



Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 11, 2019

Readings

This week:

Wisdom 18:6–9

Hebrews 11:1–2, 8–19

Luke 12:32–48

Next week:

Jeremiah 38:4–6, 8–10

Hebrews 12:1–24

Luke 12:49–53

Psalm

Blessed the people the Lord has chosen, chosen to be his own. (*Psalm 33*)

Today

Today's presider is Fr. Larry Percell.

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

Thursday, August 15

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
(See Mass times on page 2.)

No TMC meetings this week.

From Thomas Merton

You cannot be a man of faith unless you know how to doubt. You cannot believe in God unless you are capable of questioning the authority of prejudice, even though that prejudice seems to be religious. Faith is not a blind conformity to a prejudice --a “pre-judgment.” It is a decision, a judgment that is fully and deliberately taken in the light of a truth that cannot be proven.

--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

Bring Communion to homebound Catholics:

New Ministers are needed for the parish Pastoral Home Ministry.

We are in need of ministers to bring communion to individuals at home and at nursing care facilities. Many of our ministers have left or retired due to age and health issues.

Please consider joining this fulfilling ministry. Training is provided. If interested, please contact Mary Fong at 650-494-1660 or fongmt@hotmail.com.

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 Sept. 27. Go to 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.

"Perhaps a good question to wrestle with is how we can share in God's great agony regarding human choice and God's great desire for human healing, so that we can somehow facilitate the Spirit's ongoing movement toward resurrection."

----Rosemary M. Ellmer, M.Div., Ph.D.

Jews & Quakers in Multifaith Lament and Public Worship on Immigrants August 11:

In lieu of our regular "Peaceful Presence" on August 11, we invite everyone to join in this multifaith vigil and worship:

Sunday, August 11, 6 -7:15pm

King Plaza, 250 Hamilton, Palo Alto



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.

All community members are warmly welcomed!

Sponsored by T'ruah: Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, in partnership with Bend the Arc South Bay, Multifaith Voices for Peace & Justice, Palo Alto Friends Meeting (Quaker), and Beth Am, Etz Chayim, Keddem, Kol Emeth, Jewish Community Relations Council, National Council for Jewish Women San Francisco, and Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom.

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.

Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Thursday, August 15:

In addition to the regular parish Daily Masses at 7:15 a.m. and 12:15 pm at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, there will be:

- An English Mass at 7 pm at St. Albert the Great Church
- A Spanish Mass at 7:30 pm at Our Lady of the Rosary
- A Sung Mass in Latin with Gregorian chant at 8:00 pm at St. Thomas Aquinas Church.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Workism cannot save America:

[By Kevin Clarke, *U.S. Catholic*, May 2019]

The president famously expressed unhappiness with immobile Americans in an interview with the Wall Street Journal in July 2017. His advice for the unemployed? “Cut your losses,” and “start moving.”

Trump was complaining about an emerging phenomenon: People often don’t live where the most new jobs are being created, but a growing number of U.S. workers are unwilling to pull up roots in pursuit of those jobs. That contemporary stickiness represents a profound historical reversal in a nation crowded with examples of vast labor migrations.

Across centuries and state and territorial boundaries, Americans have chased precious minerals, oil, arable land, and industrial work opportunities. But according to the U.S. Census Bureau, that mythological restlessness stalled between 2017 and 2018 when only 10 percent of U.S. adults moved, the lowest number since the government began collecting such data in 1948.

There have been a number of explanations for the sudden immobility. Some cite the two-body phenomenon: with both spouses working it is often difficult for families to move unless both parents can simultaneously score new jobs. Others say capacity created by the internet means that virtual workers can find work anywhere in the country while staying put.

But the likeliest inhibitor appears to be that, for many workers, the difficulties of leaving hearth and home just don’t appear to be worth it. Low-skill jobs, even in hot job markets, will not offer much more than the middling opportunity already in depressed home communities. That’s especially true if it means moving to U.S. coasts, where a higher cost of living wipes out any advantage offered by nominally better wages.

Restraints on mobility are likely to grow only more acute in the near future. An unwholesome confluence of low skills and low educational attainment are suppressing working-class opportunity while at the same time technological innovation threatens the obliteration of entire labor sectors. Consider the potential impact of the much anticipated self-driving cars and trucks. Should Silicon Valley visionaries succeed in developing a new safe, self-propelled vehicle industry, it will likely phase out taxi and truck drivers, substantially reduce car production, and lay off employees in manufacturing.

“Family” and “community ties” are often cited by workers who wish to stay put even in defiance of better job opportunities. They are ineffable claims difficult for economists to factor, too human and fragile for analysis. Coupled with diminished opportunity, those factors mean larger armies of underutilized workers unwilling to move.

But even the elite in this emerging new economic order face unprecedented challenges. In a recent Atlantic article, Derek Thompson reports that as traditional sources of spiritual sustenance decline, Americans have been seeking identity and spiritual fulfillment on the job. Workism, he writes, is the “belief that work is not only necessary to economic production, but also the centerpiece of one’s identity and life’s purpose.” But “our jobs were never meant to shoulder the burdens of a faith,” he says, “and they are buckling under the weight.”

And what remains to the low-skilled denied even this pale and false substitution?

What began as temporal losses related to declines in income, opportunity, and self-esteem quickly translate into deeper spiritual diminishment. Workism cannot save an America on the edge of a new era of reduced opportunity and fulfillment found on the job. Confronting that emptiness is a vast challenge, but it is an opportunity as well for the Catholic Church and other faith communities in the United States. They have a chance to redeem and restore themselves. Let’s hope they are up to the job.

[Kevin Clarke is a writer living in New York.]

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

Adult Education: Jim Davis, 650-704-8002, Jim_Davis@pacbell.net

Mary Coady, 650-261-9155, coady_94025@yahoo.com

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.]

America's gun addiction denied:

[By Daniel P. Horan, *National Catholic Reporter*, 8/7/19]

In the wake of the horrific mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, this week, it occurs to me that, when it comes to guns, the United States collectively behaves in a way that mimics an addict in denial. Anybody familiar with 12-step recovery programs knows that the entire effort to manage a behavior or dependence on a substance that has gotten out of control is predicated on the ability to acknowledge that there is a problem in the first place. Americans in general — and Republicans in particular — refuse to admit that there is a gun problem....

Instead of addressing the problem head-on, acknowledging that an 18th-century constitutional provision to ensure a rebelling colony's right to defend itself against a foreign empire should not provide cover for nearly anybody to have access to weapons of mass murder, Republicans and "gun rights activists" deflect focus on tangential issues.

This week, President Donald Trump condemned bigotry (yet refused to acknowledge his own campaign's rhetoric as inciting bigotry), but blamed the mass shootings on "mental illness, violence in the media and violent video games." The American Psychiatric Association released a statement refuting Trump's embrace of a gun lobby talking point: "The overwhelming majority of people with mental illness are not violent and far more likely to be victims of violent crime than perpetrators of violence." Blaming gun violence on those struggling with mental health only serves to further stigmatize an already vulnerable population, and there is absolutely no causal relationship between violent video games and real-world violence.

I learned about the El Paso and Dayton shootings while in Australia this week delivering a series of lectures. As in the United States and every other country in the world, a significant percentage of Australia's population suffers from various forms of mental illness, and violent television, movies and video games are as common here as anywhere else. And yet, like much of the rest of the world, Australia does not experience mass shootings (or gun violence in general) anywhere near the mind-numbingly absurd levels of the United States.

What accounts for the difference? Australia's strict gun laws that limit or, in some cases, outright prohibit personal gun ownership. It hadn't always been this way in Australia, but after the 1996 mass shooting in Port Arthur, Tasmania, where a shooter armed with a Colt AR-15 SP1 killed 35 people and wounded 18, the Australian government — with the widespread support of the Australian people — passed legislation banning semi-automatic and military-style weapons within weeks of the mass shooting. There was an assault-weapon buy-back program, which according to at least one Harvard

University study, was extremely successful.

Australia's neighbor to the southeast, New Zealand, recently followed suit, passing strong legislation banning most assault weapons within a month of the mass shooting at two mosques in the city of Christchurch, which left 50 people dead.

As the scientific data make clear, the one factor that accounts for America's disproportionate gun violence is the number of and wide access to guns in America. According to a 2016 study published in the *American Journal of Medicine*, Americans were 10 times more likely to die as the result of a firearm than residents of other economically developed countries. The study also shows that firearms deaths in the United States increased between 2003 and 2010 — the number of guns in America (approximately 120 per 100 persons) is also on the rise.

American exceptionalism is real, but it is not the laudable characteristic so many Americans think it is. Our exceptionalism is increasingly located in our ability to deny reality. And this is something about which we should be deeply ashamed. While this denial is a wide-ranging societal problem, it is especially acute with Republican politicians. We see it in the refusal to accept what the rest of the world has long recognized as true about global climate change, and we witness it in the red-herring theater that takes the public stage after every tragic mass shooting. Politicians, awaiting their next campaign-contribution "hit" from the gun lobby, dissemble, obfuscate, distract, scapegoat and simply deny that there is a problem. ...

But watching from Australia the usual post-tragedy gears of performative handwringing kick in and statements of "thoughts and prayers" proclaimed brings into greater relief how truly sick my home country is. ...

When someone whose behavior is as destructive to themselves or others on the personal level as what we see on our societal level, those who care about them stage an intervention to help them see their problem. There are some people, notably gun-control activists like the Parkland students and some Democratic politicians, who care enough about the United States to intervene, to call out the denial, and to seek real change. But more of us need to do this, particularly people of faith and especially church leaders.

[C]hurch leaders must name the social denial and political deflection for what it is: a systemic problem that can be and must be addressed. We have a moral and a civil obligation to acknowledge that we as a country have a problem, a social sickness. Absolutely nothing will change until we overcome our denial and accept that we are out of control, and many more people will die because of our collective denial and inaction. At present, we the people are enabling the cycle of violence in our country... #

[Daniel P. Horan is a Franciscan friar and assistant professor of systematic theology and spirituality at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Follow him on Twitter: @DanHoranOFM]