

  
**Testimony**  
**A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas**

Anticipating December 22, 2019

Communications with the editor may be sent to [j6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com](mailto:j6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com). Pax Christi International was founded in 1945 with the encouragement of Bishop Pierre Marie Théas of Montauban, France, by Marthe Dortel Claudot, as a Christian lay organization dedicated to preventing a repetition of the savagery of the twentieth century's world wars.

### Editorial

After the calendar, the Liturgical Reading reflections are based on readings for the Fourth Sunday of Advent and for the Feast of the Nativity on December 25. Every year the Christmas Season presents us with the practical problem of a great number of readings to consider within a few days. In past years we sent out separate newsletter for the Fourth Sunday in Advent and for Christmas. This year we are sending out only one newsletter for the week.

Tom Keene's poem is *Un-naming the Butterfly*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem are a few thoughts of mine on the prosecution of anti-nuclear bomb demonstrators, and a consideration of Martin Luther King's Beloved Community by David Atwood.

### Calendar

#### **In Austin**

**Sunday December 15 (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month)**, 7:00pm, Pax Christi Austin meeting. Fr. Payne House, St. Ignatius Church, 126 Oltorf St.

**Tuesday January 7**, 9:00am-12:00pm, and **Saturday January 11**, 9:00am-12:00pm, discussion and plan for action, "Five Myths on Immigration." McCord Hall 204, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 100 E. 27<sup>th</sup> St. Information: <https://www.austinseminary.edu/contact-lifelong-learning>

**Thursday January 30**, 12:30pm-1:30pm, discussion on "Colleges Must Choose: Pursue truth or Harmony/Social Justice." Read for the discussion the article

at <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Are-Colleges-Failing/244544>. Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress.

**Monday January 20**, 9:00am, Martin Luther King March, Festival and Food Drive. Short program at the MLK statue on the UT campus, followed by march to Huston-Tillotson University, where further activities are planned.

### **In El Paso**

**Saturday December 21**, 10:00am-4:00pm, Weaving for Justice will sell a variety of hand-woven and embroidered textiles by Maya women in cooperatives in Chiapas, Mexico. We are located upstairs at 525 E. Lohman on the north side of Lohman between Mesquite & Tornillo in Las Cruces. Just look for our sandwich board and balloons by the street. All proceeds go back to the weaving groups. Weavers in these groups have told us that their earnings are making a big difference in their ability to stay on their ancestral lands and avoid having to migrate. Information: [www.weaving-for-justice.org](http://www.weaving-for-justice.org).

**Fridays**, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Pax Christi El Paso joins Border Peace Presence in front of the Federal Courthouse (corner of Campbell and San Antonio).

**Sunday December 15**, 1:30pm-4:00pm, Community First Coalition press conference (1:30 in front of the downtown E Paso Public Library), Community First Coalition meeting (2:00), and Social Justice Education Forum (2:30; Carmen Rodriguez, Kathy Staudt, Rosemary Neill, and Oscar Martínez—authors of *Who Rules El Paso?*). El Paso Public Library, 501 N. Oregon. The book is available now at [https://www.amazon.com/Who-Rules-El-Paso-community/dp/1710689048/ref=sr\\_1\\_fkmr0\\_1?keywords=who+rules+episo&qid=1575239832&s=books&sr=1-1-fkmr0](https://www.amazon.com/Who-Rules-El-Paso-community/dp/1710689048/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?keywords=who+rules+episo&qid=1575239832&s=books&sr=1-1-fkmr0).

### **In Houston**

**Saturday January 11**, 9:00am-11:30am, Prayer and Labyrinth Walk to End Human Trafficking. This is in observance of National Human Trafficking Awareness Day and commemoration of St. Josephine Bakhita, patroness of trafficking victims. Dominican Center for Spirituality, 6501 Almeda Rd. contact Ceil Roeger @713-440-3714 or [croeger@domhou.org](mailto:croeger@domhou.org)

**Sunday January 19**, 9:45am, “Voter Registration in the Civil Rights Movement and Today,” Cherry Steinwender (Center for the Healing of Racism). Room 201, St. Philip Presbyterian Church, 4807 San Felipe.

**Monday January 20**, 10:00am, 26<sup>th</sup> Annual MLK Grande Parade begins at San Jacinto & Elgin St. Information: <http://www.mlkgrandeparade.org> or Call 713-953-1633.

**Friday January 24**, 8:00am-9:00am, “Evangelicalism and Whiteness in the Age of Trump,” Jessamin Birdsall (Ph.D. cand., Princeton U.), joining virtually. Lovett Hall, Suite 402 (accessible via bldg. entrance C), Rice University. Information: Hayley Hemstreet, [hjh2@rice.edu](mailto:hjh2@rice.edu).

**Tuesday January 28**, 12:15pm-1:30pm, “Death of the Black Church: How Religious Diversity Erodes Racial Solidarity among African Americans,” Jason Shelton (U. of Texas, Arlington). Kyle Morrow Room, Fondren Library, Rice University. Information: Shirley Tapscott, [sht1@rice.edu](mailto:sht1@rice.edu).

**Tuesday January 28**, 7:00pm-8:30pm, panel discussion “Evangelical Politics,” Richard Mouw (Fuller Theological Seminary), Jason Shelton (U. of Texas, Arlington), Janelle Wong (U. of Maryland). Sewell Hall 309, Rice University. Information: Hayley Hemstreet, [jhj2@rice.edu](mailto:jhj2@rice.edu).

**Saturday February 29**, Racial Wealth and the Income Gap, presented by NETWORK. Dominican Center for Spirituality, 6501 Alameda Rd. Contact Ceil Roeger @713-440-3714 or [croeger@domhou.org](mailto:croeger@domhou.org)

### **In San Antonio**

**Tuesday December 17**, 6:00pm doors open, 6:30 program begins; Ian Caine (UTSA), “What Would a Sustainable San Antonio Look Like?” Faik Family Rotunda, Tobin Center for the Performing Arts, 115 Auditorium Circle.

**Friday January 10**, 7:30am-9:00am, Dreamweek 2020 Opening Breakfast. Keynote speaker is Paul Rusesabagina, who hid refugees during the Rwanda genocide and founded the Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation to fight for human rights. \$65.00. Briscoe Western Art Museum, Jack Guenther Pavillion. 200 W. Market. <https://dreamweek.org/events/>

**Sunday January 12**, 4:00pm-6:30pm, panel discussion “Religion and Violence: It’s Complicated,” Roger Barnes (U. of Incarnate Word), Sajida Jalalzai (Trinity U.), Simran Singh (Union Seminary, NY), Derick Wilson (Ulster U., Northern Ireland, scholar-in-residence St. Philip’s College). SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Free, but register by January 8 at <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration/>

**Second Reading, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent** (Romans 1:1-7)

This is the beginning, the greeting part, of Paul’s letter to the Christian congregations in Rome. In the style of the day, it is one long sentence, with the name of the letter’s sender associated with a series of phrases:

*Paul:*

*A slave of Messiah Jesus*

*Called to be an apostle*

*Set apart for the good news of God*

Then come phrases associated with *the good news of God*.

*Which He has promised through his prophets with holy scriptures*

*Concerning His son*

Finally come phrases associated with *son*.

*Born of the seed of David according to the flesh*

*Declared according to the spirit of holiness son of God by virtue of the resurrection from the dead*

*Jesus, Messiah, our lord,*

*Through whom we received grace and apostleship for the obedience of faith in his name among all the gentiles*

More follow! Paul did not know the Roman Christians. He had to introduce himself. The communities to whom he was writing were divided between Jewish Christians and gentile Christians; so he makes a point of identifying with neither, emphasizing instead that it was all about God and the Son of God, not lesser matters.

Paul has a similar message about Jesus, who was Jewish “according to the flesh” but pressed a mission on Paul “among all the gentiles.” This new religion of a small number of people was ambitious enough to embrace all people, beginning with a newborn “of the seed of David” and culminating with a universal spirit of holiness “by virtue of the resurrection from the dead.” Paul mentions the earthly ministry of Jesus by referring to its beginning with the Nativity and its conclusion

with the Resurrection, and to the Christians' ministry "for obedience of faith in his name." Ancient style folds all this into one sentence, while modern style would spell it all out, point by point.

### **Third Reading, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent (Matthew 1:18–24)**

Of the four evangelists, Matthew is distinctive for being a stickler for the Law—properly interpreted, of course. But Matthew states in plain terms that Jesus was begotten out of wedlock, and he says this was happening through divine intervention. The Abrahamic and David lineage had been traced earlier in Matthew's narrative, only to have it lead up to Joseph, who did not really beget the savior. That Jesus would have a family environment at all would be an outcome of an act of mercy on the part of Joseph.

How many people are with us, against the rules? Fatherless children at a certain age crave attention—Emmanuel, God with us! Female spirits in male anatomies and male spirits in female anatomies—God with us! Persons with same sex attraction—God with us! Pan handlers where the public does not want them and international migrants whom officials have not lined up and processed—God with us! Half a century ago it was young men who did not show up for military induction; before that, it was interracially married couples—all God with us! How many people are actually rule-perfect anyway?

It seems that there is a powerful flaw in western civilization. Our religiosity is an ethical one; it makes morality an aspect of faith. No doubt, that is an achievement. However, we have confused morality with rules and the ethical with the customary. Miraculously, the early disciples of Jesus knew this would happen; indeed, they saw it happening in their own time. So they let it go on record that salvation came about through rule-breaking.

So should we set about breaking rules? Matthew was a stickler for the Law, and that is a paradox. What is wisdom for anyway?

### **Second Reading, Feast of the Nativity**

*Vigil Mass (Acts 13:16-17, 22-25)*

This reading is from Luke's narrative in the *Acts of the Apostles* of Paul's mission in what is now the nation of Turkey. Paul arrives in a town called Pisidian

Antioch in time for the Sabbath and visits the local synagogue. He is invited to speak. Paul presents a history of the chosen people, beginning with the sojourn in land of Egypt and leading up to David being chosen King. The Lectionary skips most of the history, bringing us abruptly to this: From David's seed, says Paul, "God brought forth a savior for Israel, Jesus, according to a promise." It has Paul proceeding to present the now-familiar Advent story of John the Baptizer saying that another was to come: "What you suppose me to be I am not, but behold he is coming after me, the sandal of whose feet I am not worthy to loose."

*Mass during the Night (Titus 2:11-14)*

"For the grace of the savior God appeared to all people, instructing us so that, rejecting the impiety and worldly passions of humanity, we may also live in the present age with justice and piety, expecting the great hope for and appearance of the glory of the great God and our savior Jesus, Messiah..." Current fashion appears to have some people praying a great deal and other people involved in works for justice. This text from the *Letter to Titus*, does not speak of "either...or" but both prayer and working for justice.

*Mass at Dawn (Titus 3:4-7)*

This brief excerpt from the *Letter to Titus* comes after an exhortation to be peaceful citizens and an admission on the part of the fictive author, Paul, that he once was foolish, disobedient, misled, etc., most of all "hateful and despising all." "But when the goodness and benevolence of God our savior appeared, He saved us not through works of justice that we did but according to His mercy..." This can be read as a critique of "salvation by works," but it can also be observed that the letter is not calling for a conversion to divine grace, though receiving divine grace is implicit, but the conversion is to peace, courtesy toward all people, etc.

*Mass during the Day (Hebrews 1:1-6)*

The reading consists of the opening lines of the *Letter to the Hebrews*. Its point is that while the ancestors had prophets, the Christians have God's own Son and Word. "In the past God spoke to the patriarchs through the prophets in many ways and in many places. In the last of these days He has spoken to us through a son, whom He designated heir of everything, through whom He also made the ages." In the context of the Feast of the Nativity, the implication is that the

presence of the Word and Son should not be taken as a narrative about ancient ancestors in the faith.

### **Third Reading Alternatives, Feast of the Nativity**

#### *Vigil Mass (Matthew 1.1-25)*

The third reading for the vigil mass is Chapter One of the Gospel of Matthew, much of it consisting of a genealogy: “Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob...” The *Lectionary* provides the option of skipping the genealogy and taking up the narrative at verse 18: “And the birth of Jesus the Messiah was thus....” But the genealogy is actually quite interesting, going back only as far as Abraham, not all the way to Adam, and following a lineage through David. It concludes, “...Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, from whom Jesus, called the Messiah, was born.”

Why did Matthew emphasize the lineage from Abraham to Joseph? Jesus, after all, was “begotten by the holy spirit” (verse 20). One reason would be that Abraham is the father in the Faith, recognized by Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Joseph carries the tradition of the faith up to the time of the Messiah. It is not particularly important who one’s biological ancestors were but whose historical faith one has.

It is well known that Matthew’s gospel is grounded in Jewish tradition, but it clearly broke with any tribalism. Jesus was begotten from outside the tribe, and Matthew belies no interest in the ancestry of Mary. The tradition of Matthew’s nation—and Joseph’s—led outside the nation to a peoplehood that included that nation, for sure, but was not limited to it, not morally imprisoned in a tribe. The implication is that faith should not be used to define a tribe.

#### *Mass during the Night (Luke 2.1-14)*

Caesar Augustus wanted all the wealth in his “world” registered for “taxation”—not taxing for public purposes as in modern governance but for the private margin that went to the Caesar household. Mr. Octavian Caesar’s governor of the region, Quirinius, took an inventory of the properties of the deposed Herodian operative, Archelaus, in 6-7 CE. Writing about eighty years later, Luke was evidently mistaken about the dates of the birth of Jesus and of the inventory. Luke was therefore also mistaken about the reason Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem. Joseph may well have had a share in some income

property near Bethlehem, perhaps occupied by relatives or renters. There was no room where the people lodged (translations that speak of a commercial inn read too much into the Greek). The suggestion is that while Caesar Augustus and his governor are tallying up properties to be taxed, Joseph's property near Bethlehem was so modest that he and Mary had to spend the night where the animals were kept, and when Jesus was born they had to place him in a feed bin.

Having set the contrast, Luke provides a chorus to comment on the narrative, a host of God's messengers, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among people with whom He is pleased." Somehow, translators have missed the point! With whom is God pleased—Caesars and governors, or commoners so poor that they have to tend their animals in the open country and make do with an animal shelter when travelling?

#### *Mass at Dawn (Luke 2.15-20)*

The shepherds seek out Mary, Joseph, and the newborn, and after seeing them they returned to their flocks, all the while praising God over what they heard. And Mary tried to understand in her heart what the shepherds had said—that a messenger of God told of a savior being born for them and lying in a feed bin. According to Luke's narrative, Mary had some sense that something momentous was happening: "...Because He looked upon the lowliness of His handmaid / For behold all generations will bless me from now / Because the Mighty wrought great things for me...." But what did it mean, when they had to stay with the animals and lay the child in a feed bin?

#### *Mass during the Day (John 1.1-18)*

This is the well-known Prologue to the Johannine (or Fourth) Gospel. Side notes linking the text to the tradition of John the Baptist have come to be interpolated into the text itself, thereby obscuring what the author was originally saying. Moreover, using the word *beginning* to translate the opening words obscures an allusion to the Greek translation of the opening of Genesis, and while using the term *Word* links the passage to the Logos Theology of the Wisdom books of the Bible, it obscures the fact that the Word is presented as spoken to God, thereby making a reference to a conversation within God. The passage anticipates Trinitarian theology in a remarkable way. Hence:

"In Genesis there was speaking, and the speaking was to God, and the speech was God. This was to God in the beginning. Through him (i.e. through the speech—AB) all things came to be, and apart from him nothing came to be that



has come about. In him was life, and the life was people's light. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

"...He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, and the world did not know him. He came into his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to those who accepted him he gave the ability to become children of God—to those believing in his name—those who were born not from blood, from the will of flesh, or from the will of a man, but from God. And the speech became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, glory as the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. ...For we all received from his fullness one gift in place of another. For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came about through Jesus, the Messiah."

In the commercial carnival of seasonal merchandising and the righteous violence that is oblivious of sacred seasons, the world still does not know or accept him.

## Poem

*Un-naming the Butterfly*  
(for Dillon Aguirre, age 2)

Remember that first sighting?  
How IT flit-danced in the air?  
Its colors waving zig-zag?  
Splendor, surprise,  
before its name nailed it down?

Remember the seizing wonder?  
Like, but not like,  
the feel-bad flood of hurt  
when tripping,  
how the ground falls up  
to hit head, belly,  
scrape knees, hands,  
extracting yowls, tears,  
only this felt good?

Is there a name for what we lose in the naming?

Did the losing begin  
before Adam grabbed the apple?  
When he dared to name  
his fellow creatures:  
    a risk neither cunning fox,  
    nor brave lion would take.

It is true,  
as our ancestors knew,  
that to name a god is to get a handle,  
a way to control.

But there is danger, confusion too.  
For the ticket is not the show,  
the directions are not the destination,  
and your name is not your soul.

Names are frames,  
like for windows,  
and the window  
is more than the frame.  
Windows are for sticking out your head,  
to go through and out,  
to find the Un-named.

Tom Keene Nov. 5, 1997

## **Thoughts on the Prosecution of Anti-Nuclear Bomb Protesters**

Anthony J. Blasi

It is a recurring event: A small group of elderly protesters, some of them retired clergy and religious, break into a nuclear weapons facility of some kind and take some symbolic steps toward destroying them. Symbolic steps—maybe spray painting a peace symbol or hitting a silo with a hammer. Armed security personnel show up to arrest them, and the demonstrators make a point of not paying bail. They are prosecuted for trespassing and damaging public property or something like that and serve years in prison. So we have the spectacle of peaceful octogenarians serving time.

I wish to call attention to the sentencing. If the protesters caused any real damage, there is some rationale for requiring them to make restitution. However, the sentences are not proportionate to that; rather they are intended as a deterrent so that other elderly peace protestors will not trespass and do symbolic damage. The point is to make an example of them.

Such protesters engage in two constitutionally protected activities—free speech and exercising their religion. I am not an attorney, let alone an expert on constitutional law. It does appear to me, however, that seeking to deter speech and the exercise of religion is something no branch of government in this country should be about.

## **A Consideration of Martin Luther King's Beloved Community**

David P. Atwood

With all the acrimony and controversy going on in the United States at this time, it is vitally important to embrace the Beloved Community promoted by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., or face dire consequences. In 1960, King wrote the following in "The Rising Tide of Racial Consciousness".

The dream is one of opportunity, of privilege and property widely distributed; a dream of a land where man will not take necessities from the many and give luxuries to the few; a dream of a land where men do not argue that the color of a man's skin determines the content of his character; a dream of a place where all

our gifts and resources are held not for ourselves alone, but as instruments of service for the rest of humanity; the dream of a country where every man will respect the dignity and worth of all human personality and men will dare to live together as brothers...Whenever it is fulfilled, we will emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity to man into the bright and glowing daybreak of freedom and justice for all of God's children.

We have undoubtedly come a long way since King wrote these words, but few would disagree that we still have a long journey in front of us. Racism and bigotry still pervade our land, including at the highest levels of government. We have experienced a growing divide between the rich and the poor over the past 40 years. Even our democracy has been under attack when one considers some recent decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court (e.g. Citizens United V. FEC, Shelby County V. Holder).

When Dr. King spoke about the Beloved Community, he was very concerned about respect among the races. In the age of Trump, we must also emphasize respect for women, immigrants, people of different religions, people with disabilities, and people with different political opinions.

We still have millions of people living in poverty without affordable, quality health care. The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world, and we are the only western, industrialized nation to use the death penalty.

King was against the Vietnam War and spoke out against militarism. If he were alive today, I am sure he would speak out against our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as our huge military budget and nuclear arsenal.

I suspect he would also speak about the need to protect our natural environment and take strong steps to counter global warming.

King's vision of a Beloved Community is timeless. It is vital that we take his words seriously.

## Links

Pax Christi International

<http://www.paxchristi.net/>

Pax Christi U.S.A.

<http://www.paxchristiusa.org>

Pax Christi Texas

<http://www.paxchristitexas.org>

Pax Christi Dallas

<http://www.Paxchristidallastx.org>

Pax Christi San Antonio

<http://www.paxchristisa.org>

Marianist Social Justice Collaborative

[www.msjc.net](http://www.msjc.net)

Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, International JPIC Committee

<http://saccvi.blogspot.com/>

San Antonio Peace Center

<http://www.sanantoniopace.center>

Interfaith Radio, (*Interfaith Voices*)

<http://www.interfaithradio.org/>

Texas Catholic Campaign to End the Death Penalty

[www.txccedp.org](http://www.txccedp.org)

Dialogue Institute of San Antonio

[www.thedialoginstitute.org/san-antonio/](http://www.thedialoginstitute.org/san-antonio/)

Climate Change

[www.creation-care.com](http://www.creation-care.com)

NowCastSA

[www.nowcastsa.com/](http://www.nowcastsa.com/)

