



# Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 4, 2019

## Readings

*This week:*

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21–23

Colossians 3:1–5, 9–11

Luke 12:13–21

*Next week:*

Wisdom 18:6–9

Hebrews 11:1–2, 8–19

Luke 12:32–48

## Psalm

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. (*Psalm 138*)

## Today

Today's presider is Msgr. John Sandersfeld.

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 coffee pot 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 5, 7:00 pm TMC Liturgy Committee, Thomas House (1 wk early)  
Wednesday, August 7, 7:30 pm STA Site Committee, Thomas House

## From Thomas Merton

There is very little hope that the world will be run according to [moral exhortations], all of a sudden, as a result of some hypothetical change of heart on the part of politicians. It is useless and even laughable to base political thought on the faint hope of a purely contingent and subjective moral illumination in the hearts of the world's leaders. But outside of political thought and action, in the religious sphere, it is not only permissible to hope for such a mysterious consummation, but it is necessary to pray for it. We can and must believe not so much that the mysterious light of God can "convert" the ones who are mostly responsible for the world's peace, but at least that they may, in spite of their obstinacy and their prejudices, be guarded against fatal error.

*--New Seeds of Contemplation*

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*

## ***Peaceful Presence August 11:***

In lieu of the regular Peaceful Presence meeting on the 11th of each month, on Monday, August 11, join the Jewish & Quaker Multifaith Prayerful Vigil and Public Worship for Immigrants and Refugees at 6:00 p.m. on King Plaza, 250 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto. All community members are warmly invited.

Jewish institutions of Palo Alto invite the broader community to a vigil in prayerful protest of inhumane policies toward immigrants in our country. This is part of a national effort that connects the 9th of Av (August 11th), the annual day of mourning over displacement, discrimination and murder of Jews through their history, with the experience of today's immigrants.

The Jewish vigil will lead directly into a Quaker Public Worship with a Concern for Immigrants and Refugees, in which participants will gather in silence to listen to the Spirit which guides human affairs and inspires both immediate words and future action.

## ***Call to Action meets October 4-5 in Sacto:***

Come to the Call to Action West Coast Regional Conference: "Building More Just Communities" at the Doubletree Hotel, Sacramento, CA, October 4-5, 2019. It will be a spirit-filled weekend.

### ***Keynote presenters:***

Roy Bourgeois, champion of women's ordination, Sister Irma Dillard RCSJ, champion of racial justice, and Ched Myers, champion of ecological justice, are the keynote speakers. Six additional speakers will lead workshops on the issues of homelessness, gender justice, clergy sex abuse, immigration, women's role in the church, and the links between carbon addiction and white supremacy.

### ***Registration:***

Registration Fee (includes 3 meals & all scheduled activities): Full Fee \$225 Registration ends September 27. Go to [saccta.org](http://saccta.org) for full information.

## ***Church Future in light of Sex Abuse Crisis:***

Come to a conversation workshop with Rosemary Ellmer, Ph.D., Sr. Elizabeth Avalos, BVM, Fr. Tom Reese, SJ, and others and attendees.

August 17, 9:00 am - 12:30 pm, at Santa Clara University, Benson Hall - Williman Room. Sponsored by Graduate Program in Pastoral Ministries.

Please register at [scu.edu/churchfuture](http://scu.edu/churchfuture).

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.

## ***Climate should be priority for US Church:***

[By Brian Roewe, NCR, Jul 23, 2019]

OMAHA, NEB. — During an advocacy-focused breakout session at last month's "Laudato Si' and the U.S. Catholic Church" conference, a room of 30 Catholics were asked to list organizations and people within the church they perceived as engaged on the issue of climate change.

Almost every corner of the church — colleges, hospitals, women religious, Pope Francis, aid organizations, even bishops' conferences of other countries — was represented in the 20 or so groups named. But not the U.S. bishops. Instead, they were relegated to a second list: those with the potential to become more engaged.

In the classroom at Creighton University was San Diego Bishop Robert McElroy, who sat at a student desk and listened. For most of the three days, McElroy was a regular participant in the conference co-sponsored by Catholic Climate Covenant and Creighton. He joined small-group discussions, sat in the audience during presentations and shared meals at a campus cafeteria.

The San Diego bishop has become one of the leading voices among U.S. bishops on Francis' encyclical "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home." McElroy joined his fellow bishops of California in June in issuing their own pastoral statement on the environment. Four years earlier, shortly after the encyclical's release, he encouraged pastors in his diocese to explore installing solar panels at their churches. So far, about half of the 97 parishes have done so, with more to come.

Several times during the conference, McElroy addressed the question of bishop engagement. He characterized it as an issue of focus — that few bishops would dispute the pope's encyclical and many have no issue encouraging Catholics wanting to take on creation care projects. The tougher ask, he said, is getting them to make it a greater priority amid an ever-expanding slate of issues.

"The other thing is that we can't ignore for a moment the general credibility loss the bishops have in speaking to issues in society as a whole," he told NCR in a sit-down interview midway through the conference.

McElroy, 65, said he would like to see "a structurally deeper level of commitment" to the encyclical within the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, beyond the work already done by some of its offices and programs on environmental policy and climate adaptation and mitigation. (The USCCB helped form the Catholic Climate Covenant in 2006, and remains among its 18 national partners.) #

# COMMUNITY FORUM

*Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns*

## ***Barr, death penalty & Communion wars:***

[By Stephen Schneck, *US Catholic*, 7/29/19]

“The Body of Christ . . .” In early September of 2012, Cardinal Donald Wuerl looked pointedly at me as he offered holy communion on the high altar of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. It was the inaugural Mass for The Catholic University of America’s new academic year and I was on the altar as acting dean for the school of social work along with other university officials. Yet, my bishop’s gauging look was for a different reason, I believe. Because, ahead of the Democratic Convention that summer I had joined the reelection campaign of President Obama and been named one of the national co-chairs of Catholics for Obama. Conservative Catholic activists at the time were insisting that Catholics working for Obama—Catholics like me—should be denied communion and some bishops agreed.

That moment on the altar remains a poignant memory; one that resurfaced Thursday with the announcement by Attorney General William Barr that the Trump administration would reverse an Obama era moratorium and resume executions by the federal government. Should Barr, a prominent Catholic, now be denied communion?

Church teachings are clear on the death penalty. Pope St. John Paul II wrote in *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life) that “Not even a murderer loses his personal dignity, and God himself pledges to guarantee this.” Pope Francis affirmed his predecessor in 2017, saying “no matter how serious the crime that has been committed, the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and the dignity of the person.”

Last summer these teachings were codified in Section 2267 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Barr, in ordering the executions, is—with clear intent and knowledge—acting and advancing a policy of government that is contrary to the catechism. His actions in this matter, thus, are more serious than simply voting for a candidate whose policies are contrary to church teachings, more serious than merely serving in an administration with policies contrary to the church’s, and more serious even than a Catholic legislator voting to provide funding for evil policies.

Barr’s actions are purposeful and direct. In the language of canon law, Barr is “formally” and “explicitly” cooperating in grave actions that the catechism forbids.

One wonders how the conservative Catholic punditry that was so strident in calling for denial of communion to John Kerry, Kathleen Sibelius, Nancy Pelosi, or Joe

Biden in past years now will justify its current silence in light of the attorney general’s current active opposition to our church’s teachings. Perhaps some pundits will recant. They should.

For my part, I’m grateful that my bishop did not withhold the body of Christ on that altar in 2012. Then as now, I am utterly opposed to any who would weaponize the sacraments to score *ad hominem* points in the divisive politics that plagues our nation.

And, while I utterly oppose Attorney General Barr for his role in the executions ordered by the Trump Administration and will lift up the church’s teaching on the death penalty at every chance, I urge my fellow American Catholics on all sides in public life to forego any new rounds of the Communion Wars. Regarding the sacraments, we are wrong to judge and wrong to politicize.

Catholics in public life should indeed bring their faith to bear when addressing the laws and policies of the political order. Every law and policy, no matter how momentous or trivial, has moral consequences that we are obliged to weigh in light of the Gospels. It is not only appropriate but required that we are guided by the church’s teachings in assessing the Trump administration’s decision to reinstate the death penalty.

And, by those teachings, we must call out the immorality of those executions. As faithful, Catholic citizens we are obliged to make moral judgments about policies and laws. But regarding the personal receipt of sacraments and similar matters of another’s conscience, there is no place for public demonstrations or judgment. New Communion Wars are unacceptable.

[Stephen Schneck is a retired professor and Catholic activist in Washington, D.C.]

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**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, 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, Patricia Markee, Nancy Marty, Maureen Mooney, Hayden Pastorini, Alicia Placone-Combetta, 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.]

## ***“Queer Eye” is grace working:***

[By Don Clemmer, *ncronline*, 7/30/19]

When the U.S. bishops met this past June, Bishop Robert Barron, auxiliary of Los Angeles, drew some heavy pushback when he lifted up Canadian psychologist and social media personality Jordan Peterson as a model of how the church could be engaging with the culture, especially the religiously unaffiliated "nones." Arguably, the pushback might have been worse had more bishops even heard of Peterson and his noxious broth of hyper-masculinity, anti-PC spite and cringeworthy flirtations with Christianity. But the real missed opportunity here was that Bishop Barron did not instead opt for a model of cultural dialogue closer to home, namely, the hit Netflix makeover show "Queer Eye," which premiered its fourth season on July 19.

While still probably an unknown quantity to most bishops, "Queer Eye" at least evinces a joy and a love for marginalized people as each episode finds the "Fab Five" — a makeover team of five gay men — coming into the life of a particularly stuck person and, over the course of a week, fostering transformation across the board in each team member's areas of expertise — Karamo (culture), Jonathan (grooming), Antoni (food), Tan (fashion) and Bobby (design). Since arriving on Netflix in early 2018, the show — a reboot of an early 2000s series "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" — has garnered a reputation for its intense human warmth and cathartic tears, both onscreen and in the homes of its viewers. Others in religious media have called the work done on the show ministry as much as makeover. But that's underselling the dynamics unfolding before our eyes.

The real reason "Queer Eye" deserves to be lifted up, and unironically so, as a model for the church's cultural engagement is that it's probably the strongest and most vivid representation currently on display in popular culture of how grace works. The arc of each episode offers a helpful illustration:

A person is stuck. He or she may simply be in a rut or might be weighed down by something in the past that is preventing flourishing in the here and now. Grace is not there.

A friend or loved ones nominates this person for the makeover — basically a form of intercession. The intervention of the Fab Five is not earned, but is asked for and freely given.

When the Fab Five arrives, it is a disorienting whirlwind. Piles of clutter get overturned. Old attachments are pried away, sometimes painfully. Favorite crutches and rationalizations are named for what they are and

lovingly, but unmistakably dispelled from the individual's life. New, life-giving habits move into the opening that is created. It is raw. It is overwhelming. It is gratuitous. It is grace.

When the week is over and the transformation has occurred, it's then up to the person to continue cooperating with what they've learned from the epiphany, the graced encounter with the five persons in one makeover team. Are things perfect now? No. But the difference is undeniable.

For a Catholic who's being honest, watching the Fab Five descend into an individual's unique mess and dysfunction has an unmistakable Pope Francis feel to it. The words of *Evangelii Gaudium* ring throughout, that "Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others" and "enter into the reality of other people's lives and know the power of tenderness. Whenever we do so, our lives become wonderfully complicated and we experience intensely what it is to be a people, to be part of a people." (270) For "Queer Eye," this could be the series synopsis.

But for those not inclined to listen to this pope, another reason why this show offers the long-resisted model for engagement is that it deals so often with an issue that is adjacent, if not central to the rise of the "nones" — wider cultural acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community and rejection of the traditional sexual ethics of the Catholic Church and other religious groups. In the face of this, one detail not in dispute is that the church spent a critical first decade of the millennium not engaged in a Pope Francis-Queer Eye posture of "Who am I to judge?" accompaniment but in an entrenched stewing of "I'll take my Eucharist and go home."

Yes, "Queer Eye" wears on its sleeve a sexual ethic that the Catholic Church has not embraced. But it's worth noting that, as the show does so, it also resists every opportunity to reject or objectify the other. The team dialogues with the devout people they encounter, not calculating in some sort of scorched earth, quasi-intellectual Jiu-Jitsu, but authentically, candidly and charitably making the case for who they are. It's also clear that even the team members carry scars, some of them religious in nature. In a season two episode, in which the group makes over a woman who is very active in her church in the town of Gay, Georgia, we see designer Bobby unable to join the rest of the group that has walked into a church. He lingers just outside the door, uneasy.

The moment speaks to how much is left unaddressed for a would-be culture of encounter.

[Don Clemmer is a journalist, communications professional and former staffer of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He writes from Indiana. Follow him on Twitter: @clemmer\_don.]