



# 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 19, 2018

## Readings

*This week:*

Proverbs 9:1–6

Ephesians 5:15–20

John 6:51–58

*Next week:*

Joshua 24:1–2a, 15–17, 18b

Ephesians 5:21–32

John 6:60–69

## Psalm

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord. (*Psalm 34*)

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

## 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, August 20, 7:00 p.m. THC Spiritual Education Committee, Thomas House Library

### From Thomas Merton

Our idols are by no means dumb and powerless. The sardonic diatribes of the prophets against images of wood and stone do not apply to our images that live, and speak, and smile, and dance, allure us, and lead us off to the kill. Not only are we idolaters, but we are likely to carry out point by point the harlotries of the Apocalypse.

And if we do, we will do so innocently, decently, with clean hands, for the blood is always shed somewhere else! The smoke of the victims is always justified by some clean sociological explanation; and, of course, it is not superstition, because we are by definition the most enlightened people that ever happened...

We live in a society that tries to keep us dazzled with euphoria in a bright cloud of lively and joy-loving slogans. Yet nothing is more empty and more dead, nothing is more insultingly insincere and destructive than the vapid grins on the billboards and the moronic beatitudes in the magazines, which assure us that we are all in bliss right now. I know, of course, that we are fools, but I do not think any of us are fools enough to believe that we are now in heaven. *--Faith and Violence*

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

## **Save Sunday, Oct. 14, for Kate Hennessy talk:**

The Merton Center Spiritual Education Committee is excited to announce that Kate Hennessy, Dorothy Day's youngest-of-nine grandchildren and author of a memoir about her grandmother, will be here to talk to us on Sunday, October 14, at 3:00 pm at the Menlo Park Recreation Center. We will have her book, *Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved By Beauty*, available for purchase in advance of October 14. Save the date!



Kate Hennessy

Kate Hennessy's book illuminates in intimate detail the life and work of Dorothy Day—the iconic, celebrated, and controversial Catholic whom Pope Francis called a “great American”.

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) was a prominent Catholic, writer, social activist, and co-founder of a movement dedicated to serving the poorest of the poor. Her life has been revealed through her own writings as well as the work of historians, theologians, and academics. What has been missing until now is a more personal account from the point of view of someone who knew her well.

*Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved by Beauty* is a frank and reflective, heartfelt and humorous portrayal as written by her granddaughter, Kate Hennessy. She presents Day as a matriarch with a close but complicated relationship with her daughter and only child, Tamar Hennessy, as well as her nine grandchildren.

The book's title comes from one of Day's favorite quotes from Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Day would often add her own coda to the Dostoyevsky quote: “The world will be saved by beauty, and what is more beautiful than love?”

**Board:** Gerard McGuire, gerardmc@aol.com, 650-814-2223

**Bulletin:** Kay Williams (Aug. 19 & 26) kaywill@pacbell.net  
Michelle Hogan (Sept. 2 & 9) myhogan@comcast.net

**Finance:** Helena Wee, 650-323-7987, shhwee@sbcglobal.net

**Hospitality:** Jim Davis, 328-2584

**Liturgy:** John Arnold, 325-1421, jsaoso@comcast.net

Sally Benson, 408-972-5843, sallymbenson@gmail.com

**Membership:** Kay Williams, 650-270-4188, kaywill@pacbell.net

**Needs Net:** Roberta Kehret, 650-494-1488, robkehr@yahoo.com

**Adult Education:** Jim Davis, 650-704-8002, Jim\_Davis@pacbell.net

Mary Coady, 650-261-9155, coady\_94025@yahoo.com

**SpeakOut:** Diana Diamond, 650-323-4787, dianaldiamond@gmail.com

## **Brochure of “Rejoice and Be Glad” available:**

Earlier this year, Pope Francis published an Apostolic Exhortation entitled “Rejoice and Be Glad”.

The parish has purchased copies of a brochure summarizing the exhortation published by the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB).

We have placed them in each church vestibule; feel free to pick one up.

The full text of “Rejoice and Be Glad” is online at:

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20180319\\_gaudete-et-exsultate.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html).

## **Bring communion to homebound:**

The parish is in need of ministers to bring communion to individuals at home and in nursing care facilities in and around Palo Alto. Many of our ministers have retired due to age and health issues. Consecrated hosts are acquired at Mass and reserved in a pyx by the minister, who then schedules visits/appointments with those in need. Please consider joining this fulfilling ministry. If interested, please contact Mary Fong at 650-494-1660 or fongmt@hotmail.com.

## **Ecumenical Hunger Project needs helpers:**

Every Wednesday at St. Francis of Assisi Parish at 1425 Bay Road in East Palo Alto, volunteers assist the Ecumenical Hunger Program (EHP) offering dinner to hungry people and families.

**1) 2:30 p.m.**, set up and wash tables, put out forks and napkins, help prep food, begin the cooking.

**2) 4:00 pm**, serve food onto plates then wrap with Saran wrap about 30 dinners for people to take home after their sit-down meal

**3) 6:00-7:00 pm**, clean & organize the kitchen & dining hall.

Info: Email to: [volunteers@ehpcare.org](mailto:volunteers@ehpcare.org) or call (650) 323-7781 or Terry at 650-714-2131.

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

# COMMUNITY FORUM

*Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns*

## **Sr. Helen Prejean on death penalty change:**

[*Commonweal*, 8/7/18: Sr. Helen Prejean, a member of the Congregation of St. Joseph in New Orleans, is a human-rights leader known around the world for her advocacy to end the death penalty. Her 1993 book, *Dead Man Walking*, based on her experiences serving as a spiritual advisor to death-row inmates, was made into a movie two years later starring Susan Sarandon. Her memoir, *River of Fire*, will be released in the spring of 2019. *Commonweal* contributing writer John Gehring interviewed Sr. Prejean by phone.]

**John Gehring:** Pope Francis made big news last week by revising the Catechism to declare the death penalty inadmissible in all cases. Why is this so significant?

**Helen Prejean:** Pope John Paul II said that the times when the death penalty could be justified were so rare they would practically be nonexistent. But this did reserve the use of the death penalty in cases of absolute necessities. Pope Francis has now established a foundational principle that no matter the severity of the crime, it's never legitimate. This is huge. In every death-penalty trial, the district attorney argues that because of the gravity of this particular crime the death penalty is required. So when the pope says it's never admissible, it pulls the whole rug out from that kind of argument. During my dialogues and correspondence with John Paul II, I always argued we needed a principled stance opposing the death penalty without any exceptions. In St. Louis on his visit to the United States in 1999, John Paul spoke about the dignity of life no matter the crime, but he didn't go as far as to establish the principle that under no circumstance is it acceptable. What Pope Francis did is just huge.

**JG:** A number of conservative Catholic commentators are upset about the pope's decision, arguing that church teaching can't change. What do you make of this opposition?

**HP:** Change happens when society grows and evolves, and we have alternative ways of keeping people safe. We've also learned from science. The fact that young juveniles' brains are not yet as fully developed as adults influenced the Supreme Court's decision to end capital punishment for juveniles. Teaching can change. The church endorsed slavery for a long time and quoted

Scripture to do so. Jesus also had to deal with religious legalism. People were so attached to the letter of the law they missed the person and human dignity behind it.

Pope Francis also has direct experience with prisoners. In 2015, I got a call about Richard Glossip, an innocent man on Oklahoma's death row. We started a full-fledged campaign and I wrote a letter to Pope Francis. The pope got involved in the case by calling on the governor to commute his death sentence, which he did. I think Pope Francis helped save his life. When I visited with Pope Francis in 2016, I delivered a letter from Richard thanking the pope for helping to save his life.

Jesus also had to deal with religious legalism. People were so attached to the letter of the law they missed the person and human dignity behind it.

**JG:** Polls show declining support for the death penalty over the past few decades, but more than half of Catholics still support it. How can we do a better job of convincing those Catholics that capital punishment is wrong?

**HP:** The Catholic Church historically has been tied into empire and government, so that meant a deference toward the right of the state rather than human rights and inalienable human rights. Since the days of Emperor Constantine, the church always had the rationale for the defense of society. Remember, the Goths and Visigoths were breaking down the gates. There was violence everywhere, and no prisons or criminal justice system. The Catechism always talked about the dignity of innocent human life, but when I'm walking with a man to an execution and he says, "Sister, please pray for me," where is the dignity in the killing of that man?

I wrote to Pope John Paul II in 1997 and made that point as they were doing the final editing on the Catechism. He really got it. For the first time, John Paul II made the death penalty a pro-life issue. He moved the envelope morally not just toward the dignity of innocent life but of all human life. Pope Francis is the first to say the death penalty is contrary to the Gospel. But it's going to take more than a statement from a pope. Social justice has to be an integral part of our spiritual life. When you watch the government execute a human being, there is nothing pro-life about it. We need a whole educational strategy in parishes. Suburban parishes are often disconnected from the reality of what it means to be poor and to face injustice. I'm a religious educator, and with social justice you have to take people through that journey.

**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, 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 listing Page 2.)

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.

## **Respond to McCarrick scandal:**

[By Rita Ferrone, *Commonweal*, 8/14/18)

In the weeks since reports of Cardinal Theodore McCarrick's sexual abuse of seminarians and minors began to appear, there has been a chorus of cries for an investigation—not just into how the incidents of abuse took place, but also into how McCarrick advanced in the hierarchy despite them. The investigation must find the culprits who, knowing McCarrick's misdeeds, were responsible for his ecclesiastical advancement....[I]n every case the demand is to identify the people who failed to stop him. The expected result is a return to a state of justice, once these individuals are named and censured... Permit me to observe that these responses are typical of American confidence in legal and penal solutions to injustice. They are also likely to fail.

There are several reasons why. First of all, what will the people calling for these investigations do if Pope Saint John Paul II is implicated? He is likely implicated, after all. He gave McCarrick the red hat. He signed off on his advancement. ... How much do you want to bet that any official church investigation—no matter who conducts it—will be circumscribed in such a way that it cannot impugn his memory? Yet if it cannot reach the top, it cannot satisfy the demand for truth.

Second, in order to discover who is responsible for the McCarrick mess, an investigation would have to find out and make public the workings of the Congregation of Bishops that were responsible for his advancement. It would need to report on the machinations that went on behind the scenes at that curial institution. This is plainly impossible. No American committee, even one comprised of bishops, can conduct a forensic investigation into that body. It is out of our reach.

Third, to be fair, any investigation of how the McCarrick scandal came about would also have to acknowledge the widespread practice of “winking” at the misdeeds of the ordained—a practice so common that it may fairly be said to be a feature of clerical culture. Winking means looking the other way, or passing off with a joke, anything that uncomfortably hints at malfeasance. .... But can winking even be investigated? Once you start lining up everybody who laughed something off, or didn't want to get involved, or looked the other way rather than confronting a powerful man who did unethical things, you certainly do “find the truth of this matter”—but unfortunately it's this: the flourishing of McCarrick's career despite his crimes is the result of a systemic problem.

Systemic problems cannot be cured by finding culprits. They require systemic solutions. This fact should sharpen our wits rather than discourage or defeat us. ...The cover up of abuse and the concomitant enabling of abusers, after all, is a phenomenon we already understand fairly well in the church. For better or worse, most of our bishops are canon lawyers; it will be easy for them to assume that the most effective means at

their disposal for dealing with this crisis are investigative tools and legal remedies. They aren't.

**So what can be done?** The good news is that there is an alternative to a convict-and-punish response to the scandal....[T]he American bishops can immediately begin to address the systemic issues embodied in that scandal. The first thing the American church must do—and probably the only effective thing it *can* do—is to put its own house in order.

In order to do this, the bishops will need to work together with all the members of the church. They cannot address the problem alone. But it's altogether possible that clergy and laity can do it together by recognizing the crisis for what it is and applying remedies with rigorous care.

Just as the American church established training in how to maintain safe environments for children and youth, it can start in on the work of putting everyone on notice concerning the problem of winking at illicit clerical sexual activity with adults, as well as financial malfeasance, misuse of power, corruption of conscience, and all the rest. Protocols can be put in place to protect whistleblowers and to see that accusations are taken seriously. Training in seminaries and houses of religious studies can support these initiatives. Efforts that have already been made to safeguard minors can be enlarged to include adult victims. Our national and local guidelines to prevent abuse can and must be rewritten to apply also to bishops. Prospective bishops should be locally screened for credible abuse allegations before their names are sent to Rome. Ultimately, the insularity of the clerical system, an insularity currently fostered in seminaries, needs to give way to a greater imperative: the good of the Catholic community as a whole.

There is also a spiritual dimension to this crisis that is waiting to be addressed. We need to renew a humble, Christ-like sense of mission in the American church across the board. I haven't always been happy with how Pope Francis handled the problem of sex abuse in Chile, ... But he did get at least one thing right. When he met with the Chilean bishops, he called on them to rediscover their mission by remembering their calling “not to be served but to serve.” He told them that the church thrives by renouncing privileges, not by cultivating elitism. He recalled that the church in Chile used to be prophetic, and asked them to return to their roots. In other words, he saw with laser clarity that the only way out of this crisis is to follow Christ's example and take on the gentle yoke of his humility.

We could use a dose of that insight in the American church right now. Just as the church can't restore trust and credibility through a forensic investigation of McCarrick's misdeeds, it can't cure the systemic problems of clerical abuse by anything less than a conversion.

(Rita Ferrone is the author of several books about liturgy, including *Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Paulist Press). She is a contributing writer to *Commonweal*.)