



Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 18, 2019

Readings

This week:

Jeremiah 38:4–6, 8–10

Hebrews 12:1–24

Luke 12:49–53

Next week:

Isaiah 66:18–21

Hebrews 12:5–7, 11–13

Luke 13:22–30

Psalm

Lord, come to my aid! (*Psalm 40*)

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

Monday, August 19, 7:00 p.m.

TMC Spiritual Education, Thomas House Library

From Thomas Merton

Nor should the nonviolent resister be content to prove to himself that he is virtuous and right, and that his hands and heart are pure even though the adversary's may be evil and defiled. Still less should he seek for himself the psychological gratification of upsetting the adversary's conscience and perhaps driving him to an act of bad faith and refusal of the truth. We know that our unconscious motives may, at times, make our nonviolence a form of moral aggression and even a subtle provocation designed (without our awareness) to bring out the evil we hope to find in the adversary, and thus to justify ourselves in our own eyes and in the eyes of "decent people." Wherever there is a high moral ideal there is an attendant risk of pharisaism, and nonviolence is no exception. The basis of pharisaism is division: on one hand this morally or socially privileged self and the elite to which it belongs. On the other hand, the "others," the wicked, the unenlightened, whoever they may be, Communists, capitalists, colonialists, traitors, international Jewry, racists, etc. *--Passion for Peace: The Social Essays.*

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

5 reasons to join the climate strike Sept. 20:

[Bill McKibben, *Sojourners*, Sept/Oct 2019]

...[On] Sept. 20 the first all-ages climate strike will take place across the planet. Here's why you should join in making it the largest day of climate protest in human history:

1) Because the climate crisis just keeps deepening.

When I wrote the first book about all this, 30 years ago this fall, scientists were issuing warnings about what would happen if we didn't act. We didn't act, and now instead of warnings we're issuing body counts. Wildfire, flood, the spread of insects carrying disease: The iron law of climate change is that it affects first those who have done the least to cause it. But by now it's reaching every part of the planet: Last autumn in California, we watched a city literally called Paradise almost literally turn into hell inside half an hour. This spring, we watched the relentless flooding across the richest grain belt of the planet.

2) Without rapid, transformative action, it's going to get much worse.

So far, we've raised the temperature of the planet 1 degree Celsius—about 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit. But we're on course, unless something changes fast, to see it rise 3.5 degrees Celsius—6 degrees Fahrenheit—by century's end. Scientists say that would preclude civilization as we've known it.

3) We could change if we got our act together.

Engineers have worked small miracles—the price of solar power has dropped almost 90 percent in the last decade. So, if our governments and financial institutions put their mind to it, rapid change is truly possible (and it would save us vast amounts of money that would otherwise be spent trying to defend against cataclysm).

4) There's a big movement demanding change—but it needs to get much bigger.

Right now, leadership is coming from frontline communities most affected by change. It's coming from Indigenous communities around the planet. It's coming from scientists and from people of faith. But it needs to come from everyone! This is the defining issue of our lifetimes—you need to not just worry about it, but to get out in the street.

5) A strike—if only for a day—is the perfect way to do it.

We have to show that we're willing to disrupt business as usual. Right now, despite the unfolding crisis, we mostly just get up in the morning and do what we did the day before—business as usual is literally what's killing us.

So, go to globalclimatestrike.net and make yourself an organizer for a day. It's not hard, and you'll sleep better.

[Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org, is the author most recently of *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?* (Apr2019)]

Tell Senate to end secrecy at EPA:

If a new rule by President Donald Trump's industry-friendly EPA stays in effect, the public's ability to shine a light on the Trump administration's backdoor dealings with Big Oil and polluters could remain in the dark. Climate deniers and industry insiders packed into the EPA are fighting to keep public records secret in order to gut environmental protections and enrich the industries that are destroying communities and exacerbating the climate crisis.

New bipartisan legislation in the Senate, called the Open and Responsive Government Act of 2019, S. 2220, would safeguard Freedom of Information Act requests and ensure the public's right to information. We must build public support for this legislation to protect our right to know and expose the corruption in the Trump administration.

Thanks in part to intrepid journalists and public interest organizations armed with FOIA requests, we know that President Trump has packed his administration with climate deniers and oil lobbyists, handed public lands over to extractive industries, scrubbed climate information from public websites, and is waging a war on science. In fact, FOIA requests played a significant role in the downfall of former disgraced EPA administrator Scott Pruitt. It's FOIA requests that show the ongoing (and illegal) connection between Assistant Secretary of the Interior Doug Domenech and the Koch-funded Texas Public Policy Foundation.

But President Trump's new rule, signed by Andrew Wheeler, current EPA Administrator (...he was a coal lobbyist), without any public input, would allow a wide range of political appointees at the agency – many of whom are industry insiders – to deny requests for public information. The rule would let them keep their secret deals with the fossil fuel industry away from public scrutiny.

The rule comes on the heels of a Supreme Court decision that overturned more than 40 years of FOIA precedent to rule in favor of corporate secrecy over the public's right to know. This legislation seeks to undo that decision as well.

...[T]he Open and Responsive Government Act will start to put the public's interest ahead of corporate interests. Tell the Senate: Support the Open and Responsive Government Act of 2019 now.

--STA Parish Green Committee

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

San Diego diocesan employees meet on abuse:

[By Aida Bustos, Catholic News Service, in NCR, 8/15/19]

Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego gathered all 2,500-plus diocesan employees for the first time in its history to announce an expansion of the fight against the sexual abuse of children not just within the local church but in the greater society.

U.S. church reforms adopted in the early 2000s have contributed to a dramatic decline in cases of child abuse by clergy. The San Diego Diocese has not had a confirmed incident of sexual abuse of a minor by any of its priests in the past 20 years, records show.

But much more remains to be done to confront abuse, McElroy told the employees at the Aug. 13 meeting at the University of San Diego.

The bishop said Pope Francis, in a directive issued in May, had challenged bishops worldwide to not merely change procedures, but to commit to personal and institutional transformation to eradicate abuse. McElroy then outlined his plan to drive that transformation within the diocese.

In his "motu proprio" titled "Vos Estis Lux Mundi" ("You Are the Light of the World"), Francis challenges Catholics to "recognize that while the church's mission to eliminate sexual abuse must begin with the internal life of the church and the sin and scandal of clergy sexual abuse, our efforts as disciples of Jesus Christ must also reach into those structures of societal and family life that generate and protect the sexual victimization of minors," McElroy said.

At the meeting, the bishop:

--Called on every employee of the diocese to report child abuse they suspected was occurring, not just so-called mandated reporters obligated by law to do so, such as teachers and priests.

--Extended the effort to fight sexual child abuse beyond the Catholic Church, calling on all employees to report abuse wherever they suspected it was occurring in the larger society, where most of it occurs.

--Announced the formation of a task force to develop programming to raise awareness among the diocese's families at schools and parishes of the epidemic of child abuse and what they could do to prevent it and to help its victims to heal.

--Unveiled two new diocesan policies regarding communication and social media to advance the protection of minors. One prohibits all employees, including cler-

gy, from communicating privately with minors they met through their work in the church without copying their parents or guardians on any such communications. The other bans all employees, clergy included, from having direct interaction on any personal social media account with any individual minor they met through their work.

These are the latest measures taken by McElroy in the past year in the wake of investigations in Pennsylvania and New York, as well as revelations in countries throughout the world, of devastating patterns of clergy sexual abuse of children and systematic cover-ups by bishops for decades.

At the meeting, McElroy highlighted the moral responsibility each staff member had to fight abuse. The fact that, years later, many co-workers admitted they had seen very troubling indications of abuse but had kept silent was "one of the most tragic dimensions of our history of sexual abuse," he added.

"The epidemic of sexual abuse of minors thrives because it operates in the shadows," McElroy said. "If any of us stand by and do nothing, then the evil of victimization triumphs."

"We cannot erase the horror of the church's history, nor can we restore the shattered souls and hearts and lives of those we have been victimized," he added. "But we can move forward as Pope Francis calls us to, utterly resolved to continually expel the sexual abuse of minors from the internal life of the church, and equally resolved to help transform families and society to purge the epidemic of sexual abuse that rages in our midst." #

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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.]

No segregation in heaven:

[By Brian Harper, NCR, 7/25/19]

Several years ago, Cardinal Timothy Dolan described Dorothy Day as "a saint for our time." I think there is something to this idea of a saint serving not only as patron for a profession or country but also for an entire era. Just as Thomas More might have special qualities toward which politicians should aspire, "a saint for our time" suggests that in navigating the unique challenges and opportunities of a given age, we can look to certain peoples' experiences for particular guidance.

Though he has not been canonized, beatified or even declared venerable or a servant of God, the life of the late New Orleans Archbishop Joseph Rummel might serve this purpose today.*

Born in Germany in 1876, Rummel moved to New York as a boy, became archbishop of New Orleans in 1935, and led a relief program President Franklin Roosevelt established to aid refugees fleeing the Nazis during WWII. It is for his stance on issues of race, however, that he is most remembered.

In 1949, Rummel responded to New Orleans officials' decision to ban black worshipers from a celebration by canceling it. A year later, he removed "White" and "Colored" signs from the archdiocese's churches, and in 1953, the year before the Supreme Court reached a unanimous decision in *Brown V. Board of Education*, Rummel wrote a pastoral letter calling for "no further discrimination or segregation in the pews, at the Communion rail, at the confessional, and in parish meetings ..." Two years later, he closed a church that refused to welcome a black priest, chastising parishioners for their "act of injustice, uncharitableness, and irreverence."

Rummel's efforts were often ignored, but after yielding to critics and postponing the official end of segregation within his archdiocese's educational system, he ordered the integration of all Catholic schools in 1962. When several prominent Catholics refused to bend, Rummel excommunicated them.

So why might Rummel be a "saint for our time"? Because race, as *The Wall Street Journal's* Gerald F. Seib writes, "remains the great unresolved issue" in the United States? Certainly. But Rummel's witness on race offers lessons that speak to some of our broader social struggles, of which race is one example.

It is no secret that the United States are not particularly united at the moment.

"We really are two different Americas," wrote Republi-

can pollster Frank Luntz in *Time* last year.

"America may be more divided now than at any time since the Civil War," lamented a headline in *Salon* two years ago.

For many of us, the answer to this divisiveness has not been to reach out to those with whom we disagree but to wish them away. Yes, the people chanting, "Send her back" at a "Make America Great Again" rally were displaying racism, but they were also suggesting that there is no reason to engage with their political opponents. Instead, these people should simply go away. As the president said two days before the rally, "If you're complaining all the time, very simply, you can leave."

Others of us respond by writing people off as unreachable — whether it is Hillary Clinton painting some of Donald Trump's supporters as a "basket of deplorables" or Mitt Romney effectively describing 47 percent of voters as moochers.

Aside from being unproductive, each of these sentiments is grossly un-Christian, at odds with everything from the Parable of the Lost Sheep to Jesus' directions for resolving conflict in Matthew 18. They fail to recognize the basic dignity of every person, even those we don't especially like.

In his 1953 pastoral letter calling for equal treatment within his archdiocese's churches, Rummel declared "[T]here will be no segregation in the kingdom of heaven." While he was referring specifically to race, his comment can describe any of the superficial ways we build walls between ourselves.

I once heard a poetic account of the Last Judgment in which people were blocked from passing through the gates not by their own sins but by their own sense of scandal and unwillingness to enter when they saw all the people they detested who had been allowed in.

Racism is contrary to God's will. So is every cruel and petty reason we devise to separate instead of joining, to split instead of bridging. With the hope and expectation that these barriers will not be tolerated in eternity, we should get busy learning to live together by tearing them down now.

*Special thanks to my great uncle, Fr. Edward Carroll, for bringing Archbishop Rummel's story to my attention.

[Brian Harper is an alumnus of Fordham University's Graduate Program in International Political Economy and Development and Marquette University. He previously worked in communications with the Midwest Jesuits and served as a Jesuit Volunteer in Peru. His writing has been featured in *America*, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, *Counterpunch*, *Mic*, and various other publications. You can read his work and listen to his music at www.brianharper.net.]