



21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 25, 2019

Readings

This week:

Isaiah 66:18–21

Hebrews 12:5–7, 11–13

Luke 13:22–30

Next week:

Sirach 3:17–18, 20, 28–29

Hebrews 12:18–19, 22–24

Luke 14:1, 7–14

Psalm

Go out to all the world and tell the Good News. (*Psalm 117*)

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 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

No TMC meetings this week.

From Thomas Merton

The Cross is the sign of contradiction--destroying the seriousness of the Law, of the Empire, of the armies, of blood sacrifice, and of obsession.

But the magicians keep turning the Cross to their own purposes. Yes, it is for them, too, a sign of contradiction: the awful blasphemy of the religious magician who makes the Cross contradict mercy! This, of course, is the ultimate temptation of Christianity! To say that Christ has locked all the doors, has given one answer, settled everything and departed, leaving all life enclosed in the frightful consistency of a system outside of which there is seriousness and damnation, inside of which there is the intolerable flippancy of the saved--while nowhere is there any place left for the mystery of the freedom of divine mercy, which alone is truly serious and worthy of being taken seriously.

--Raids on the Unspeakable

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

TMC donation envelope enclosed today:



Please use the envelope enclosed in this bulletin to make your monthly contribution to the support of the Thomas Merton Center. Your dollars make possible the sponsorship of the 8:45 Sunday Mass, monthly contributions to Seton School (\$1,000) and the Ecumenical Hunger Program (\$40), spiritual education talks, retreats, and the publication of this bulletin. Lay-led, self-sustaining, self-generating—this is TMC. Thanks to all who contribute.

Mental Health and Spirituality Sept. 13:

Luncheon and discussion on Mental Health & Spirituality, Sept 13th from 11:30 am – 1pm; Chancery Office of the Diocese of San Jose; 1150 N. First Street; San Jose 95112. RSVP required: marcus.cabrera@dsj.org

Cindy McCalmont is a United Methodist pastor, having had the privilege of serving churches in both rural and University communities. In addition to working now for NAMI, Cindy leads workshops on "The Art of Facilitating Self Determination," is a facilitator-in-training for Stanford's "Compassion Cultivation" program, and is on the Board for Recovery Café in downtown San Jose. Cindy and her husband Scott have one daughter who lives with her husband and two young children in St. Paul, Minnesota. When they're not flying back and forth to the Midwest, Cindy and Scott are avid bikers, biking to work during the week and riding their tandem bicycle up Mt. Umunhum almost every weekend.

Anna Nguyen is a faithful Catholic originally from Vietnam. She came to the United States as a teenager without knowing English and started high school. Anna is bilingual in Vietnamese and in English and she occasionally travels to Vietnam to teach spirituality and psychology to religious women. She worked as a research development engineer for 20 years and recently completed a doctoral program in clinical psychology with a dissertation on integrating psychology and spirituality into psychotherapy. Anna currently works as a registered psychological assistant at a non-profit organization serving a low income population. She is honored to be part of a team whose purpose and passion is to bridge the gap between psychology and religion/spirituality with the aim of cultivating understanding, kindness, and compassion toward those who are affected by mental illness. She holds a PsyD, M.A. in Pastoral Ministry, and a M.S. in Computer Science.

A place to live is needed:

TMC member Diana Diamond has an acquaintance who is looking for a place to live. He's been an in-home handyman/caretaker (not licensed) for elderly individuals and couples. For the past five years he was living in a room in the home of an elderly woman who recently moved to Channing House. He buys groceries, cooks, maintains the house and garden, and can repair household items, such as lamps, vacuum cleaners, etc. He needs housing in return for some services. Diana vouches for him and he can provide references.

Contact Diana at DianaLDiamond@gmail.com or call her at 650-323-4787.

Go EV to fight climate change:

You are invited to a free workshop on the benefits of driving an electric car:

Sun, September 8, 3-5 pm @ Congregation Beth Am
26790 Arastradero Road, Los Altos Hills

Driving an electric vehicle is one of the single biggest actions YOU can take to fight climate change. On September 8, come learn about the benefits of EVs, charging basics, government rebates, the latest makes and models, and what's in store for the future. Several owners will display their EVs and answer questions in the parking lot prior to the presentation.

RSVP to Acterra now, so enough chairs will be set out: arianee@acterra.com now .

The following topics will be covered:

- ◆ The benefits of EVs versus gas-powered cars
- ◆ Government rebates (up to \$10,800) for "going EV"
- ◆ Additional rebates for low income consumers
- ◆ Battery range and charging basics
- ◆ Leasing versus buying
- ◆ Current makes/models and what's in store for the future!

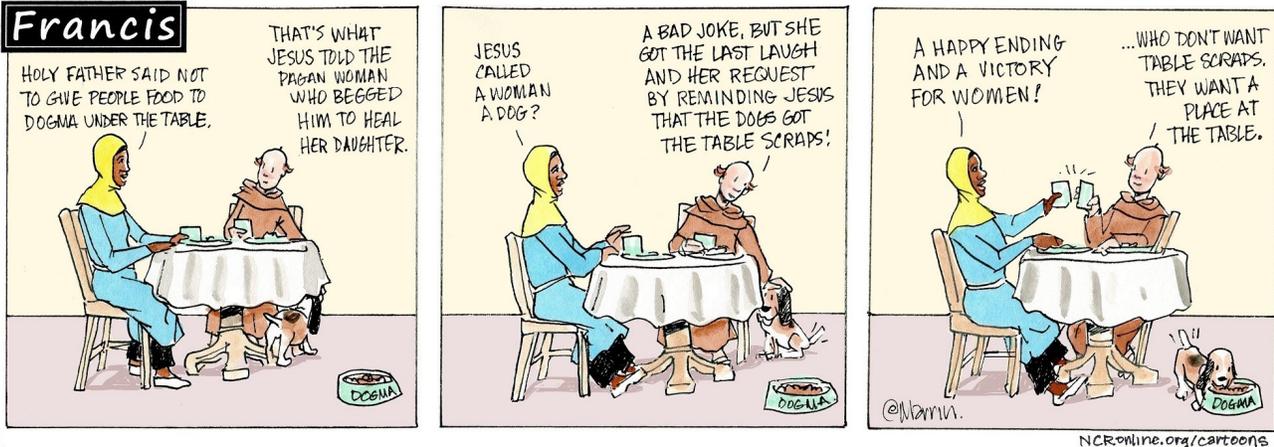
Multifaith Peace Picnic and Prayers Sept. 11:

Everyone is welcome to the next Multifaith Peace Picnic & Prayers, on Wed., Sept 11, 6-8 pm at King Plaza, 250 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto

Hosted by American Muslim Voice in partnership with MVPJ, the picnic begins at 6 pm and the program at 6:45 pm with children singing, prayers from diverse faith traditions, and candlelight circle to conclude. Free. Everyone welcome!

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns



Single-use plastic and just war theory:

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

New surveys report that the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, mostly made up of plastic refuse from packaging and fishing, has reached 617,000 square miles, twice the size of the state of Texas, and is still growing.

Descending from this floating garbage dump...are microparticles of plastic, churned up as wave action degrades plastic bags and containers. Scientists have long recognized this micropollution as a nearly invisible hazard in ocean water that shows up in the aquatic food chain when small animals ingest the particles and get ingested themselves by larger sea life. ... Plastic particles are drifting in the air we breathe, turning up in our soil, and showing up in our water supplies.

Despite all the civic energy devoted to recycling, only 9 percent of the plastics produced over the last seven decades or so has been recycled. ...

Almost two thirds of all plastic refuse still ends up in landfills, where it will decompose over centuries, slowly leaching potentially toxic substances into the soil and water. Other microparticles come off synthetic clothing during washing and contaminate water systems, as do plastic "microbeads" used in cosmetics and cleaning supplies....

The American Chemical Society reported in May that the average American consumes more than 70,000 plastic particles a year; bottled water drinkers much more than that. These microparticles can enter human tissue and trigger adverse immune reactions, throw off natural systems by mimicking hormones, and recombine into potentially cancer-causing toxins.

Getting this micropollution out of our food, soil, and waterways will be a macro project. The plastics industry could help by shifting to biodegradable plastics and designing plastic packaging that is easier to recycle. ...

Consumers should take a long, hard look at the dreaded

single-serve plastic, whether in the form of a water bottle, fruit cup, frozen food package, or the increasingly bemoaned supermarket grocery bag. ...[I]n analyzing the real-world impact of bans, researchers discovered that far from being a single-use product, supermarket bags are often redeployed by consumers as in-home trash receptacles. And when bans took effect, ... they substituted with purchases of heavier plastic garbage bags, contributing to a problem the bag ban was meant to address. Switching to paper actually created an even heavier production and disposal burden on the environment.

Policymakers and consumers engaged in a war on single-use plastics may wish to borrow some notions from the Church's just war teaching. Two ideas pertain: Does the proposed solution to a problem only lead to greater disorder, and is a possible fix proportionate to the threat? In serving the ecological common good, we don't want to merely appear good, we want to produce civic policy that actually achieves some good. #

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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.]

Sr. Helen Prejean's River of Fire:

[By Colleen Dulle, *America*, 8/16/19]

Sr. Helen Prejean, C.S.J., is best known for her work against the death penalty, but her new memoir, *River of Fire*, tells the story of the woman she was before she ever set foot on death row. The book leaves off, literally, where her famous memoir *Dead Man Walking* begins. The last sentence of *River of Fire* is the opening line of *Dead Man Walking*: “When Chava Colon from the Prison Coalition asks me one January day in 1982 to become a pen pal to a death-row inmate, I say, Sure.” That pen pal was Patrick Sonnier, whose correspondence with Sister Prejean would lead to her accompanying him to the execution chamber at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, the nation’s largest maximum-security prison. Mr. Sonnier was put to death in the electric chair with Sister Prejean looking on. Sr. Prejean vomited, and then resolved to spend her life fighting state-sanctioned executions.

The magnitude of this resolution might surprise even longtime followers of the activist sister. It seems almost impossible to imagine Sister Prejean as anything but the fiery, outspoken woman who has spent decades addressing structural inequality with barbed statements like, “Capital punishment means those without the capital get the punishment.” But in *River of Fire*, Sister Prejean explains that it was a long road from her parents’ Louisiana estate, Goodwood, where the family employed black household servants, to St. Thomas Housing Projects in New Orleans and the death chambers of Angola. Sister Prejean describes her childhood at Goodwood, near Baton Rouge, with humor and fondness ... She details her own internalized racism by recounting how she bristled when her classmates called her “blackie,” or when they used the most offensive racial slur when she returned from summer break with a tan.

Soon, though, young Helen leaves Goodwood behind to become Sister Louis Augustine, a headstrong novice trying (and often failing) to fit into her 1950s-style novitiate with its silent meals, early morning prayers, ill-fitting habits and ban on “particular friendships.” ...After a sigh of relief when her novitiate is over, Sister Prejean goes onto teach English and then work at a parish, both in ritzy, white neighborhoods in 1960s New Orleans. It is during the time of the Second Vatican Council, and Sister Prejean describes the thrill and tumult of its effects both in her parish and in her religious order. She is sent to study theology for the first time, where she falls in love with an intelligent young priest. She describes their seven-year affair with candor, explaining how they unsuccessfully tried to live a “third way” between religious and married life. (The two ultimately recommitted themselves to their religious vows.

Following Vatican II, the Sisters of St. Joseph, like many other orders of women religious, began to wrestle with what kind of institute they wanted to be: Sister Prejean boils it down to “spiritual” versus “social justice”—and says she gave impassioned speeches in favor of the spiritual...

It is not until almost the end of the book that Sister Prejean describes her awakening. At a gathering of her religious order in 1980, one of the “social justice” sisters says, “Jesus preached good news to the poor.... Integral to that good news is that the poor are to be poor no longer.” She describes the statement as striking her like lightning, causing her to realize at once that in the four decades of her life, she had never known a single poor person, nor had she known any black person as an equal. She began to realize that her conception of herself as an apolitical person had been wrong, because supporting the status quo is an inherently political position...

For a full year after her lightning-strike realization, Sister Prejean struggles to put her newfound call to social justice into action. She writes with honesty about hatching lofty plans and failing to implement them until a member of her community delivers a stinging critique: “Barbara Miller stood up and challenged me to live and work among poor people myself before I try to inspire young people to work for justice. How can I teach them what I don’t live?”

In the last chapter of *River of Fire*, Sr. Prejean packs her bags and moves into the city to work at Hope House, a ministry in the St. Thomas Housing Projects, where, she says, she finally learns to listen. In working with the people there, she sees firsthand and begins to understand generational poverty and racial bias in the criminal justice system.

Sister Prejean clearly sees *River of Fire* as her last book. ... And lest the reader assume that Sister Prejean’s work against the death penalty...is the sum total of her story, she spends the final pages of her afterword calling out the places where she sees continued injustices, particularly in the treatment of women and L.G.B.T. people in the church. She includes as an appendix a letter she wrote to Pope Francis calling “for the Catholic Church to fully respect the dignity of women,” in which she describes her dismay at being excluded from “certain opportunities of service” in the church, like preaching a homily and proclaiming the Gospel.

Although Sister Prejean can count among her victories Pope Francis’ change to the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 2018 outlawing the death penalty, support for the practice is ramping up again in the United States. Just last month, U.S. Attorney General William Barr directed the Bureau of Prisons to resume federal executions in the United States after nearly two decades. Sister Prejean was fighting capital punishment back then, and she is ready to continue doing so now.

[Colleen Dulle is assistant producer of audio and video at *America*.]