn't have to do anything to my name to make fun of me, no rhymes or variations. They just said the whole thing and it was funny."

Many indigenous people gave young children temporary names. Later, once they experienced something, perhaps through a personal quest, they would reveal the name that expressed their deepest understanding of self. Yet whatever personal name they chose, they remained members of a clan and a tribe, protected by their guardian powers. No one ever happily stepped away from the family, the clan or the tribe. That would have meant stepping away from themselves.

In his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus would have been known

as Jesus bar Joseph (Jesus the Son of Joseph). Patriarchy (dad names, as Opal's mom puts it) entered Hebraic life, as it typically does in history, with the development of agriculture and the apparent need to assign ownership of the land. When he left home and encountered strangers, they most likely called him Jesus of Nazareth. Surnames are a relatively modern phenomenon, one that entered culture with the need to identify taxpayers.

The thought behind calling Jesus the Son of Joseph was that if you knew the father, you already knew a lot about the person standing in front of you. Who else, save the mother, would have done more to form the personality, to instill the values and the habits that form this person?

In celebrating the Feast of the Holy Family, we draw attention to this fundamental fact about families, and, in this case, salvation. Not being his neighbor or kin, none of us can say what came from Joseph and what was of Mary, but we do know that the two of them made him the man he was. They formed him in the faith of Israel, taught him to pray and gave him the vigor to preach with authority. The compassion that animated his ministry came from them. His laugh and his smile, perhaps even his gait and physical movements, would have echoed those of his parents.

This is why the church considers Mary and Joseph to be her two most powerful saints. Christ forms all of his saints. His grace makes them into the men and the women they become. That is true of Joseph and Mary as well, but their singular status derives from their vocation of forming the Christ himself, of parenting Jesus.

Is there any part of modern life messier, more packed with troubles and embarrassments, and real suffering than the family? Yet for all that, and even if we have been trained not to take note of it, our families give us life. They still make us who we are. And are not many of our fondest memories wrapped-up in family?

Do not lament how far your family is from the one that we call "holy." Concentrate on what so many of us share with them: poverty, lack of opportunity, a need to relocate just to survive. So many of our families have no voice. Mary and Joseph were largely enveloped in silence. They did not matter to the world at large. They only mattered to their son. Yet, in the plan of God, that is all that mattered.

"We got on a bus on a cold gray morning in late January 1970. Me and Jacquie had matching beat-up old red duffel bags that didn't hold much, but we didn't have much. I packed two outfits and tucked my teddy bear, Two Shoes, under my arm. The name Two Shoes came from my sister, because her childhood teddy bear only had one shoe the way they got it. Her bear wasn't named One Shoe, but maybe I should have considered myself lucky to have a bear with two shoes, and not just one. But then bears don't wear shoes, so maybe I wasn't lucky either but something else."

Opal and Jacquie might not have had much when they boarded the bus that morning, but they had a mother and were members of a family. And no one, save God alone, can measure how much that means. #

[The Rev. Terrance W. Klein is a priest of the Diocese of Dodge City and author of *Vanity Faith*.]

## ***Should we change our pronouns for God?***

[By Meghan Murphy-Gill, *U.S. Catholic*, 12/3/18]

In the past year, terrible secrets in the U.S. Catholic Church have finally seen some light: ...a grand jury was able to issue a scathing report about “predator” priests in the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and the long time cover-up of the abuse; police stormed the office of Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, the current president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and raided it for information on how he and his staff responded to complaints against Manuel La Rosa-Lopez, a priest accused of sexually abusing teenagers 20 years ago....

Such crimes are not new. Even before 2002, when the Boston Globe broke the first major clergy abuse scandal, priests and bishops abused children and covered it up....

“Catholics in the pews” have been responding in myriad ways to the scandal that priests... would so deeply harm their brothers and sisters in Christ. And not merely brothers and sisters, but children....

Not a single Catholic (or anyone for that matter) is without an opinion of how the church can respond. I disagree with almost everything I’ve read about the future of the Roman Catholic Church, from how it is resilient and will weather this storm to calls for giving women more of a voice in its governance. Not one of these proposed solutions will change Catholics’ minds about the nature of power as it relates to God.

Yes, the church could ordain women deacons and add more women to papal commissions. Or hire more women to teach at seminaries. Or ordain men later, screen and train them better for ordained ministry. Yes, the church could rethink the required discipline of celibacy. All things I agree would bring about extraordinary change. But at the root of how the church understands itself in relation to God is the language it uses to talk about and to God.

If the church wants to change, we have to stop referring to God in only male pronouns and metaphors. King, lord, he, him, his, father. They are insufficient. Just as female pronouns alone are insufficient because God is God, ineffable mystery. No single way to talk about God will ever be enough because God is always more.

But the language we use to address, refer to, and describe the divine is where the rubber hits the road in a life of faith. We must use it, despite the fact that it is never enough. ...

Our institutional church veers dangerously close to worshiping power concentrated in the hands of men. Solely male pronouns and metaphors for the Holy Mystery we celebrate are the gold and cast that reduce God to this idol.

Speaking non-theologically, language shapes the way we think. In her TEDWomen 2017 talk, cognitive scientist Lera Boroditsky points out that this question—whether language can shape our minds or if words are

simply tools, stand-ins for a larger reality—has persisted for centuries. But today scientists have collected data on how languages across the globe (there are more than 7,000!) affect how their speakers experience their realities...

“People pay attention to different things depending on what their language requires them to do,” Boroditsky says. “Language guides our reasoning.”

How does Christian language about God guide our reasoning about power, leadership, and gender dynamics? Even if we say God is neither male nor female, to call God “him” guides our internal reasoning. And if God is male, then male is better than female. More powerful. And therefore entitled to that power and the consequences of it (read: the abuse of it in ministry).

But there is a danger in reaching toward female pronouns and metaphors to expand our language for the divine. Social and medical sciences have taught that the social construct of gender is a spectrum. And to use terms such as mother or nurturer for God creates a false dichotomy between male and female, assigning roles to each gender that hurt. Sometimes I wonder if the gender neutral *they* isn’t the best way to refer to the triune creator, redeemer, and sustainer. We need to likewise dismantle the myth based on an ancient misunderstanding of reproductive biology that females are the passive receivers of a seed of life passed to them from males.

I’ve always loved this line from Elizabeth Johnson: “The symbol functions.” She puts it this way:

“What is the right way to speak about God? . . . The intensity with which the question is engaged from the local to the international level, however, makes clear that more is at stake than simply naming toward God with women-identified words such as mother. The symbol of God functions. Language about God in female images not only challenges the literal mindedness that has clung to male images in inherited God-talk; it not only questions their dominance in discourse about holy mystery. But insofar as ‘the symbol gives rise to thought,’ such speech calls into question prevailing structures of patriarchy.”

And therein lies why I believe that if we want to stop the insidious abuse of power within the church and the world, we have to stop only calling God “him.” We can still call God “him.” We can even still refer to Jesus as “Lord.” But we need more than that.

Perhaps this is why there is fear and anxiety about feminism in the church, about feminine language for God. It threatens the existence of the structures of patriarchy (male power). But the church of Jesus Christ is not the patriarchy. That’s the earthly institution. And we’ve seen where protection of the institution at all costs, even when that cost is a systematic dismantling of the beloved humanity of God’s people, gets us. The symbol has functioned well for so long that as an institution the entire church is swimming in circles—and getting nowhere, sinking, and taking too many innocent people down with it. #