



Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 11, 2018

Readings

This week:

2 Chronicles 36:14–16, 19–23

Ephesians 2:4–10

John 3:14–21

Next week:

Jeremiah 31:31–34

Hebrews 5:7–9

John 12:20–33

Psalm

Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you! (*Psalm 137*)

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, March 12, 7:00 pm

TMC Liturgy Committee, Thomas House Library

From Thomas Merton

How is it that our comfortable society has lost its sense of the value of truthfulness? Life has become so easy that we think we can get along without telling the truth. A liar no longer needs to feel that his lies may involve him in starvation. If living were a little more precarious, and if a person who could not be trusted found it more difficult to get along with other men, we would not deceive ourselves and one another so carelessly.

But the whole world has learned to deride veracity or to ignore it;. Half the civilized world makes a living by telling lies. Advertising, propaganda, and all the other forms of publicity that have taken the place of truth have taught me to take it for granted that they can tell other people whatever they like, provided that it sounds plausible and evokes some kind of shallow emotional response.

--No Man Is an Island

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

Life Bloom founder to speak today:



All are invited to hear Catherine Wanjohi today, March 11, 3 -5 pm, in Menlo Park. Catherine will speak about Life Bloom, the program she founded to help commercial sex workers reclaim their sense of self-worth and find alternative ways to support their families. Over time she has be-

come the go-to person in Naivasha and Nairobi, Kenya, to counsel abused women and children and is recognized throughout the region as a leader in women's empowerment and health. She has organized educational programs and materials for men regarding HIV/AIDS, how it is spread and using condoms.

Catherine left her job as principal of a girls high school to found Life Bloom Services International in 2003. Since that time, Life Bloom has served over 10,000 women, men, girls, boys and children.

Please join us as Catherine tells us the story of Life Bloom's founding and learn about the homegrown, innovative strategies addressing the challenges faced by women. Hear stories of successes as well as disappointments and learn how she raises her children to achieve their goals and share their gifts. You will come away with a much deeper understanding of what her clients face, why they do sex work and ways they have been able to leave it.

Available will be Catherine's 2 books: *A Walk at Midnight: Journeying with Abused Women and Girls Towards Inner Wholeness and Dignity*, in which she tells about going with the women to bars to see what they face every day, and *Stepping Out and Stepping Up: Former Sex Workers Now Flying Wing to Wing!*

Where: Home of Margo McAuliffe
179 East Creek Drive, Menlo Park

When: Sunday, March 11, 2018, at 3 pm
RSVP to Margo.(650) 322-0821, margo@kenyahelp.us

Handicapped parking behind church:

Reminder: On Sunday, all spaces in the driveway behind the church are signed for people with handicapped 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.

Fish Fest on hiatus until April:

Next Friday Fish Fest will be April 13 in the Thomas House at 6:00 p.m. The usual March date (of the "teenth Friday" of the month) is too close to the parish St. Patrick's Day Dinner (March 17). See you in April!

March is TMC Membership Month:



Thomas Merton Center (TMC) membership materials are being distributed this month to current TMC members.

If you would like to support TMC, a membership application form is available in the church vestibule.

The Thomas Merton Center is a membership-based non-profit religious education organization required by its bylaws to register its membership annually. Membership fees are minimal—\$15 per individual or \$30 per family. Your choice to become a member helps to keep this Catholic, lay-led, progressive faith community active. Your membership shows your support for sustaining the Sunday 8:45 a.m. Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas church, the adult spiritual education programs, and educational opportunities at St. Elizabeth Seton School in Palo Alto.

Please contact Kay Williams for more information:
kaywill@pacbell.net, 650-270-4188.

Janice O'Brien of Sierra Roots, March 24:



Janice O'Brien and her husband Jim were among the founding members of TMC. Following Jim's retirement in 1999, the couple moved to the Grass Valley area in Nevada County to begin their new life. It wasn't long before

Janice became aware of a critical need to do something about the many homeless people living in the area. When one of these people actually froze to death on a cold winter night, she knew she had to take positive action to help resolve the problem. Hence, Sierra Roots was born in 2010.

Sierra Roots now offers through its Housing First program temporary housing, a lunch program as well as other services to help people in need. The organization's long term goal is to provide a permanent shelter for the homeless community. Progress is underway to achieve this goal.

On March 24th, this courageous and hardworking woman will tell the story of Sierra Roots, and how this ambitious program has changed not just the lives of people in need in her community, but her own life as well. She is an inspiration, bringing a message of hope at a time when our country needs to hear messages of hope.

All are invited to a presentation by Janice on March 24, 2018, from 10 am till noon at St. Albert the Great Hospitality Room, 1095 Channing Ave., Palo Alto. There will be time for questions, answers and discussion. Light refreshments will be served. There is no charge for this event.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Catholics and the LGBT community, Mar. 21:

The parish Human Concerns Committee is discussing our parish response to LGBT Catholics on Wednesday, March 21, 7:30 p.m. in the OLR Hall. Please join in the discussion.

James Martin, S.J., the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything* and *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, turns his attention to the relationship between LGBT Catholics and the Church in *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity*.

Martin has written a moving and inspiring book, offering a powerful, loving, and much-needed voice in a time marked by anger, prejudice, and divisiveness. Adapted from an address he gave to New Ways Ministry, a group that ministers to and advocates for LGBT Catholics, *Building a Bridge* provides a roadmap for repairing and strengthening the bonds that unite all of us as God's children.

Martin uses the image of a two-way bridge to enable LGBT Catholics and the Church to come together in a call to end the "us" versus "them" mentality. Turning to the Catechism, he draws on the three criteria at the heart of the Christian ministry—"respect, compassion, and sensitivity"—as a model for how the Catholic Church should relate to the LGBT community. #

PRAY FOR US: Please remember in your prayers this week Denise Alongi, George Bouche, Tom Carmody, George Chippendale, Mary Connors, Mike Cummings, Ken Dias, Pat Dietrich, 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 listing below.]

Bulletin submissions must be e-mailed by Thursday noon or phoned by Thursday, 9:00 pm, to:
Kay, kaywill@pacbell.net, (650)270-4188.
Michelle, myhogan@comcast.net, (650) 493-8452.

Board: Vicki Sullivan, vickisullivan@comcast.net, (650) 327-5339
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Francis needs to listen to women:

(By Maureen Fiedler, *ncronline*, March 9, 2018)

Every time I write about gender equality in the church, I feel like a broken record. But of course, I am part of a global chorus of women (and men) who have been calling on the Vatican for years to recognize the equality of women and men — which it proclaims in theory — in the structures of the church.

That means, of course, welcoming (and ordaining) women deacons and priests, and ultimately bishops and cardinals. That prospect is surely frightening for many in the hierarchy. ...Now, Mary McAleese, former president of Ireland, has called on Pope Francis to develop a "credible strategy" to include women at every level in the Catholic Church's global structure, saying their exclusion from decision-making roles "has left the church flapping about awkwardly on one wing."

McAleese, speaking at the annual Voices of Faith event March 8 in Rome, said the church "has long since been a primary global carrier of the virus of misogyny."

How true. And this is an area where Pope Francis, for all his wonderful human traits, has fallen way short. He has appointed a few women to Vatican posts, but has yet to consider admitting women to the diaconate, let alone the priesthood.

If he has any such instincts or desires, I am sure he is held back by the Vatican's male hierarchy, who no doubt consider such ideas one step from heresy. (Or maybe heresy itself, who knows?)

If I were speaking to Francis directly, I would want him to know that those male hierarchs are living in another world, a world that the 21st century has left behind. If he wants to be a true prophet in the 21st century, he needs to move forward with new and equal roles for women in the church.

He might hold conversations with leaders of denominations that have ordained women for decades. They know that such ordinations have enriched their denominations.

March 8 was International Women's Day. It's the perfect time of year for Francis to step forward and promote the rights of women.

Francis has now passed the five-year point in his papacy. It's time that he forge his lasting legacy in church structures. And nothing would be more memorable than recognizing the equality of women. And nothing is more needed in our time.

[Sister Maureen Fiedler, Ph.D., is a member of the Sisters of Loretto and has long worked with interfaith coalitions on social justice, peace, anti-racism work, gender equality, human rights and female ordination in the Catholic Church. She holds a doctorate in Government from Georgetown University.]

Hard truths about white supremacy:

[By Jack Downey, *America*, March 8, 2018)

In 1968, the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus's inaugural public statement indicted the Catholic church in the United States for being a "white racist institution." ...

The proposition that Christianity has continuously operated hand-in-glove with white supremacy since even before Spanish, French and English seafarers first washed up on North and South American shores is not itself a new thought. However, it is also true that this suggestion is still guaranteed to offend white (liberal and conservative alike) sensibilities ...

In fact, these latter responses can themselves be seen as symptomatic of the white Christian lens's monopoly on the mainstream historical narrative in the United States. For this reason, ***The Sin of White Supremacy, Jeannine Hill Fletcher's wrenching and meticulous genealogy of the relationship between Christian thought and racism, is guaranteed to shock, depress and enrage more than a few white readers.*** At the same time, others will read it and think it to be among the most obvious and historically demonstrable theses in world history.

By virtue of its legibility and intellectual rigor, Hill Fletcher's work is strong meat for inquiring minds who seek to study seriously the American legacy of white supremacy. "As we seek a way forward we must see how Whiteness and Christianness have been twin pillars of the dominant religio-racial project," Hill Fletcher writes, adding: "... the theology of Christian supremacy gave birth to the ideology of White supremacy, and ... White supremacy grew from a dangerous ideology to an accepted position inherited by Whites." The systems and structures of White supremacy have been intimately joined with Christian supremacy, such that ***undoing White supremacy will also require relinquishing the ideologies and theologies of Christian supremacy.***

... Hill Fletcher...lays bare the endemic white supremacy that is...present in the rarefied air of European and white American scholarly circles and elite-professional life. One of the many hard truths she uncovers is that virtually every white thinker in the intellectual canon in the United States was—among everything else they were—a white supremacist by our contemporary standards. This is how normalized white supremacy has been throughout modern history....

The rub here that Hill Fletcher points to is that white supremacy is not just the result of "horizontal hostility," the case of whites in economically precarious positions revolting against proximate melaninated labor competition. This has long been a common logical presupposition in leftist "identity politics" critiques, and was most recently and prominently visible in liberal autopsies of the 2016 presidential election. But far from being a marginal feature that takes root only in the presence of white poverty, as Hill Fletcher demonstrates, ***white supremacy often remains a central element of Christian intellectual formation in this nation.***

Hill Fletcher's work invites readers to interrogate the deeper implications for conventional optimism regarding the liberatory promise of education, given the incredible resilience of structural racism. ***The most educated men in the history of the world contributed to designing the architecture of white supremacy.*** If white racism can still be usefully thought of as a form of ignorance, we must contend with the realization that it has merged with our very understanding of what "education" is, and conscripted the keenest minds in the history of white people.

... Hill Fletcher makes a particular contribution to the genealogy of Christian racism by framing its ideological roots within an exclusivist relationship to other faith communities. A conquering, Christian supremacist universalism has served as cover for the development of a tiered "sliding scale of humanity," one that depicts non-Christians as ontologically other while nevertheless maintaining a rosy Christian self-image as the great hope for transcendental unity. The survival of Christian innocence—the notion that American Christianity is fundamentally committed to the equality of all humanity, despite voluminous evidence to the contrary—is the soil out of which white supremacy grew, she contends.

While Hill Fletcher is unflinching in her critique of Christian theo-racial exceptionalism, she continues to find vibrant resources within the Christian tradition for the promise of white conversion, reparations and reconciliation. Contemplation of the Sacred Heart and the Ignatian Examen couple with contemporary inter-religious dialogue praxis to offer proactive methods for the struggle against the enduring legacy of white supremacy. ...

However, this is predicated on the scrupulous contrition of white Christians; part of what that contrition requires is ***a willingness to accept the fact that white Christians are not, in fact, the heroes of this story.*** The figure of the Black Christ raised up on the cross of white supremacy is a legacy that belies both Christian optimism and moral exceptionalism. White Christians have been the crucifiers, not the crucified.

... She meticulously enumerates the systematic oppression of indigenous, black and of-color communities as concrete expressions of white supremacist ideology, and notes that ***white Christians' self-examination, conversion and repentance are necessary but not sufficient, so long as they remain uncoupled from concrete structural action.*** And yet, in this nation that so prides itself on dreaming the impossible into reality, the mere mention of "reparations" is more likely to be met with nervous sputtering about pragmatic impossibilities than with serious deliberation.

White Catholic institutions are beginning to reckon with their internal traditions of racism, but justice will remain an ever-receding horizon without a full accounting of, and divestment from, their spoils of white supremacy. #