



Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 11, 2018

Readings

This week:

Leviticus 13:1–2, 44–46

1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1

Mark 1:40–45

Next week:

Genesis 9:8–15

1 Peter 3:18–22

Mark 1:12–15

Psalm

I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you fill me with the joy of salvation. (*Ps.* 32)

Today's presider is Fr. Larry Percell.

Today

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, February 12, 7:00 pm

TMC Liturgy Committee, Thomas House library

Wednesday, February 14, 6:00 pm

Ash Wednesday Mass at STA

From Thomas Merton

Gray skies. It rained in the night. The lights all went out at ten to two, and we said Matins and the Office of the Dead and Lauds and Prime with many candles. The flu has not left me, and my head is full of glue and I can't breathe.

And yet Ash Wednesday is full of joy. In a minute we will sing None and go barefoot to get ashes on our heads to remember, with great relief, that we are dust. The source of all sorrow is the illusion that of ourselves we are anything but dust. God is all our joy and in him our dust can become splendor. The great sorrow of mankind is turned to joy by the love of Christ, and the secret of happiness is no longer to see any sorrow except in the light of Christ's victory over sorrow. And then all sorrow contributes somehow to our happiness.

Thus I sit here in the corner of the upstairs Scriptorium and look out the window at the bare trees in the préau and the gray guesthouse wall and at my own little happy corner of the sky.

--*The Sign of Jonas*

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

Lector and Eucharistic Minister schedule:

John Arnold has completed the scheduling of 8:45 am Mass lectors and Eucharistic ministers covering February 18 till July 1. He has emailed the list to all currently active in those positions. Please acknowledge receipt directly to John at jsaoso@comcast.net.

CA People of Faith meeting February 17:

There will be a meeting of California People of Faith on February 17th in the Thomas House from 2 to 4 pm and open to all interested persons.

Under discussion will be:

- * Status of the death penalty in California
- * How you can assist the abolition campaign
- * The way forward to ending the death penalty in California.

Questions: Terry McCaffrey:
terrymc0531@gmail.com, 408-515-0341

Bring mercy into Lent, Feb. 24, with Fr. Kevin Ballard, S.J.:

Lenten Morning of Reflection:
"I desire mercy, not sacrifice."
(Matthew 9:13)

Saturday, February 24, 2018
9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Our Lady of the Rosary Church Hall
3233 Cowper St., Palo Alto

With Fr. Kevin Ballard, S.J.

"I desire mercy, not sacrifice." But isn't Lent about sacrificing? Giving up candy or movies or wine? Sacrificing sleep to get up for early morning daily Mass?

Fr. Ballard will look at Lent through the lens of Pope Francis's apostolic letter on *Misericordia et Misera*, a phrase used by Saint Augustine in recounting the story of Jesus' meeting with the woman taken in adultery (cf. Jn 8:1-11). It would be difficult to imagine a more beautiful or apt way of expressing the mystery of God's love when it touches the sinner: "the two of them alone remained: mercy with misery." He "came to call not the upright, but sinners." There is mercy for all of us.

All are welcome. Light refreshments available.
For information, contact Jim Davis,
jim_davis@pacbell.net, 328-2584.

Collecting for local unhoused persons:



HAVE A HEART weekend will take place in our parish on February 17 and 18. This year, cash donations will be collected to provide for a variety of needs that arise over the year for unhoused clients at our local Opportunity Center.

Thanks to your generous donations in prior years, our parish has been able to provide sleeping bags, rain ponchos, thermal blankets, winter hats, men's and ladies underwear, warm socks and other similar items as needed.

Representatives of the Human Concerns Committee will be available after each STA Sunday mass to receive cash donations. We look forward to seeing you.

STA artists exhibit:

The first parishioner art exhibit is hanging in the St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center. The artists are Fran Adams, Louise Gibler (from Lytton Gardens), and Carol Pulliam. The next exhibit will be hung this month. Do you know an artist who would like to participate sometime this spring? If so, please have him or her contact Neil Barrett at 650-330-1762 or at nbarrettsky@hotmail.com.

Handicapped parking behind church:

Reminder: On Sunday, all spaces in the driveway behind the church are signed for people with handicap designation except for the space marked for the Presider. These spaces are in great demand. Please save spaces for those with the appropriate hanger/license plate. Another option is to arrive early and/or park on the street. Parking in the back gravel lot is not advised for those who use canes, walkers etc.

Fish Fest on hiatus until April:

Next Friday Fish Fest will be April 13 in the Thomas House at 6:00 p.m. The February and March dates are too close to the Knights of Columbus Crab Dinner Dance (Feb. 10) and the parish St. Patrick's Day Dinner (March 17). See you in April!

Board: Vicki Sullivan, vickisullivan@comcast.net , (650) 327-5339
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COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

St. Valentine: radical Christian love:

[By Olivia Whitener, in *Sojourners*, Feb. 8, 2018]

..Where is the truth in the post-truth narrative? Where is the love when everyone feels divided? Can we unbiasedly practice what we preach about love and the value of life? Can we turn the other cheek when tweeting a one-liner is so much simpler?...

I don't have answers to these questions. I read the latest news reports about ICE raids in cities across the country and I feel that love is lost. But then I see a gathering like the most recent Moral March on Raleigh, and my faith in justice and truth is restored and I am encouraged.

The memory of Saint Valentine — or at least the tales that are told of his legacy — also encourages a continued strong Christian witness for love in the face of danger and persecution. In a time when Emperor Claudius II persecuted Christians and forbade them from marrying, Valentine officiated over weddings and supported Christians seeking safety. For these acts of resistance, Valentine was beheaded, but not before trying to convert the emperor himself. Valentine lived out radical love in a radical way.

Jesus also knew a little something about this act of resistance called love — he was so deep in the resistance that he also was sentenced to death by the officials and citizens alike (a government execution...). During his time traveling and spreading God's love, he ensured that the lepers and the tax collectors and the unmarried women were included in his message: You are loved. And more than just saying the words, Jesus showed that love as he gathered the outsiders close to him, in his actions demonstrating how his followers should act when he was no longer there to do so.

The feast of Saint Valentine is a day of mourning for some, fear for others, cynicism for a few, and giddy hope for many (though the constant upbeat love songs playing through department stores decked out in pink and red want you to think it is a solely joyful occasion). As Nicholas Kristof reminded us in a recent opinion article for the New York Times, *Husbands Are Deadlier Than Terrorists.* "For many women (and men) around the world, partnership means abuse and violence and an obnoxiously superficial holiday like Valentine's Day is painful. As some couples fear increased threats to marriage rights to any two people, there is hesitant celebration today, for their rights to love openly may be stripped away. Widows will visit graves today and long-distance phone calls will be made to loved ones in foreign places.

In all of these life circumstances, the love of God remains, even as we cry out to our Mother in Heaven to make it clear to us. St. Valentine's act of defiance was not only of performing wedding ceremonies between two people, but of sharing the radical love of Jesus Christ with people around Rome. His feast day is not a time only for heteronormative couples to dine together, but for all who can share love with another to declare that "love is love is love is love is love is love is love cannot be killed or swept aside."

Jesus did not preach, "Show love only to your romantic partner and only in the ways the state allows." Jesus preached, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."

May today be a day of radical love that you show to others and that is shown to you.

As Christian witnesses, we should use the feast of Saint Valentine to care deeply for one another and especially for those who are persecuted by those in power. Flowers and candies and candles are nice — but this year, I'd much rather be smashing patriarchy, overturning the "refugee ban," creating pathways to citizenship, and supporting high quality education for all children. And my valentine can join me in my ventures.

Sharing the love of God may have gotten Saint Valentine killed along with many other of the saints we honor, but what we learn from his witness and Jesus' teaching is that love is ultimately a courageous display of freedom. In the words of Maya Angelou, "Yet if we are bold / love strikes away the chains of fear / from our souls."

May today be a day of radical love that you show to others and that is shown to you. #

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 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 on page 4.]

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.

Book of Joel--hope in the apocalypse:

[By Alice Camille, *U.S. Catholic*, Feb. 7, 2018]

Apocalypse is so in right now. It's almost an essential part of the cultural landscape. It's not just sci-fi that takes us into the realm where everything falls apart. ...We're invariably given to understand it's the horrible humans we have to fear.

This notion is reinforced in dystopian shows about deeply twisted goings-on in prisons, police departments, hospitals, and governments. The horror creeps even closer in dramas exploring the danger implicit in neighborhoods, families, and marriages....

The problem with apocalypse is that it's getting harder to change the channel on it. Cable news serves up hourly global terrors that rival any fiction. Real life lived locally has its own shattering aspects. ... Things fall apart, and the free fall is often closer than we expect.

For these reasons, we may find a weird affinity with the mysterious prophet Joel, whose urgent summons to a grand assembly of repentance kick-starts the season of Lent each year. Crisis and devastation are Joel's specialty. In a few short chapters, he describes environmental catastrophe brought on by a terrifying imbalance in nature. ...

Joel is not a particularly familiar prophet. Each year a single passage from his book makes the alternate reading list at the vigil mass for Pentecost—which means chances are high you didn't hear it....It's a lovely ethereal forecast about how our sons and daughters will speak the truth while the elderly dream dreams (Joel 3:1-5). ...

In fact, the only reason the average Catholic may hear Joel in church is because his is the first lectionary reading for Ash Wednesday annually: "Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning" (Joel 2:12). Joel urges us not simply to repent but to assemble. ...When things fall apart, people come together. We see this in episodes of disaster—when communities are struck by hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, or shootings. ...When the social order is threatened by internal divisions—racial conflict, partisan wars, blue collar vs. ivory tower—the instinct to form barricades must be overcome by the mandate to re-commune. Healing doesn't take place around a wound. First you have to close it.

So who was Joel...? Scholars guess that his prophecies took shape in the 4th century BCE, at least a century after Israel returned from Babylonian exile to Jerusalem....By Joel's generation, Jerusalem and its Temple

have been rebuilt. The Persians are in virtual command of the nation. As the former Israelite kings are not even mentioned, the monarchy is likely a dead issue for Joel's society. Priests and scribes govern the community in most ways that matter. Things have, in other words, found their new normal....If Joel has a theme, it's that the present situation can easily be reversed. Reality rides a seesaw in which the tipping point is always a minor shift of gravity away.

As we weigh our present options in regard to climate change, international engagement, economic inequality, the gender gap, or racial tension, some of us may sense what Joel perceived: The ground underfoot is only as stable as where we place our next step. Put a foot down in the wrong direction, and we might be dangling from a precipice. And as the ground goes, so do we all.

At the same time, Joel... also asserts that circumstances can improve quite dramatically with the right effort. Is this a flip-flop?

Some scholars find Joel's turnabout unbelievable and have determined that his book may have two authors: Joel bright and dark, so to speak. Yet theologians, scientists, diplomats, and sociologists often present similar Y-shaped paths toward the future. We're always on the cusp of a choice that could make or break our reality, both personal and global. We can choose kindness or violence, mending or tearing, sharing or hoarding, risking or fearing, yes or no.

There most likely will be an hour in which our cumulative choices foreclose upon the future, and we'll be stuck with the reality we've purchased. In the end, we do become who we've always been. But that hour is not now. Soon, perhaps. But not quite yet....

Things fall apart. People do too. So do plans, careers, relationships, living situations, and personal identities. We think we know who we are, what we're about, what we're capable of. Then we say or do something we never imagined could come from us, and suddenly there's a stranger in the mirror.

Our illusions about the world and ourselves wind up in fragments on the floor regularly. Apocalypse is about so much more than planetary cataclysm. Private worlds can be annihilated quietly in a handful of words: "I want a divorce." "The test came back positive." "The storm took everything."

If we expect to keep it together when apocalypse makes landfall, we'll need each other. Which is why we begin our annual season of repentance with Joel blowing his trumpet, proclaiming a fast, summoning the assembly. If anything is to change, we're going to change it together.

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