



22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 1, 2019

Readings

This week:

Sirach 3:17–18, 20, 28–29

Hebrews 12:18–19, 22–24

Luke 14:1, 7–14

Next week:

Wisdom 9:13–18b

Philemon 9–10, 12–17

Luke 14:25–33

Psalm

God, in your goodness, you have made [a home] a home for the poor. (*Psalm 68*)

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

Wednesday, Sept. 4, 7:00 pm

STA Site Committee (NOTE NEW TIME)

From Thomas Merton

Once there was a disciple of a Greek philosopher who was commanded by his Master for three years to give money to everyone who insulted him. When this period of trial was over, the Master said to him: Now you can go to Athens and learn wisdom. When the disciple was entering Athens, he met a certain wise man who sat at the gate insulting everybody who came and went. He also insulted the disciple, who immediately burst out laughing. Why do you laugh when I insult you? said the wise man. Because, said the disciple, for three years I have been paying for this kind of thing, and now you give it to me for nothing. Enter the city, said the wise man, it is all yours. Abbot John used to tell the above story, saying: This is the door of God by which our father, rejoicing in many tribulations, enters into the City of Heaven.

--The Wisdom of the Desert

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 Spiritual Education programs coming:

Mark your calendars for the following programs brought to you by the TMC Spiritual Education Committee and the TMC Liturgy Committee. More details will follow as each program approaches.

▼ ***Saturday, Sept. 28, 3:00 p.m. at SAGH: The Catholic Media: Past and Future.*** A discussion with Jim Purcell, Chairman of the Board of the *National Catholic Reporter* and past CEO of Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County. How familiar are you with the broad landscape of Catholic media? Progressive and conservative sources abound. How does one sift through it all? Conversation, questions and answer session with Jim Purcell. Followed by wine/cheese reception.

▼ ***Saturday, October 12, 10:00 a.m. at Thomas House: How to plan a Catholic funeral liturgy.*** The TMC Liturgy Committee, under the leadership of Maureen Locke, will offer a workshop on how you can think in advance about your own or a loved one's funeral/memorial Mass.

▼ ***Saturday, December 7, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm: Advent Morning of Reflection, at St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center*** with Fr. Larry Percell. Set your personal spiritual house in order as Christmas approaches.

▼ ***Saturday, February 8, 3:00 p.m., at OLR Hall: The Future of the Church in the Light of the Clergy Abuse Scandals,*** with Dr. Rosemary Ellmer. A licensed clinical psychologist, Dr. Ellmer has worked for over 15 years at Santa Clara University both as an adjunct professor and a clinical psychologist and training director at the university's counseling center. She will offer reflections from the fields of psychology and theology on the current crisis facing the church. At the request of Bishop P.J. McGrath, in the fall of 2018 she moderated the four diocese-wide listening sessions held to seek input from people in the pews on the pathway to reform and to listen to those victimized by clerical sexual abuse. She has written her personal thoughts from those sessions in an article published in *Theological Studies*, available at <https://theologicalstudies.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/>. (Printed copies will be available in advance from TMC Spiritual Education

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.

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. 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.

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!

Finding God in community:

[By Ron Rolheiser, OMI]

"God is love," Scripture says, "and whoever abides in love abides in God and God abides in him or her."

Too often, we miss what that means because we tend to romanticize love. We've all heard this passage read at weddings; appropriate surely, but, within that circumstance, all too misunderstood for it is pictured as romantic love, as falling-in-love, wonderful and holy though this may be.

That text might best be rendered this way: "God is community, family, parish, friendship, hospitality and whoever abides in these abides in God and God abides in him or her." God is a trinity, a flow of relationships among persons.

If this is true, and Scripture assures us that it is, then the realities of dealing with each other in community, at the dinner table, over a bottle of wine or an argument, not to mention the simple giving and receiving of hospitality are not a pure, secular experiences but the stuff of church, the place where the life of God flows through us.

By definition, God is ineffable, beyond imagination and beyond language, even the best language of theology and church dogma. God can never be understood or captured adequately in any formula. But God can be known, experienced, tasted, and related to in love and friendship.

God is a flow of relationships to be experienced in community, family, parish, friendship, and hospitality. When we live inside of these relationships, God lives

(Rolheiser, continues on page 3.)

COMMUNITY FORUM

Ideas Opinions Reflections Concerns

Francis in the Amazon—and Rome:

[By Christopher Lamb, *The Tablet*, 8/29/29]

▼ **Amazon:** The Amazon is in flames. World leaders gathered in Biarritz for the G7 pledged money to help stem the wildfires, but experts say cash alone is not enough. The underlying causes, they say, must be addressed, including Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's policies on the Amazon.

Given the context, Pope Francis' decision over a year ago to call a synod of bishops for the Pan-Amazonian region this October is being described as "prophetic" here in Rome. Even the Francis sceptics have to concede it was a politically savvy move, revealing the Argentine Pope's knack of picking hot button humanitarian issues. So often in the past, the Church has played catch-up. Francis is trying to get ahead of the curve.

The bishops from the region gathering in Rome will be discussing "integral ecology", the guiding theme of the Pope's environmental encyclical *Laudato Si'*. This argues that the protection of the planet and of humanity – especially the most vulnerable – are intimately connected. Environmental concerns and social justice concerns are inseparable.

The synod will present an alternative strategy to the Amazon to that pursued by the populist-nationalist Bolsonaro, who has removed protections from the rain-forest. Campaigners argue that his decisions have led to increased deforestation and helped to fuel the wildfires. The Brazilian president is nervous about the synod. He has already sent a delegation of diplomatic and military representatives to the Vatican in an attempt to try and influence its outcome. Brazil's military is proprietorial about the Amazon, which they see as sovereign to them. Bolsonaro and his allies know how influential the Church is in the region. Francis wants the synod to be a protected space, where the Amazonian Church can develop its own prophetic voice, free of political and commercial influences. Synod organisers rebuffed Bolsonaro's approaches. They point out that while most of the Amazon region is in Brazil, it is a massive territory that includes parts of eight other countries.

The old guard in the Roman Curia and conservative Catholic networks are nervous about the synod, seeing the possible approval of the ordination of married elders as priests as just one element in a possible reform

programme. They are right to be nervous. When the synod gets going, expect fireworks....

▼ **Rome:** He was sitting unobtrusively in the sixth row during an early morning Mass in a side chapel of St Peter's. The congregation appeared unaware that Pope Francis had taken his place among them for the liturgy on 21 August, Feast of Saint Pius X. The Mass took place at the altar above the glass and bronze-work sarcophagus that holds Pius X's body. Someone took a photo that went viral thanks to Legionary of Christ priest, Fr Matthew Schneider. It was classic Francis. A pope among his people, and doing what all sensible priests do from time to time: sit at the back of the pews to get a congregation's perspective. His decision to turn up in the basilica on the Feast of St Pius X also showed his respect for a predecessor renowned for his vigorous efforts to stamp out modernism. Francis' opponents, who often accuse Francis of being a dangerous liberal, were strangely silent. #

(Rolheiser, continued from page 2)

inside of us and we live inside of God. Scripture assures us that we abide in God whenever we stay inside of family, community, parish, friendship, hospitality – and, yes, even when we fall in love.

The most pernicious heresies that block us from properly knowing God are not those of formal dogma, but those of a culture of individualism that invite us to believe that we are self-sufficient, that we can have community and family on our own terms, and that we can have God without dealing with each other. But God is community – and only in opening our lives in gracious hospitality will we ever understand that. #

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PRAY FOR US: Please remember in your prayers this week Denise Alongi, Rudy Bahr, George Bouche, 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.]

Marco Rubio on dignity of work:

[By Jonathan Malesic, *America*, August 29, 2019]

U.S. politicians love to talk about the dignity of work. And for good reason: Work is a major part of how Americans understand themselves. But politicians do not agree about what the dignity of work entails. The way Republicans and Democrats talk about this idea and the policies they justify through it differ widely.

So it is remarkable to see Florida Senator Marco Rubio's recent essay on the dignity of work in the journal *First Things*. In it, Mr. Rubio, a Republican, uses the concept of work's dignity in ways more commonly heard from Democratic senators like Ohio's Sherrod Brown and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts. Mr. Rubio writes of "the essential role of labor unions" and how the growing power of financial capital "has sapped our productive capacity and damaged our ability to provide dignified work."

It is also remarkable that Mr. Rubio draws these ideas from Catholic social teaching. "The dignity of work, the Church instructs us through documents like [Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical] *Rerum Novarum*, is not just the concern of individuals," he writes. "It is the concern of communities and nations to provide productive labor to their people."

The labor-friendly ideals of Catholic social teaching are more often echoed by Democrats' statements on the dignity of work than by Republicans. With this essay, Mr. Rubio is breaking intellectual ranks. If other Republicans follow him, he may show that Catholic social teaching points the way toward a pro-worker political consensus.

The partisan divide over the dignity of work comes down to one question: Where does dignity come from? Do jobs give people dignity, or do people give jobs their dignity?

Republicans typically say dignity is inherent in work itself. When you work, you earn not just wages but also the right to take pride in contributing to society. By this reasoning, minimum-wage and maximum-hours laws, as well as collective bargaining by labor unions, get in the way of people's access to the dignity that work brings. As the former Wisconsin governor Scott Walker said last year, in a statement justifying new work requirements for food stamps, "We want to help those in need move from government dependence to true independence through the dignity of work." Without work, on this view, you lack dignity.

Democrats, by contrast, talk about dignity as contingent on the quality of the job; work is only as dignified as the wages, protections and benefits workers get from it. That means dignity is not equally inherent in all work. "Dignity of work means hard work should pay off for everyone, no matter who you are or what kind of work you do," reads the website for Mr. Brown's 2019 Dignity of Work Tour. "When work has dignity, everyone can afford health care and housing.... When work has dignity, our country has a strong middle class." Dignity, then, is something to preserve, to organize around or, as Mr. Brown has said, to "fight for."

Mr. Brown's view, like the one Mr. Rubio espouses in his essay, aligns with much of what the popes say in the social encyclicals. Catholic social teaching emphasizes that the person has dignity before they ever work a day in their life—or if they never do. As Pope John Paul II wrote in his 1981 encyclical, "Laborem Exercens," "the basis for determining the value of human work is...the fact that the one who is doing it is a person." Work is only dignified because human beings, made in the image of God, already are.

The social encyclicals were written, in part, to combat socialism. Pope Leo spends much of "Rerum Novarum" defending the right to private property and calls Marxists "crafty agitators." But his vision of labor is also radical by the standards of the United States in the 21st century. Leo sounds further left than Senator Bernie Sanders, an avowed democratic socialist, when the pope deplores the inequality created by Industrial Age capitalism: "A small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the laboring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself."

As for policy, Leo argues for a living wage—income high enough to support a frugal family—and for maximum hours based on the kind of work being done and "the health and strength of the worker." He mentions miners as deserving "shorter hours in proportion as their labor is more severe and trying to health." Throughout the encyclical, the pope appeals to natural law. Humane labor conditions are not just perks for the highly skilled; they are universal requirements of justice.

It will take more than one Republican senator's essay to realize Catholic social teaching's vision of the dignity of work. But workers' natural rights become a little more secure with each legislator who begins to see dignity in Pope Leo's terms.

[Jonathan Malesic is a writer living in Dallas. He is working on a book about burnout for University of California Press.]