



# Faith Matters Guests Speak on Catholic Writers of Deep Faith



Phillip Thompson is the executive director of the Aquinas Center of Theology at Emory University. He will speak on Thomas Merton as part of the Faith Matters series on Catholic writers. Photo from the Aquinas Center Website

By DORIS BUCHER

Some things are impossible to put into writing. The more transcendent the experience, the more impossible it is to put into words. Many try, many fail, but some soar into glory and take the reader with them. Three superb Catholic writers of deep faith and insights whose words have had the power to transform the lives of readers will be the subject of Faith Matters sessions in January and February. They are Thomas Merton (1915-1968), St. John

Henry Newman (1801-1890) and St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582). All three wrote books that became classics about their faith experiences. Three outstanding speakers will lead the sessions: Phillip Thompson, Patrick Allitt and Carl McColman.

Merton and Newman were both converts to Catholicism. Merton's life journey took him from no belief to conviction so strong that he became a Trappist monk. His book about this transformation, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, became an instant best seller and has remained in print ever since its publication in 1948. Emile Farge, chair of the Atlanta Chapter of the International Thomas Merton Society, believes Merton is so popular because he was "ruthlessly honest" about himself as a seeker of God.

Phillip Thompson, the executive director of the Aquinas Center of Theology at Emory University, will speak on Merton. In a letter to the public last August, Thompson described the vision of the center in these words: "Transforming Lives through the Search for God's Wisdom."

St. John Henry Newman's journey

took him from priest in the Church of England to cardinal in the Catholic Church. His autobiography, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, has remained in print since its publication in 1864. Perhaps his hymn, *Lead, Kindly Light*, written as he struggled with his conversion decision, is his "best seller." Patrick N. Allitt, the Cahoon Family Professor of American History at Emory University, will speak on Newman. Allitt has made recordings for several of the Great Courses series, one of them being *The Art of Teaching*.

It could be said that St. Teresa of Avila, a cradle Catholic, converted the entire Catholic Church. At the time of the Protestant Reformation, she worked to reform the Church from within. Her spheres of operation began with her own heart and extended to the Carmelite convents where she guided her sisters in contemplative prayer on the journey to the center of their hearts and the presence of the indwelling God. Her autobiography, *The Life of Teresa of Jesus*, is not only a religious classic but also a classic of

*Continued on Page 3*

# Participate in Activities and Show Solidarity with the Poor

By PAUL DULION

The Social Justice Ministry has identified several programs to help people see how to get involved and show concern for the less fortunate.

One of the activities, First Fridays for Food Security, is sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and consists of a challenge to fast on first Fridays until April 6, 2012. Voluntary fasting can facilitate openness to the Holy Spirit and appreciation of the plight of those who struggle to obtain enough nutritious food. The activity suggests that people look up the size of their family on the USDA Modified Thrifty Food Plan and use the cost for a single day to plan their menu for each first Friday. The daily cost of the thrifty plan for a family of four, for example, is \$20.60.

Other activities promoted by the ministry include a Fair Trade coffee and chocolate sale at Holy Cross on January 28, 2012, a visit to El

Refugio, a hospitality house for visitors to the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Ga. on February 11, 2012 and participation in the 3rd Annual Catholic Earth Day held April 22, 2012.

Thompson and Hovey started the Social Justice Ministry in 2011. With a new understanding of Catholic social teachings as a result of their participation in JustFaith, they wanted to expand on their knowledge and provide a way to educate and engage members of the parish in issues concerning social justice.

"We are taking baby steps right now," Thompson said. "IHM has a more developed ministry and we will keep in touch with them and other social justice ministries."

The ministry now has 11 members and an e-mail list of about 18.

Contact Marianne Hovey at [mariannehovey1@gmail.com](mailto:mariannehovey1@gmail.com) or 404-610-5106 or Cecelia Thompson

at [scthomp@bellsouth.net](mailto:scthomp@bellsouth.net) or 678-380-5732 for more information about the Social Justice Ministry.

## Seven Key Themes at the Heart of the Catholic Social Tradition

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Call to Family, Community and Participation

Rights and Responsibilities

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Solidarity

Care for God's Creation

## Life Teen Needs Adult Volunteers

You may have heard about Life Teen or even have a teen attending the program. Life Teen is a program that teaches teens about Catholicism while still having fun. They do really fun activities like parties and retreats but adults are behind it all. Without the adults, they could not experience those fun activities. They are lacking adults for this program and need more. If you think you could help them out, please contact Mary Busbee at 770-939-3501 ext. 232 or [holycrosslifeteen@gmail.com](mailto:holycrosslifeteen@gmail.com), and let her know. It would mean a lot to her and the teens.

# *big, the musical* Opens Feb. 3

By STEVE LANE

The Theater Ministry is pleased to present the 28th Annual Street Peoples Show *big, the musical* the weekends of Feb. 3-5 and Feb. 10-12. Proceeds benefit the work of St. Martin de Porres in feeding the hungry in our area.

*big, the musical* is based on the hit movie *Big* starring Tom Hanks. It features a lively musical score and great singing and dancing including a dance number on a 16-foot walking piano. The play is family friendly. It's about a young boy getting his wish of being suddenly big and the comedic moments that ensue.

The Theater Ministry was formed in 2010 to support the pre-production and behind-the-scenes efforts needed to produce a play. We are recruiting carpenters, painters, stage crew, spotlight operators, costumers, ushers and ticket sellers. We also need help with setting up for the dinner and buffet shows and with ad sales. If you'd like to be involved, we'll find a place to put your time and talent to good use in the service of the Lord by raising funds to feed the hungry of

Metro Atlanta.

Gail Goodman, the head of the music ministry, is director for *big, the musical* and Debbie Dixon returns as stage manager. Allen Barbee from the Peachtree Symphonic Winds will direct the orchestra. Auditions have been held and we have some fine talent cast for this wonderful production.

This year we are fortunate to have Chef Harry Bryant returning to prepare the meals for both the dinner and buffet shows. The Thursday night dress rehearsals will be closed to the public this year, so please

make sure to buy a ticket when sales open in January.

We invite you to join our ministry, get involved in the production of a fun musical and help St. Martin de Porres feed some hungry people in our area.

Last year *The Sound of Music* generated \$17,034.00, which helped St. Martin's purchase and distribute over 300,000 pounds of food. Help us raise even more for their work this year.

*Steve Lane is Theatre Ministry coordinator.*

## Show and Ticket Information

<b>Feb. 3</b>	<b>Dinner Theatre</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>	<b>\$35.00</b>
<b>Feb. 4</b>	<b>Buffet Theater</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>	<b>\$25.00</b>
<b>Feb. 5</b>	<b>Matinee</b>	<b>4 p.m.</b>	<b>\$12.00 adults/\$6.00 children</b>
<b>Feb. 10</b>	<b>Show</b>	<b>8 p.m.</b>	<b>\$12.00 adults/\$6.00 children</b>
<b>Feb. 11</b>	<b>Show</b>	<b>8 p.m.</b>	<b>\$12.00 adults/\$6.00 children</b>
<b>Feb. 12</b>	<b>Finale</b>	<b>4 p.m.</b>	<b>\$12.00 adults/\$6.00 children</b>

## Three Speakers Present Three Writers

*From Page 1*

Spanish literature. She's been in print for over 400 years. Carl McColman, a lay associate of the Cistercian Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers, will speak on St. Teresa. McColman, who recently conducted two wonderful Faith Matters sessions on "Writing Your Heart to God," has written extensively on mystics, particularly in his work, *The Big Book of Christian Mysticism: The*

*Essential Guide to Contemplative Spirituality.*

Faith Matters sessions in 2012 begin on Sunday, Jan. 15. Faith Matters takes place at the same time as catechism classes, making it possible for parents to attend while their children are studying. The group meets from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on Sundays in rooms 7&8 of the Religious Education building.

Coffee, tea and snacks are provided. Exact dates for each topic will be announced in the weekly

parish bulletin.

All are welcome.

Faith Matters meets Sunday mornings from 10:30 to 11:30 in rooms 7&8.

## The Way It Was

# Church Rules: Fast and Abstinence

By LOU ERBS

Ah! A new year with its resolutions and optimisms that 2012 will be at least as good as was the year 2011 past. For those who have had the misfortune of loss of employment or illness, we pray that the new year will be a kinder visitor. Christmas parties and feasting now pretty much concluded, it's time to return to the old routine, if such is possible.

Each December for the past two or three decades I cannot help but recall the planning involved in setting dates for holiday events in order to accommodate the food restrictions which were the result of church rules of fast and abstinence. The month of December, aside from the season of Lent, had the most number of days when either fast and/or abstinence was required. Calendar days affected the vigil of the feast of Immaculate Conception on Dec. 7, Dec. 23, the vigil of Christmas and the Ember days, which are the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday after Dec. 13. Ember days? These occurred four times per year and were timed to the change of seasons.

Abstinence is defined as eating no flesh meat and applied to all Catholics who had attained the age of 7 years. Every Friday of the year was a day of abstinence. No flesh meat included gravy and meat soups. I can remember that mince meat pie was off limits on the day after Thanksgiving.

Fasting refers to the amount of food one eats, so the allowance is one full meal in the day, and the quantity of food at the other two meals is less than that consumed at the full meal and meatless. Liquids generally do not break the fast, but snacking would not be allowed. Persons were required to fast upon reaching the age of 21 and continued



until reaching the age of 59.

Why the laws of fast and abstinence? The old Baltimore catechism states that "the Church commands us to fast and abstain in order that we may control the desires of the flesh, raise our minds more freely to God, and make satisfaction for sin."

There were a few more days of fast and/or abstinence on the calendar such as the vigils of Pentecost and the feasts of the Assumption and All Saints. The season of Lent, of course, with its 40 days from Ash Wednesday to the noon of the Easter vigil, was the real test of commitment. Living in the middle of the continent as I did, and before the days of frozen foods, there was a

limited choice of "meatless" dishes. Most often, fish meant jack salmon, a small white fish which was the staple of the parish Friday fish fries, one rung below the popularity of Bingo. After three days I usually had my fill of cheese and eggs, with only 37 more days to go. Lent concluded at noon on Holy Saturday. We had our little ritual of meeting at a corner tavern across the street from the church to await the ringing of the noon time Angelus, at which time our pre-ordered hamburgers were savored with ethereal delight.

Not to be overlooked was the Eucharistic fast. If you intended to receive Communion at tomorrow's Mass, it was required that you fast from all food and drink from the previous midnight. Consider that Masses were celebrated before noon with no evening celebrations. The only time this rule posed some difficulty was New Year's Eve. If you wished to receive Communion on New Year's Day, all partying ceased at midnight.

Many persons have little knowledge of what being Catholic involved in days gone by. The practice of the faith was an integral part of one's living. And so it remains today, but coming from a different perspective, thanks to Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council.

Reaching Out staff: Doris Bucher, Pam Dorsett, Paul Dulion, Lou Erbs, Megan Malvoisin, Mary O'Connor and Kassie Taylor. The Reaching Out staff welcome your comments and contributions. Contact the editor via e-mail at [pgdorsett@aol.com](mailto:pgdorsett@aol.com).