



Second Sunday of Lent

March 17, 2019

Readings

This week:

Genesis 15:5–12, 17–18

Philippians 3:17–4:1

Luke 9:28b–36

Next week:

Exodus 3:1–8a, 13–15

1 Corinthians 10:1–6, 10–12

Luke 13:1–9

Psalm

The Lord is my light and my salvation. (*Psalm 91*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. Kevin Ballard, S.J.

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

Tuesday, March 19, 5:00 p.m.

TMC Spiritual Education Committee

From Thomas Merton

It is not possible for man to live so separated from others, so isolated and private in his own heart, that his secret selfishness and sin will not affect others. We are involved in each other's lives, not by choice but by necessity, for that is the way we are made. No man can pretend successfully to live purely in his own private universe and remain sane. The very condition of normal human life is community, communication, and "conversation" in the old Latin sense of *conversatio*, exchange on the level of social living.

The lives of all men are inextricably mixed together, and the salvation and damnation of souls is involved in this inescapable communication of freedoms. Either we will love and help one another or we will hate and attack one another, in which latter case we will all be one another's hell. Perhaps Sartre was not far wrong in saying that where freedom is abused, society itself turns into hell. ("L'enfer c'est les autres.")
--Seasons of Celebration

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

Heart & Home Collaborative dinner March 28: Lenten Morning of Reflection April 6:

Thursday, March 28 has been selected as our parish last meal of the Heart and Home Collaborative winter shelter season. The Human Concerns Committee is calling all parishioners who would like to contribute a little something homemade,--chili, soup, salad, cake, chicken dish, veggie dish--whatever you prefer.

It's a fun way to participate helping these ladies and everyone is welcome to stay and share the meal at the current site at Unitarian Universalist Church.

Give us a call so we can get plans underway! It's a great Lenten project for you and families. Call Terry 650-714-2131.

Update on climate change, March 19:

Dear Merton and STA site members,

The Green Committee would be honored and delighted if you would attend our Spirituality Tuesday presentation on March 19: "Update on Climate Change Picture," at 7:00 pm in the Hospitality Center at the St. Albert the Great site.

Catastrophic change is coming. How soon? What can we do about it? Even conservatives now agree that climate change is no hoax. We will assess the future. We'll consider Pope Francis' appeal "to every person living on the planet" and we'll look at some recent signs of hope and review some solutions advanced by the scientific community and policy makers.

Sincerely yours,

The STA Parish Green Committee

Go to Confession at STA during Lent:

Experience the healing and freedom of the Sacrament of Reconciliation here at STA church from 5 - 7 pm on March 13, 20, 27, and April 3, 10, and 17--that's every Wednesday during Lent. Also Saturdays, from 11:30 - 12 noon here at STA.

PRAY FOR US: Please remember in your prayers this week Denise Alongi, Rudy Bahr, George Bouchey, Tom Carmody, Kerry 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, and T. J. Wooten. [Add or subtract names by e-mailing editor Kay Williams, kaywill@pacbell.net.]

Save Saturday morning, April 6, from 9 am till noon at St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center, for a Lenten Morning of Reflection, led by Sr. Marilyn Wilson--a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgi Mary.

Sr. Marilyn is a an educator, spiritual director and retreat facilitator. She will lead us in an informal structure of prayer and contemplation as we approach Easter. All are welcome. Breakfast refreshments served.

Lenten Centering Prayer on Saturday morns:

Give yourself the gift of sacred time and space this Lenten season. Come to the Thomas House Library for this weekly one-hour prayer session on Saturday mornings during Lent from 9 -- 10 am. Dates are March 23, 30, April 6, 13.

All are welcome. Books on contemplation, centering prayer and the spiritual journey will be available. No registration needed and the session is free.

If you can't make all the Saturdays, come when you can. Facilitator is Pat Clough, Centering Prayer practitioner. Contact her at pathclough@gmail.com if you have questions.

Collecting books for Seton School:

Our parish collection for new books for Seton second grade books will be held on March 16-17. Your generosity in past years has provided a package of 5-7 books for each student to keep and use at home during the summer weeks. These emerging readers benefit from this educational opportunity inspiring them to read, learn and share these books with others while maintaining skills during their school break.

Any cash donations may be given to a Human Concerns rep after each mass that weekend. We are happy to shop for you! If you prefer to have fun shopping yourself, new books at second grade level may be placed in the collection boxes at each church site that weekend. You will see lots of smiling faces in photos of the handing-out event come June.

-- The STA Human Concerns Committee

TMC Board: Gerard McGuire, gerardmc@aol.com, 650-814-2223
Bulletin: Kay Williams, kaywill@pacbell.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

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Parish International Spring Festival March 23:

All are invited to Our Lady of the Rosary, 3233 Cowper Street, Palo Alto 94306, 11 am – 3 pm, on Saturday, March 23, to celebrate spring | new life borne of the warmth of the sun | diversity. Let's share our diversity, build community, eat great foods and have Spring-time fun!

Please bring food samples from your region or native homeland to share. The parish will provide tables, paper and plastic ware, and beverages. We'll dance to the rhythms of the world; dress in your traditional clothing. Sign-up to help set-up, decorate, clean-up or help serve Sign-up to bring a potluck item sharing your traditional food, and with traditional decorations too!

Pre-cut portions of your potluck item(s) so they're small. Please make sure your food is ready to serve with service ware when you arrive, as there are no extra platters or service pieces available at OLR

Sign-up online at:

<http://signup.com/go/STASpringFestival>

Event Timing:

9:30-11 am Set-up Volunteers

10:30 am Deliver potluck items to the OLR Hall

11-3 pm Community Art Activity in parking lot

12:20-1:15 pm Enjoy an International lunch

1:15-3 pm Music & Dancing

3-5 pm Clean-up Crew

Please Sign-up to Volunteer and bring potluck items *Salad* for 20 People; *Entrée* for 12-15; *Side dish* for 20; *Dessert* for 20.

Or register with: Charlene Temple, 650.868.4006, cymtemple@hotmail.com

End Death Penalty for good:

[By Valerie Schultz, *America Magazine*, 3/15/19]

In the past two years, I have been reminded many times of why I am happy to call myself a Californian. ... We Californians are fighting the good fight. Among other matters, we have stood up for the rule of law, the rights of immigrants and the survival of the planet. Now our new governor has imposed a moratorium on the application of capital punishment, and I feel prouder than ever to live in the Golden State.

Gov. Gavin Newsom's executive order provides a reprieve for the 737 inmates who are currently housed on California's death row in San Quentin State Prison. The order does not release any prisoners or alter any sentences they are serving. It repeals the state's lethal injection protocol and directs that the death chamber at San Quentin be closed immediately...

Of course, not all Californians back the governor's decision. The blue fabric of our state contains swaths of red, one of which I inhabit. Among other outraged

supporters of the death penalty, Tom Lackey, the state assembly member who represents my neighborhood, decried the governor's order. "Death row inmates are not ordinary criminals," Mr. Lackey said. "They are kidnapers. They are cop killers. They are rapists who murdered their victims. These are the monsters Gov. Newsom is protecting."

His statement brings up one big reason I am against the death penalty: Human beings are not monsters. Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God; hence it is a self-evident truth that we are not monsters. History proves that when we label others as less than human, as monkeys or cockroaches or monsters, we then feel justified in persecuting in unspeakable ways those we have dehumanized. Using the kind of language that intentionally strips the essential humanity from other humans allows us to walk a cruel path in good conscience...

It is true that human beings do terrible things to one another. Some of us kidnap and murder and rape. Our penal systems struggle to apply the optimal combination of incarceration and rehabilitation for people who break the law, especially in the most shocking instances of crime. But we err when we forget that every human being is a beloved child of God. Every living person, no matter how damaged or depraved or mentally ill, holds within himself or herself the spark of the innate dignity of life.

We humans are not God. There are many valid arguments against capital punishment that are practical: It is extraordinarily costly; it has not been shown to be an effective deterrent to future crime; it is applied unequally and unjustly along economic and racial lines; it is not necessary to secure public safety; it is irreversible in the event of exonerating evidence. All of these points are well documented.

The most compelling reason not to execute the convicted, however, is an existential one: We humans are not God. Killing another human being as punishment or deterrent is playing God. It is taking away another person's possibility of redemption. We righteous ones do not get to decide who does not deserve or who forfeits the divine spark of life.

Having worked closely with prison inmates, I know I personify the bleeding heart that Mr. Lackey no doubt thinks is misguided. I cop to the bleeding, but I also credit that work with teaching me to be slow to judge and quicker to witness. It taught me that I am no more or less worthy of God's lavish mercy than anyone else and that no one is irredeemable. Better a bleeding heart than a hardened heart....

[Valerie Schultz is a freelance writer, a columnist for *The Bakersfield Californian* and the author of *Closer: Musings on Intimacy, Marriage, and God*. She and her husband Randy have four daughters.]

Practice patience and help society:

[By Sr. Joan Chittister, *National Catholic Reporter*, 3/13/19]

Healthy and self-respecting Americans tolerate nothing that's slow. Not trains, not coffeemakers, not toasters, not online purchases, not education, and definitely not success.

Speed, finality, and pressure are in the American DNA. And it shows. We rush as a nation to be first politically. We struggle as individuals to make profitable decisions before the sale ends, before the deal gets away, before we wind up on the bottom end of a very high social ladder to climb. We move relentlessly from one job to another in search of the perfect one. No grass grows under our feet. Ever.

So, along the way, we swallow a lot of Tums, forego a lot of vacation time, take a lot of sleeping pills.

And yet, there are whole segments of life that cannot be avoided, that must simply be borne. And, at the same time, are more important than they look at first glance.

Then, however much pressure is the name of the game now, it is time to realize that the ancients lay out another way to go through life, equally effectively, certainly more happily.

Issa's haiku may have more to say to us about human development and long-term purpose than all the modern theological treatises and psychological research we have: "O Snail, climb Mount Fuji, but slowly, slowly."

Most interesting of all, it gives immense insight into the 1,500-year-old Rule of Benedict, whose prescription for spiritual development is distilled in one chapter concentrated on humility. After he situates us in the presence of God, focused on the will of God and open to wisdom teachers, he begins to talk about our personal development.

In the fourth degree of humility, the Rule of Benedict cautions us to realize that we can't rush life. "When difficult things are commanded," he says, "Endure and do not grow weary." There are some things that simply must be borne. There are some mountains in life that must be climbed but can only be climbed one boulder, one level at a time.

But if we don't like them, then what? Quit the job? Blame it on the teacher, the boss, the situation, on someone else's failures? On everything but our refusal to learn, our resistance to direction?

Yet, everything, the Book of Ecclesiastes says "is for its own time only." It is its own stage in life. It is a part of life we're meant to go through. What is meant to happen will happen when "the fullness of time has come." When we're ready, in other words.

Until then, we must, Benedict says, "Endure. Hang on. Don't give up." Or to put it even more pointedly, whether we realize it or not, there's a purpose in being in this place, at this time. There are lessons to learn

here, a reason to persist. Keep trying, the simple teaching of the Rule insists, and don't get frustrated.

It's a simple lesson but it will change all of life if we allow it. Nothing really important, long lasting or profound happens quickly. Immediately. Exactly how and when I demand it.

I must learn, this fourth degree of humility insists, to bear with patience the burden of visions envisioned but not yet accomplished. I can see what should be done in the country but cannot for the life of me make it happen. I wander from one level of life to another seeing clearly what is missing in society, what needs to be done, while an astonishing number of people around me do not see what I see, do not realize the need for the Shangri-La of economics or politics or religion or business or human community that I want to shape for them.

Nevertheless, the Rule says quietly, there is something here that must change in me first, before I can manage to be part of even greater changes elsewhere. Don't pout. Don't stamp your feet. Don't collapse just because other people do good things differently than you do. Trust the wisdom of others, even if it differs from yours. That very difference will stretch your experience and contributes to your learning process.

Indeed, "Endure and do not grow weary," the Rule says and so we learn that humility does not force its way on others, does not demand its own satisfaction, does not run before learning to walk.

Then, given that period of development, at moments of greater moral meaning, you will find you have the patience it takes to stay at the great questions of life with equanimity, with calm certainty, no matter how long it takes. You will have developed the strength you need to save the marriage, to get the children past the pitfalls of life, to squelch the poisons of discrimination where you are.

Society, too, will profit from your power of patience.

When we develop the long view, we see success differently, too. We come to understand that life is whittled one sliver at a time. When we begin to shoulder the reformation of the church, for instance, or the elimination of sexism, racism, militarism, the salvation of the planet, and the end of extremist and divisive politics, we discover that it is not necessary to succeed in the militant meaning of the word.

We discover now that success really lies in learning to stay at a thing so that generations to come are not left to begin again what we failed to pursue with patience...

...[T]he prayer I myself say in the face of every hard, dark, long, life-changing challenge of our times is "If not for us, then because of us." Then, and only then, am I able to begin one more slowly evolving struggle for the will of God on earth as we try to do our part of its coming in our own time.

[Joan Chittister is a Benedictine sister of Erie, Pennsylvania.]