

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating November 22, 2020

Communications with the editor should be sent to 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 Sunday Liturgical Reading reflections are based on readings for the Solemnity of Christ the King. Tom Keene's poem is *The Man Misunderstood*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the poem is a news report by *National Catholic Reporter* Brian Rowe on a major lobbying effort on behalf of the environment by Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City.

Calendar

(Times are given for the Central Time Zone)

Monday November 16, 12:00pm (1:00pm ET), webinar "Drawdown for Congregations," on congregations reducing carbon emissions, with Elizabeth Bagley (Project Drawdown). Register at: <http://bit.ly/IPLDrawdown>

Monday November 16, 6:30pm-8:30pm, second part of online conference "Faith in Humanity: A Pre- and Post-Election community Conversation," hosted by Compassionate San Antonio, Interfaith San Antonio Alliance, and the San Antonio Compassionate Institute 2020, organized by Ann Helmke (City of San Antonio). Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/faith-in-humanity-a-pre-and-post-election-community-conversation-tickets-125265347025>

Tuesday November 17, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Texas Coalition Against the Death Penalty webinar, "Seeking Justice in Texas," an election debriefing. Register at: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScXS5BJYtI3ThcN_NoCRJY0pmTfxJliQetWLMldF2laKXC0zA/viewform

Tuesdays November 17, 24, December 1, 8, 3:00pm (4:00pm ET) or 6:00pm (7:00pm ET), online discussion of the new encyclical by Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*.

A discussion guide will be sent upon registration at:

<https://fs18.formsite.com/rtrasp/idycfr1slp/index.html>

Electronic access to the encyclical:

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

Tuesday November 17, 7:00pm (6:00pm MT), bilingual online conversation “How to Build an Economy Centered on Inclusion,” Sebastian Chacon (Just Catholics young adult group). Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84451678674?pwd=YjJPcDVLZUZwd042cG9uWTUreH Z0UT09>

Meeting ID: 844 5167 8674; Passcode: ecofran

Wednesday November 18, 7:00pm (6:00pm MT), online bilingual conversation “From Reflection to Action,” Marco Rapozo (Catholic Diocese of El Paso). Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84873915944?pwd=SSSt4UEFuenJHNjQ3STlacU90a2ZDQT09>

Meeting ID: 848 7391 5944; Passcode: ecofran

Thursday November 19, 12:00pm (8:00pm Kenya Time), webinar “Climate Justice in Nairobi), with Fr. Joe Healy, M.M. Register at:

https://mission.maryknoll.us/climatejustice?utm_campaign=2020%20November%20Webinars&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=99065031&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8U00J-miwijBK5JUOUgeWsDMY9_tPyDVX727J1kqdl72mVnTsOoXZvzxyDTICPMXRkwAjKNdaqM9f2rToBzBiRWcgMQ&utm_content=99065031&utm_source=hs_email

Thursday November 19, 2:00pm-3:00pm (3:00pm-4:00pm ET), online conversation “Religion & the 2020 Election,” Jamil W. Drake (Florida State University), Janelle Wong (University of Maryland), Amanda Friesen (Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis), and Andrew Whitehead (Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis). Register at:

https://iu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_J8h_mPr9QVKBjsT6wbS2Dg

Thursday November 19, 4:00pm (5:00pm ET), online training “Protecting Religious Liberty for Everyone,” with Keesha Gaskins-Nathan (Rockefeller Brothers Fund), Greg Khalil (Telos), Keisha E. McKenzie (Auburn Seminary), Elizabeth Pratt (Columbia University Law School), and Bishop Joseph Tolton (Rehoboth Temple

Christ Conscious Church). Register at: <https://auburnseminary.org/all-faiths-and-none-discussion/>

Sunday November 22, 10:00am, Church & Society Series, St. Philip Presbyterian Church, Houston: “the Highest Holy Da—Yom Kippur,” Rabbi Steven Morgen.

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86564638381?pwd=MTBtSF16eVhoTUF3SXJ2VIBWd0N2QT09#success>

Friday November 27-Monday November 30: The Women’s Ordination Conference 45th anniversary, “Breaking Bread at the Table of Justice: A Celebration of Prophetic Persistence.” This event will be streamed over several days, without charge. Watch at your own pace to truly enjoy testimonies from theologians, members of the Young Feminist Network, and others. Learn of the first conference in 1975 which was attended by 2000 people including Sister Dorothy Ettling and Sister Martha Ann Kirk. Information and registration: <https://www.womensordination.org/2020/09/commemorate-wocs-45-years-of-prophetic-persistence/>

Sunday November 29, 3:00pm, “the Death Penalty Is Indmssable,” Krsin Houle (Texas Coalition Agaisnt the Death Penalty), bishop John Stowe (Lexington Kentucky), and Emma Tacke (Catholic Mobilizing Network). Information:

<https://www.paxchristisa.org>, or contact Arthur Dawes (arthurdawes@ATT.net).

Register at:

<https://uiw.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAucu6vrT0tGtEizxw5rKAVMr63CqTI9zxN>

Saturday December 5, 2:00pm, Pax Christi San Antonio online meeting. Gretchen Haynes of the local Quaker community, “Quakers Reflect on the Peace Process.” Information: Arthur Dawes, arthurdawes@att.net, 210-213-5919. For the Zoom invitation, send request to J6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com.

Sunday December 6, 10:00am, “How Churches Can Work for Social Justice,” Rachel C. Schneider (Religion & Public Life Program, Rice University). Focuses on the case of South Africa. Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86564638381?pwd=MTBtSF16eVhoTUF3SXJ2VIBWd0N2QT09#success>

Sunday December 13, 10:00am, “The Belhar Confession,” Rev. Greg Han (Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston). The online lecture concerns a protest against the use of the Bible to justify apartheid in South Africa. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86564638381?pwd=MTBtSF16eVhoTUF3SXJ2VlBWd0N2QT09#success>

Notices

Joe Biden talks about his Catholic faith, Pope Francis, and Politics (September 17, 2015). Access at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xson7Rg5p3A&feature=youtu.be>

Online Resource for families or small groups: If you’re needing some social interaction with depth, more than just listening to zoom webinars, longing for the social time that used to happen before and after Mass, consider using the *Maryknoll Weekly Reflection Guides*. Gather as family or small group and use these guides in Facetime, Skype, Zoom etc. This an easy online structure with prayer, an introductory theme, a link to the Sunday Readings and some reflection questions to guide group conversation. Using the SeeJudgeAct methodology, you will be led as a group to consider where, in light of the shared reflection, the Spirit is calling you this week. The Global Solidarity charism of the Maryknoll family will feed you spiritually for these challenging times. Find the Guides in both Spanish and English at: <https://mission.maryknoll.us/reflection-guides-ordinary-time>

Second Reading (first Corinthians 15:20-26, 28)

This is one of the passages that deal with the end times. The end is not a simple termination but a goal as well. Humans are joined to the Christ or Messiah, and the Messiah is the “first fruits” in an offering to the Lord. “But now Messiah has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since there is death because of a human, the resurrection of the dead is also through a human; for just as all are dying in Adam, so also all are being enlivened in the Messiah...” (1 Cor 15:20-22). This offering is handed over to God the Father after the Messiah has “voided every government, authority, and power” (1 Cor

15:24). The supernatural kingdom, with the Messiah as its ruler, involves a voiding of kingship itself in the political sense.

Third Reading (Matthew 25:31-46)

Jesus had come to Jerusalem, and various factions plotted to have him killed. He could hardly have been unaware of the danger he was in. Thoughts of the end naturally came to mind. Here, as Matthew develops his narrative, Jesus creates a similitude of the messianic kingdom of the end times. The king assembles his messengers or angels, along with all the nations, and he begins to separate them, like a shepherd separating sheep from goats. Notice, this is not a separating of individuals because of their personal sins and virtues, but a separation of regimes, “nations.”

“Come blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a foreigner and you took me in...”

“Lord, when did we see you hungry and we fed you, or thirsty and we gave you something to drink?” etc.

“And replying the king will say to them..., ‘whenever you did it to one of these the least of my brothers and sisters you did to me.’”

Those who commit personal sins live their own punishments; they diminish themselves. No king at the end of time need make special judgments for them. But those who neglect “the least of my brothers and sisters” as part of some national policy neglects these “least” people over and over, again and again, usually with a national ideology obscuring the truth about what is happening. Here the king needs to make a special judgment.

Poem

The man misunderstood

"Don't *cling* to me,"
I am said to have said
to Mary, my friend.
I had to go.
Unless I did,
you wouldn't get
the spirit of it all.
You wouldn't get
the whole point of my life,
or of yours.

So surrender forever
the notion you can own me.
It is enough to remember me
with wine and bread,
where you can taste
the blood-spurting, fleshy
meanings of me.

And please don't reduce me to doctrine
or trivialize me with comfy feelings.
If you want God's kingdom,
dump your images of kings.
If you want God's peace,
let go the hope that war will bring it.

If mythologize me you must,
let the myths *be* myths,
doors to the Unknown.
Don't bury my meanings
in tombs of words taken literally.
If you would explain me with words,
let them be lyrics to music.

So don't cling.
If you want to meet me, then feed the hungry,
free the prisoners, touch your enemies with love.
They are the Unique Particularities
in which Universal Compassion abides,
and where I wait for you.

Tom Keene and the Muse

“Creation needs Congress to act,” bishop tells US senators

by Brian Roewe
Oct 6, 2020

The head of the U.S. bishops' domestic justice office delivered a plea directly to the nation's legislative branch Oct. 1 on behalf of the planet: "Creation needs Congress to act."

Archbishop Paul Coakley's remarks came during a virtual policy briefing the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops held for the co-chairs of the bipartisan Senate Climate Solutions Caucus.

The briefing was intended to mark the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis' social encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home*. But it also expressed the bishops' support for the caucus to its leaders, Sens. Chris Coons, D-Delaware, and Mike Braun, R-Indiana, who along with their staff were among the 300 participants in the virtual conversation.

Coakley, archbishop of Oklahoma City and chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, called the caucus a sign of "good news." He said its bipartisan structure "connects deeply with a Christian view of environmental stewardship" and reflects the type of conversation about environmental challenges that Francis called for in his September 2015 address to Congress.

"The environment, an often-fragile gift, cannot afford to have disagreements and partisan self-interests get in the way of concerted, effective policy and action," Coakley said.

Long-term priority policies, he said, must include climate mitigation strategies, adaptation measures to provide relief for communities around the world already suffering from climate change, and protection for species, biomes and human well-being, particularly for poor and marginalized communities.

"We cannot rely on executive orders that can be rolled back, to protect the environment," the archbishop said. "We need Congress to act. Creation needs Congress to act. And in a bipartisan fashion and for the long term."

Coakley added, "We are in desperate need of good reasoning, good governance and good science, and above all truth for climate policies."

The three years and nine months since President Donald Trump took office have demonstrated the limits of implementing policies by executive order, rather than through legislation.

The Trump administration has worked to undo many environmental regulations and climate policies enacted by President Barack Obama, including withdrawing from the Paris Agreement on climate change, weakening carbon and methane emission regulations, and lowering automobile fuel economy standards. Obama implemented many of those policies by executive order because of the difficulty of pushing climate legislation through the Republican-controlled Congress during his second term.

Braun, a first-term senator, conceded that Republicans have been responsible for the gridlock on climate and environmental legislation.

"There are tons of ideas that are out there that are so good. I'm going to just cut to the chase and say it's a political issue, mostly on my side of the aisle," he said, acknowledging that some members of his party do not accept climate science or they call global warming a hoax.

A former turkey farmer, Braun said he is working to explain to fellow Republicans that "being a conservative and being a conservationist are basically one and the same."

In June, he co-sponsored the Growing Climate Solutions Act, which would help farmers, forest managers and landowners participate in carbon credit markets and encourage sustainable practices that reduce and absorb carbon emissions. Coons added that a long-stalled major Senate energy bill, sponsored by Sens. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) and Joe Manchin (D-West Virginia), cleared a final hurdle in early September.

Braun encouraged participants on the call to contact their elected officials, especially those who are congressional leaders or committee chairs, to express their concern about climate change.

"I'm going to do everything I can. I just invite others to do the same," he said.

Coons added that the faith community "can lift up the urgency" of the long-term consequences of climate change, "which is imminent and present in the experiences of so many around the world here in the short term, as well."

Braun and Coons got to know one another through weekly Senate prayer breakfasts. Coons, the Delaware senator who is part of former Vice President Joe Biden's faith outreach team, said climate change is evident in California's wildfires and the expansion of the desert in Africa's Sahel region.

"Things are changing in our climate," Coons said. "They're changing in a way that is hurting people and hurting creation, and we need to be reminded and called to this service. ... We need a change of heart and we need a change in action among members of Congress, and in particular the Senate."

The briefing, held near the end of the Season of Creation, was originally planned for April as a dinner, but was derailed by lockdowns because of the coronavirus pandemic.

In February, Coakley and Bishop David Malloy, chair of the bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace, wrote a letter of support to the Senate caucus' membership, saying, "This initiative has the opportunity to create enduring policy solutions to address the harmful social and environmental impacts of a changing climate."

The Senate Climate Solutions Caucus formed in 2019, following the creation of a similar caucus in the House of Representatives three years earlier. The Senate version counts 14 of the 100 senators as members.

In both caucuses, membership is limited to an equal number of Democrats and Republicans, often resulting in a waiting list for Democrats as fewer Republicans have expressed interest. In the House, the one-to-one ratio was skewed by the 2018 midterm election, in which roughly half of the caucus' Republican members lost their races, including co-founder Rep. Carlos Curbelo of south Florida.

Besides Braun and Coons, the Senate Climate Solutions Caucus includes Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin), Michael Bennet (D-Colorado), Susan Collins (R-Maine), Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina), Angus King (I-Maine), Murkowski (R-Alaska), Rob Portman (R-Ohio), Mitt Romney (R-Utah), Jacky Rosen (D-Nevada),

Marco Rubio (R-Florida), Jeanne Shaheen (D-New Hampshire) and Debbie Stabenow (D-Michigan).

Coons, Collins, Graham and Shaheen are up for re-election in November.

Along with the U.S. bishops, more than a dozen Catholic organizations, including Catholic Climate Covenant and Catholic Relief Services, have also lent backing to the two climate solutions caucuses. They have supported various bills proposed by the groups' members, including the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act of 2019.

Related: Trump's environmental rollbacks lack 'moral compass,' Catholics say

But the optimism some hold for the two bipartisan caucuses is countered by skepticism in other corners. A February 2018 investigative report by Inside Climate News found that GOP House caucus members averaged a 16% positive environmental rating by the League of Conservation Voters, with all voting to streamline pipeline permits, most voting to repeal methane regulations and few speaking against Trump's move to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Agreement.

Later that year, in July, just four Republican members of the House caucus voted against a mostly symbolic resolution opposing a carbon tax. Those voting records have led some to view the caucus as little more than "greenwashing" or cover for tight re-election campaigns. After the 2018 midterms, the head of the Sierra Club went so far as to call for it to be replaced.

On the Senate side, environmental groups have criticized members, including Braun and Coons, for accepting campaign donations from the fossil fuel industry.

Near the end of the bishops' legislative briefing, representatives of Catholic Charities USA and Catholic Relief Services highlighted the work their organizations are doing to respond to climate change.

Related: US bishops' anti-poverty program puts Laudato Si' into action with \$500,000 grant

Since 2005, Catholic Charities' member agencies have responded to more than 750 weather-related disasters and provided \$140 million in assistance to 5 million people. They also worked with the White House in 2015 to help communities become more resilient to climate-related disasters and extreme weather. As of August, Catholic Charities had also provided \$400 million in emergency aid and services related to the coronavirus pandemic.

The pandemic has complicated Catholic Relief Services' already difficult task of helping vulnerable communities across the globe adapt to climate change. In Madagascar, CRS has prioritized land restoration, such as planting sisal plants in coastal sand dunes, and helped farmers implement climate-resilient practices and identify new income alternatives to burning local forests for charcoal-making.

"This pandemic serves as a terrible reminder that our health and our economies are not independent of the world around us," said Carla Fajardo, CRS country representative for Madagascar.

As for the U.S. church, Coakley repeated prior comments that on *Laudato Si'*, "the good news is still getting out."

He said the U.S. bishops' conference is supporting the Vatican's "Laudato Si' Action Platform," which sets forth a plan for dioceses, schools and other Catholic entities to achieve total sustainability along seven-year timelines. The U.S. bishops' conference was also a partner in this year's Season of Creation.

As for getting the encyclical's message more deeply embedded in the church, Coakley proposed finding ways to integrate it more into existing priest and faith formation programs.

"If we can take some of these concepts that are embedded in and articulated so eloquently in *Laudato Si'*, such as integral ecology that everything is created, we're all related in so many ways, and utilize those teachings within *Laudato Si'* in what we're already doing, I think that would take us a long way," he said.

[Brian Roewe is an NCR staff writer. His email address is broewe@ncronline.org. Follow him on Twitter: [@BrianRoewe](https://twitter.com/BrianRoewe).]

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

Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, International JPIC Committee

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

San Antonio Peace Center

<http://www.sanantoniopace.center>

Texas Catholic Campaign to End the Death Penalty

www.txccedp.org

Dialogue Institute of San Antonio

www.thedialoginstitute.org/san-antonio/

Climate Change

www.creation-care.com

Migrant Center for Human Rights

<https://Migrantcenter.org>

Catholic Books Review

<http://catholicbooksreview.org>