


Testimony
A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating March 8, 2020

Communications with the editor may 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 Liturgical Reading reflections are based on readings for the second Sunday of the Lenten Season. Tom Keene's poem is *Universe at Play*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is a statement on immigration issued February 12, 2020, by Pax Christi Michigan.

Calendar

In Austin

Thursday March 5, 12:30pm-1:30pm, discussion, "Laws Treating a Fetus as a Person and the Woman Less of One." Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. Discussion
article: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/05/opinion/letters/fetus-abortion-law.html>

Monday March 9, 6:30pm, video, *Reconstruction: America After the Civil War* (part 3), Family Life Center, Holy Cross Church, 1110 Concho St.

Sunday March 15 (3rd Sunday of the month), 7:00pm, Pax Christi Austin meeting, Fr. John Payne House, St. Ignatius Catholic Church, 126 W. Oltorf St.

In Dallas

Thursday March 12, 12:00pm-1:30pm, "Who Would Drop the Bomb? Attitudes towards Nuclear Weapons in the United States, Britain, France," Benjamin

Valentino (Dartmouth College). Free, register before March 8 at <https://whozin.com/QKP-YFG-WMEH-MFNX>.

Saturday March 21, 7:00pm-9:00pm, “and You Welcomed Me: A Catholic Meditation on Immigration and Race for a Changing *Community*,” Hosffman Ospino (Boston College). Church of the Incarnation, 1809 Maher Lane, Irving.

Tuesday April 7, 7:00pm, “Ending War.” David Swanson. Peace Chapel at Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road.

In El Paso

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).

Tuesday March 3, 6:45pm, Pax Christi El Paso meeting. All Saints Religious Education Building, 1101 Birch St.

Friday March 6, 6:30pm, presentation by Catholic Relief Services. Pastoral Center, Flores A Room, 499 St. Matthew St.

Sunday March 8, 3:00pm, film *Harriet* (Harriet Tubman). St. Joseph’s School Auditorium; enter through school parking lot across from the church rectory at 1315 Travis St.

Wednesday March 18, 12:00pm-1:00pm, execution vigil in front of the El Paso County Courthouse. (execution scheduled)

Wednesday March 25, 12:00pm-1:00pm, execution vigil in front of the El Paso County Courthouse. (execution scheduled)

Saturday April 4, 8:30am, The Migrant Way of the Cross, with Bishop Seitz. Mount Cristo Rey. Information: Diocesan Peace and Justice Center, 872-8422.

In Houston

Sunday March 8, 9:45am, “Restorative Justice - Bridges to Life,” Gay and John van Osdall. St. Philip Presbyterian Church 201, 4807 San Felipe.

Sunday March 8, 2:30pm-5:30pm, Escalating Resistance: Mass Rebellion Training. Live Oak Friends Meeting House, 1318 W. 26th.

Monday March 9, 11:00am-1:00pm, Income Inequality Reform. Lambo Restaurant, 6159 Westheimer. Information: Jimmydunne80@gmail.com.

Wednesday March 18, 11:45am-1:25pm, lunch and learn dialogue: Racism in K-12 Education. Center for the Healing of Racism, 3412 Crawford St.

Saturday March 21, 6:30am-6:30pm, Dialogue on the Plantation; includes tours of three plantations. Center for the Healing of Racism, 3412 Crawford St.

Thursday March 26, 6:00pm-7:30pm, “Strangers at the Gates: Women, Religion, and Immigration at the Border,” Miguel de la Torre (Iliff School of Theology), Sr. Norma Pimentel (Catholic Charities South Texas), Anne Snyder (*Comment Magazine*). Hudspeth Auditorium, Anderson-Clarke Center, Rice University.

Friday March 27, 11:30am-7:30pm, Impact Investing conference: climate change track and faith-based investing track. Keynote speaker: Beth Collins (Catholic Relief Services). University of St. Thomas, 3800 Montrose Blvd. \$49.59 includes lunch; use promo code TIA2020. Tickets: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/annual-impact-investing-conference-tickets-92260717289>

In San Antonio

Monday March 2, 3:30, film *O’Keefe—A Portrait of an Artist*. Christus Heritage Hall, The Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway.

Tuesday March 3, 6:30pm-8:30pm, “The Legacy of Hate: How the Holocaust Still Haunts Us,” Roger Barnes. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook), \$5. Register at <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration/>.

Wednesday March 4, 7:00pm-9:30pm, “Heeding the Cal” (in the aftermath of the abuse crisis), Carolyn Woo (Purdue University, former director Catholic Relief Services). Conference Room A, University Center, St. Mary’s University, One Camino Santa Maria.

Saturday March 7, 10:00am, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting. Residence of Tom Wakely, 16406 Ledge Point St.

Sunday March 8, 3:30pm, book signing Renny Golden, *The Music of Her Rivers*, and presentation, "The Intersection of Social and Environmental Justice." Christus Heritage Hall, The Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway.

Tuesday March 17, 6:30, "Towards a Texas Nantahala: A Proposal for the Guadalupe River, from New Braunfels to Gonzales," Gib Hafernicks, sponsored by the Sierra Club. Eco Centro, 1802 N. Main.

Wednesday March 18, 12:00pm-1:00pm, execution vigil, across the street from the Bexar County Courthouse.

Saturday March 21 (3rd Saturday of the month), 11:00am, reflection and prayer service at the paupers' cemetery in southwest Bexar County. Contact Arthur Dawes, 210-213-5919, arthurdawes@att.net.

Tuesday March 24, 7:00pm-9:00pm, "Creating an Ally," Miriam Sobre and Jake Erney. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook), \$15. Register at <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration/>

Wednesday March 25, 12:00pm-1:00pm, execution vigil, across the street from the Bexar County Courthouse.

Thursday March 26, 7:30pm-9:30pm, "My Evolution as an Economist," Richard Thaler. Stieren Theatre, Trinity University, One Trinity Place.

Saturday March 28, 1:30pm, film *Beatrix Farrand's American Landscape*. Christus Heritage Hall, The Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway.

Second Reading (2 Timothy 1:8b-10)

Just reading this excerpt out of context can leave one unsure of what it is about. The three Pastoral Epistles are in reality one work in triptych form by an unknown author. *First Timothy* and *Titus* are "church order" statements for

particular early congregations; *Second Timothy*, however, is a testamentary statement, charging “Timothy” to continue “Paul’s” work. “So do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me, His prisoner, but join in suffering for the good news about the power of God, Who was saving and calling us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own resolve and gift that He gave us in Messiah Jesus before all ages, but made manifest now through the manifestation of our savior Messiah Jesus, making death powerless and bringing into the light life and immortality through the good news, for which I was appointed herald, apostle, and teacher.”

Third Reading (Matthew 17:1-9)

Matthew takes over the Transfiguration narrative from Mark’s gospel. Mark had alluded to Moses ascending the mountain to meet the Lord: “And six days later Jesus, taking Peter, James, and John with him, brought them to a high mountain by themselves” (Mark 9:2). “Then Moses went up on the mountain... (Exodus 24:15). Matthew adds a description of Jesus’ transformed appearance that specifically cites the episode of God giving the terms of the Covenant to Moses: “...and his face shone like the sun...” (Matthew 17:2); “when Moses came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God” (Exodus 34:29). Matthew, who addressed his gospel to a Jewish Christian community, was clearly indicating that the covenant was being changed as Jesus was being changed. And what was the change? “And Jesus came forth and touching them said, ‘Arise and fear not.’ And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus himself...”

The new covenant is not reserved to some glorious theophany far removed from mere mortals. For sure, the glory and reserve had—and still have—a significance, but Jesus chose to touch his followers in an ordinary way. Yes, the glorious Resurrection was to come, and the truth that was to be communicated would be incomplete without the glorious Resurrection. However, the communication would be equally incomplete without the ordinary earthly touch.

Not too many years ago linguists debated the language of the liturgy. “The Lord be with you”; “And also with you” *versus* “and with your spirit.” The former response is a reciprocation of the call for God to be among those gathered in His name; it was a call for God to be working in the ministry of the celebrant. The latter response is—well, I must admit that I never have comprehended what it is

supposed to communicate, and perhaps the obscurity is the point, not unlike the cloud in the Transfiguration narrative.

Homilies, which come after the gospel reading, need to touch the followers of Jesus in an ordinary earthly way. Homiletical Docetism, a tendency to reserve the significance of the gospel to a distant realm of spirits and phantoms, can be a genuine problem. The Messiah of Christianity was a human addressing the anxieties of a human world; he was not a phantom messiah.

Poem

Universe at play

Evolving
in its own good time,
then, now, yet to be,

to let us savor,
one by one, each
tiny fraction of its all,

the whole of it
exciting its parts,

messing around
-trial and error-
a game, blind man's buff,

feeling its way to finesse
galaxies that dance,
horizons that call,

ourselves
scribbling stories,
raising cathedrals,
nursing babies.

Tom Keene
November 2, 2015



PAX CHRISTI MICHIGAN STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION

From the moment Donald Trump announced his entry into the 2016 presidential race in June 2015, he has revealed deep-seated religious discrimination and blatant racism. After he became president, two attempts to ban Muslims from the U.S. were invalidated by lower courts. Nevertheless, a third version of the ban, applicable to 5 majority-Muslim nations, was upheld by the Supreme Court in June 2018. In January 2020, the administration extended the ban to additional nations. In response, Democrats in the House of Representatives are considering a “NO BAN Act” that would repeal the travel ban and limit the president from imposing future restrictions based upon religion.

As he announced his candidacy, Trump stated *“When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best ... They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists.”* Thus began a campaign of cruelty against Mexican and Central American migrants.

For decades, asylum seekers have arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border for reasons like economic scarcity, war, gang violence, and persecution. More recently, turmoil has become particularly acute in the “Northern Triangle” nations, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

The president responded by threatening to build a wall along the Mexican border, and in February 2019 announced he would utilize funds appropriated for other purposes to construct the wall. In April 2018, a “zero-tolerance” policy was

adopted to deter illegal immigration. Under the policy, thousands of children were separated from their families, with the adults prosecuted and held in federal jails. In fact, family separation began well before the policy was announced, but no provision had been made to reunite separated families. The policy officially ended in June 2018. However, a House committee reported that by October 2019, more than 1,000 *additional children* had been separated from their families.

Other measures, aimed at drastically reducing immigration, have been initiated or significantly increased, including: an attempt to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA) that provides legal protection for young people who come to the U.S. as children – the issue is now awaiting a Supreme Court decision; “Metering,” that is, severely limiting the number of people who can request asylum at a port of entry each day; “Migrant Protection Protocols,” requiring asylum seekers to return to Mexico to await the often long delayed start of the asylum process; a July 2019 “Asylum Transit Ban,” eliminating asylum for those entering at the U.S.-Mexico border who “transit” through another country after leaving their home; the July 2019 intensification in enforcement of “Expedited Removal,” by which low-level immigration officers deny entry and/or physically remove asylum seekers without the normal removal process involving hearings before an immigration judge; an increase in prosecutions, including targeting people like Scott Warren of the immigrant advocacy group No Mas Muertes (No More Deaths), who was acquitted in November 2019 for providing humanitarian aid to migrants; and, new “wealth test” rules – affirmed by the Supreme Court in January 2020 – making it easier to deny immigrants residency or admission to the U.S. because they have used, or might use, public-assistance programs.

These measures have had a devastating impact. As Pax Christi USA Bishop President John Stowe has noted, “There has been one chapter after another of serious atrocities intentionally perpetrated on some of the most vulnerable people: family separation, loss of children in custody, two dozen deaths in ICE (Immigration & Customs Enforcement) custody since 2017, children in cages, living under bridges in extreme temperatures, shielded from public view, assaulted and brutalized, underfed and without facilities for bathing or hygiene. Now we have raids targeting families who have fled situations of danger from gang violence, drug trafficking, and economic desperation, and changing rules about who qualifies for asylum right as people are fleeing for their lives.”

Pax Christi Michigan (PCM) deplores the cruelty, intolerance and racism readily apparent in the words, actions and immigration policies of President

Trump and other members of his administration. As Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego has observed, “Our government has weaponized fear – the fear being sown within our nation that refugees ... have now become the enemy; and the even more reprehensible fear being unleashed on the hearts and souls of immigrant mothers and fathers that they will be separated from their children purely as an act of intimidation.”

In the clearest possible language, Jesus instructs us to welcome immigrants, “I was a stranger and you invited me in.” Today, when powerful forces in our nation urge anti-immigrant fear and deny help to the most vulnerable immigrants, it is our obligation to live our faith fearlessly. We must see support for aliens in our midst as an opportunity to model for fellow Americans, especially those who do not share our faith, the love and beauty at the core of the Gospels.

Echoing the Gospel challenge, Pope Francis has repeatedly urged that we “look to build bridges between people, bridges that allow us to break down the walls of exclusion and exploitation.” Furthermore, “You cannot be a Christian without living like a Christian. You cannot be a Christian without practicing the Beatitudes. You cannot be a Christian without doing what Jesus teaches us in Matthew 25. It’s hypocrisy to call yourself a Christian and chase away a refugee or someone seeking help, someone who is hungry or thirsty, toss out someone who is in need of my help. If I say I am Christian, but do these things, I’m a hypocrite ... All nations must focus on service to the poorest, the sick, those who have abandoned their homelands in search of a better future for themselves and their families. In putting ourselves at the service of the neediest, we will experience that we already are united; it is God’s mercy that unites us.”

Accordingly, PCM encourages our members and others to support the rights of asylum seekers, migrants and immigrants by urging Congress to: end family separation and the mistreatment of immigrant children; investigate and prevent additional deaths of immigrants in Customs and Border Patrol custody; provide adequate food, clothing, shelter and medical care for all immigrants as the legal process unfolds; provide access to attorneys for asylum seekers and assure that asylum claims be processed promptly and justly; and, by means of legislative action, reverse the unjust immigration policies and practices of the Trump administration.

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

NowCastSA

www.nowcastsa.com/