



# Second Sunday of Lent

February 25, 2018

## Readings

*This week:*

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

Romans 8:31b-34

Mark 9:2-10

*Next week:*

Exodus 20:1-17

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

John 2:13-25

## Psalm

I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. (*Psalm 116*)

## Today

Today's presider is Fr. Jack Izzo.

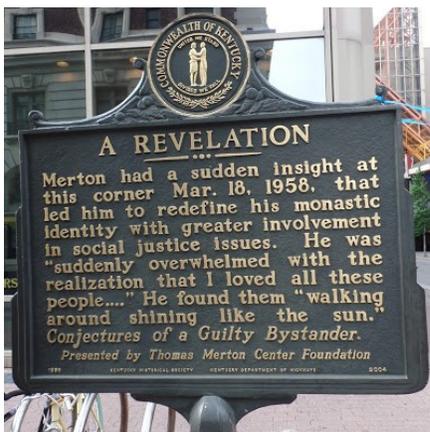
The Thomas Merton Center community worships and celebrates Sunday liturgy each week at the regularly scheduled 8:45 am parish Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas Church. Members of the Thomas Merton community plan these liturgies in the spirit of Vatican II and its call to "full, active and conscious participation" 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

No meetings this week.

### From Thomas Merton



... In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers.... There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun." Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed. . . . But this cannot be seen, only believed and "understood" by a peculiar gift.

—*Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*

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*

## **Relationship building: Let's talk and listen:**

There is a great need in our country today for respectful exchange among various groups, in order to appreciate why those holding different views from ourselves see things the way they do!

Our relationship building is based on Living Room Conversations (visit [livingroomconversations.org](http://livingroomconversations.org) for more information), a structured approach for facilitating open conversations among people of different views and backgrounds, that enables people to feel safe in sharing and to listen to different views with open minds and hearts.

Please join us and discover the joy and hope that comes from experiencing connection. We meet at Mercy Center Burlingame (2300 Adeline Drive), on Sundays from 1:00 to 2:30 pm. Our next meeting is March 18. Please come join us!

## **Correction:**

Last Sunday's bulletin had a story about Get on the Bus, which unites children with their mothers and fathers in prison. More than 200,000 children in California have a parent in prison, and the cost of travel is often a reason that prevents family visits. Sr. Elaine Coutu is the local contact for Get on the Bus, and her e-mail address was incorrect in last Sunday's bulletin. It should be [elaine-coutu@att.net](mailto:elaine-coutu@att.net), and her phone is (408) 223-2802. If you can help her in this ministry, please give her a call or e-mail her.

## **Catherine Wanjohi visits:**

Catherine Wanjohi from Naivasha, Kenya, will be visiting us in March. She will speak about Life Bloom, the program she founded in 2003 to help commercial sex workers reclaim their sense of self-worth and find alternative ways to support their families. Over time she has become the go-to person to counsel abused women and children and is recognized throughout Kenya as a leader in women's empowerment and health.

Life Bloom has served over 10,000 women, men, and children. Please join us as she tells us the story of her journey, both successes and disappointments, as she addresses the challenges faced by women while raising her own three children and two foster children.

We will meet at the home of Margo McAuliffe on Sunday, March 11, at 3:00 pm. Please RSVP to Margo at (650) 322-0821.

## **Second collection today:**

The second collection today is for the local conference of The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which helps those in need on a person-to-person basis with financial support, spiritual guidance, or by providing basic necessities such as food and shelter. The society strives to offer its clients a sense of hope during their darkest hours, regardless of race, creed, religion or sexual orientation. The success of its programs depends on you, so please give generously today!

# COMMUNITY FORUM

*Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns*

## **USCCB calls on Catholics to take action for Dreamers:**

*Abridged from an article by J.D. Long-García at [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org), February 19, 2018. Long-García is a senior editor at America.*

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is urging Catholics to call Congress and demand they act on behalf of "Dreamers," undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as minors but have been allowed to stay under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, an Obama administration policy that protected them from deportation.

The Trump administration announced in September that it would end DACA.

"We are deeply disappointed that the Senate was not able to come together in a bipartisan manner to secure legisla-

continued on page 3

## **Last Sunday of the month:**

A Thomas Merton Center envelope is included in the bulletin the last Sunday of each month. Your donation makes possible our monthly contribution to St. Elizabeth Seton School; our spiritual education programs, weekly bulletin, and other publications; and hospitality after Mass and at other meetings.

We need your support—please be generous!



Please remember in your prayers this week: Denise Alongi, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Sr. Fran Ciluaga, Mary Connors, Ken Dias, Fr. Thierry Geris, Deonna Gill, Emily Gill, Joanne Hasegawa, Dick Jackman, Michael Kiriti, Hunter Kubit, Fr. Lavagetto's mother, 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.

## **Grace—It's why I'm Catholic:**

*Abridged from an article by Annamarie Scobey, a contributing editor at U.S. Catholic and the author of Discovering Motherhood. From uscatholic.org, January 8, 2018.*

My friend recently asked me in an e-mail conversation why I stay in the Catholic Church. . . . My friend was raised Catholic but is not currently a practicing member of any religion.

. . . My friend's question is a fair one. He's not asking why I'm Christian or questioning my faith in God; he's asking me why I belong to a religion that has some elements with which he knows I disagree. He knows, for example, that I believe the church should ordain married people of both genders, along with men and women who choose celibacy. He knows I believe the question of birth control and family planning is complex and should not be simplified into a one-size-fits-all teaching. He knows that because Bill and I have adopted from the U.S. foster care system, we have a depth of understanding of the ramifications of all types of child abuse. Yet we have chosen to stay with a church whose leaders failed to protect children from the most egregious of abuse. He knows I hold dear our gay friends and colleagues—that I believe they should be as welcome at the eucharistic table as they are at our own dining room table.

And yet I'm Catholic. Passionately Catholic. And I could no more change to another Christian religion than I could peel off my skin and exchange it for a different tone with a better hue.

Why am I Catholic? I may not embrace or even agree with all the teachings of the church, but I believe in all the sacraments. I believe in God's grace working through them. I've felt the grace; I've seen it. When each one of my children was baptized, the grace washed over the whole family—connecting our new little child to us, as parents and their first teachers, back to their grandparents, and to the grace of their great grandparents. Baptism, our first gift of faith to our children, a tidal welcome into life eternal.

I've received communion and have been grateful for the grace that carried me through a difficult relationship. I know it was eucharistic grace that allowed me to be able to reach beyond the angry words I wanted to say to a difficult person, to the better words I needed to say to begin to heal the relationship.

. . . It is marriage where I've probably felt sacramental grace most strongly. Bill and I continue to turn to our vows, to our promise to God, to each other. I've seen the grace in my parents' 50-year marriage—two people with completely different personalities who bring out the best in one another.

. . . I couldn't say all this to my friend in my e mail, because the e mail came in at work, and I didn't have time

## **USCCB on Dreamers, continued:**

tive protection for the Dreamers," Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Austin, Tex., the president of the U.S. bishops' conference, and Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, the U.S.C.C.B. vice president, said in a joint statement February 19. "We ask once again that members of Congress show the leadership necessary to find a just and humane solution for these young people, who daily face mounting anxiety and uncertainty," the bishops said in their statement, announcing a national call-in day to protect Dreamers on February 26. The call comes after the Senate failed to pass a bill last week.

. . . An estimated 800,000 Dreamers have been protected by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, yet the Center for Migration Studies in New York estimates that more than 2.2 million Dreamers are in the United States. Recent court decisions have temporarily blocked the Trump administration from ending DACA March 5. But the rulings only impact DACA renewals and do not require new applications to be accepted.

The Trump administration had introduced a proposal that includes a path to citizenship for Dreamers but would also increase border security, curtail family-based migration and eliminate the diversity visa program, which brings in a limited number of people from parts of the world with relatively few immigrants to the United States. Last week, Archbishop Gomez acknowledged the need for secure borders but took issue with restricting family-based immigration, which the Trump administration has referred to as "chain migration." The United States already limits the number of family-based visas granted each year.

. . . The February 26 call-in is good timing because Congress members will be returning from recess that day. He believes it will create a new sense of urgency.

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to respond. But I can say it now. I can explain that I stay in the Catholic Church because of God's grace present in the sacraments. I have seen how this has led to prayer, service, and goodness in the world. This grace is present in Catholic social teaching, a beautiful set of letters and documents about how we are called to serve our world in a very concrete and practical way.

I am part of the Catholic Church because I see God's people, nourished by the sacraments, anointed with oil, splashed with the water of baptism, serving God in great numbers. They teach in schools, work for change, bring about good in the public and private sector. They house refugees and give food and shelter to the needy. They bandage the hurt and the broken, give medicine to the ill, and visit those in prison. They speak out against injustice. I see them, and I strive to use my God-given grace as well as they do. That's why I'm Catholic.

## ***How can you really love God?***

### ***I've found three keys:***

*Abridged from an article by Tom Carney, a retired journalist who writes a weekly blog, Skeptical Faith, at skepticfaith.blogspot.com. Published in ncronline, February 19, 2018.*

As a child, I attended a parochial school, taught by nuns. We had daily religious education classes and I recall several discussions about what should motivate you to keep God's commandments and those of the church. There are basically two motivations, I recall a nun saying. Fear of God's punishment and love of God, and, of course, the latter is preferred.

But I was skeptical. I knew how you could love family members or a sweetheart (I already loved Mary Ann, my best friend's cousin). But God? You can't see him, hear him, touch him or really know him so how can you love him? I wanted to go with love, but had to settle for fear, although I didn't quite understand how the fires of hell squared with a loving God.

I've struggled with those questions much of my life. Some would say, "What a waste of time!" But I believe the struggle has been worth it because love has won out. Still, for many people searching for God, the question remains: How can you really love God? For me, there are at least three keys.

One is what I believe to be the primordial longing for God that is expressed in the beliefs of primitive peoples around the world. It is voiced exquisitely in Psalm 42 of the Hebrew Bible: "As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God." . . . Another way to say this is that humans are "programmed" to seek and love God. Social scientists may argue this, but I believe it's evident throughout history and throughout the world. The second key is a sense of gratitude. Many people today show gratitude toward "the universe," ascribing to it attributes formerly ascribed to God. Personally, I look upon the universe as God's creation and apart from God's presence, it's cold and impersonal, not an entity toward which I can feel any gratitude.

. . . The third key to love of God is, I believe, love of others. The First Letter of John puts it nicely. "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." So, love of God expresses itself in love of others.

But what does loving God mean practically, in my daily life? Czech theologian and sociologist Tomas Halik addresses this question elegantly in his book, *I Want You to Be: On the God of Love*. . . To love God means being profoundly grateful for the miracle of life and expressing that gratitude through my life, assenting to my fate, even when it eludes my plans and expectations.

## ***How would Jesus drive?:***

*Abridged from an article by David Brooks at nytimes.com, January 4, 2018.*

Over the past several years we have done an outstanding job of putting total sleazoids at the top of our society: Trump, Bannon, Ailes, Weinstein, Cosby, etc. So it was good to get a reminder, from Pope Francis in his New Year's Eve homily, that the people who have the most influence on society are actually the normal folks, through their normal, everyday gestures—being kind in public places, being attentive to the elderly. The pope called such people, in a beautiful phrase, "the artisans of the common good."

. . . The pope focused especially on driving, praising those people "who move in traffic with good sense and prudence." As Richard Reeves of the Brookings Institution points out, driving is precisely the sort of everyday activity through which people mold the culture of their community.

. . . Driving is governed by law, but it's also shaped by norms. If enough people adopt the same driving style, then that behavior hardens into a communal disposition. Once people understand what is normal around here, more people tend to drive that way, too, and you get this amplified, snowball effect. Kindness breeds kindness. Aggression breeds aggression.

. . . Driving means making a thousand small moral decisions: whether to tailgate to push the slowpoke faster, or to give space; whether to honk only as a warning or constantly as your all-purpose show of contempt for humanity. Driving puts you in a constant position of asking, Are we in a place where there is a system of self-restraint, or are we in a place where it's dog eat dog?

Driving puts you in a constant position of asking, "Are my needs more important than everybody else's, or are we all equal?" . . . Driving also puts you in a position where you are periodically having to overrule your desire for revenge. . . . In short, driving puts you into social situations in which you have to co-construct a shared culture of civility, and go against your own primeval selfishness, and it does so while you are encased in what is potentially a 4,000-pound metal weapon.

Of course, we are all appalled at the clowns who are bespoiling our culture from the top. But I'm going to try to remember one lesson when I hit the road: Though I may be surrounded by idiots, I'm potentially an artisan of the common good.

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