


Testimony
A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating March 15, 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 Third Sunday of the Lenten Season. Tom Keene's poem is *Memo to Water*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is "Integral Ecology Requires a Larger 'Seamless Garment,'" by Daniel P. Horan, a Franciscan and assistant professor of systematic theology and spirituality at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Rev. Horan has generously granted permission for republication; it originally appeared in the online *National Catholic Reporter* of February 19, 2020.

Calendar

In Austin

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.

Saturday March 28, 9:00am-12:00pm, "5 Myths on Immigration." McCord Community Center 201, Austin Presbyterian Seminary, 100 E. 27th St.

Tuesday April 2, 5:00pm-6:30pm, Mark Graves (Fuller Theological Seminary), "AI, Ethics, and Human Flourishing." Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress.

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).

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

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

Wednesday March 11, 4:15pm-6:00pm, Dan Zahavi (U. of Copenhagen), “Empathy, Alterity, and Morality.” Humanities Building 227, Rice University.

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.

Sunday March 22, 9:45am, "Church & Society Series: The 2020 Census." St. Philip Presbyterian Church 201, 4807 San Felipe.

Tuesday March 24, 5:30pm, reception, 6:30pm-8:00pm lecture, Joan Roughgarden (Stanford University), "The Gender Binary in Nature, Across Human Cultures, and in the bible." Kyle Morrow Room, 3rd floor, Fondren Library, Rice University.

Thursday March 26, 6:00pm-7:30pm, "Strangers at the Gates: Women, Religion, and Immigration at the Border," Miguel de la Torre (Ilf 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 16, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Derek Wilson (St. Philip's College), "'There are few, if any, non-neighbors left,' An Invitation to Communities of Faith." Campus of the San Antonio Jewish Community, 12500 NW Military.

Tuesday March 17, 6:30, "Towards a Texas Nantahala: A Proposal for the Guadalupe River, from New Braunfels to Gonzales," Gib Hafernick, 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, Lazarus ministry: 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, 10:00am-12:30pm, 24th Annual Cesar E. Chavez March for Justice. Assemble at intersection of S. Brazos & Guadalupe. Bus service from end to beginning of the route.

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

Second Reading (Romans 5:1-2, 5-8)

The reading is an excerpt from Paul’s teaching that humans are justified by the faith of Jesus, who kept to his mission even to the point of death for us, despite our failings. Consequently ultimate peace with God is a grace, not something we have earned. The reading leaves out verses 3 and 4, which balance the unearned quality of peace with God with what of value could arise among us as a result of the faith of the Messiah: “But we boast not only in that but also in afflictions, seeing that affliction produces endurance and endurance produces character, and character hope...” There is hope on the part of humans as well as faithfulness on the part of the Messiah.

Third Reading (John 4:5-42)

The Lenten readings include some highly symbolic passages from the Johannine Gospel, one of which is the narrative of “the woman at the well.” Since ancient times, people have understood the Johannine Gospel to have different levels of meaning and as being more “spiritual” than the others. So while the Samaritan woman at the well has been taken to be a type for repentance and conversion, there is also much else that is to be found in the narrative.

“Give me some to drink.” The water is from Jacob’s well, a source that was there from the beginning for both Samaritans and Jews. Despite their common water source, however, Samaritans and Jews would not even discuss giving one another refreshment from that common source. Today one might speak of Palestinians and Israelis, or of “illegals” and people who think of themselves as un-hyphenated Americans.

“If you recognized the gift of God and who it is saying to you, ‘Give me some to drink....’” This is obviously not a historical quotation; Jesus was not so crude a person as to dwell upon his own importance. Rather this is the way the Johannine Gospel presents the insight also found in Chapter 25 of the gospel of Matthew—that a work of mercy done for the least of those who inhabit the world with us is done for Jesus the Messiah himself. Whatever we do to the Palestinian or the Israeli, to the “illegal,” to the Muslim, or whomever—we are doing it to Jesus the Messiah. To ban the “undocumented” is tantamount to prohibiting the sacrament of the Real Presence!

“Give me some to drink” is the opportunity to exchange ordinary water for living water. “Everyone who drinks from this water will thirst again, but whoever should drink from the water that I will give will never thirst again...” There is a lasting satisfaction in refreshing the alien.

“Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you Judean people say the place where it is necessary to worship is in Jerusalem.” The day will yet come when the worship will be “neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.” For the Samaritans to insist on their mountain betrays a lack of understanding. By implication, even though the Messiah is linked to Jerusalem, to insist on that mountain represents a comparable lack of understanding. “God is a spirit,” and it is necessary for those worshiping God to do so in spirit and truth.

Poem

Memo to water

Mostly water,
these bodies of ours are,
so, the chemists say.
As is our earth,
geographers say.

It's the life blood of life,
biologists say.

So, when, immersed in thirst,
we feel how you flood mouth, gullet, and gut,
and how you become us and we become you,
what are you trying to tell us?

Tom Keene
January 4, 2014

Integral ecology requires a larger 'seamless garment'

Feb 19, 2020

by Daniel P. Horan

Last September, I wrote a column in which I argued that "climate change is the most important life issue today." Since reading Pope Francis' latest apostolic exhortation, *Querida Amazonia*, which was published Feb. 12, I have been thinking of that column and the arguments I proposed in it.

In brief, I insisted that the rising global climate catastrophe is the most important life issue because it is uniquely threatening to *every kind of life* on the planet. Defense of the unborn, the infirmed, the disabled, marginalized communities, or anybody else is pointless if the very condition of the possibility for life at all is destroyed!

At the time, some people reacted strongly to my point, claiming that in the United States' context the most important life issue ought to be abortion and that topic alone. Those who espouse such a myopic view of what constitutes a "pro-life position" might have also felt emboldened two months later by the U.S. bishops' conference's similarly shortsighted inclusion of the descriptor "preeminent" to describe the church's anti-abortion stance during discussions around the bishops' voter's guide.

And it is my guess that the same group of people are not particularly interested in hearing what Francis had to say following the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon, especially since their subject of choice doesn't make an appearance.

But *Querida Amazonia* is a deeply pro-life text. Among other topics, it builds on the central theme of Francis' 2015 encyclical letter, "*Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home*," which is the notion of "integral ecology."

Francis states this clearly in the opening of his recent exhortation: "I wish merely to propose a brief framework for reflection that can apply concretely to the life of the Amazon region a *synthesis* of some of the larger concerns that I have expressed in earlier documents, and that can help guide us to a harmonious, creative and fruitful reception of the entire synodal process."

He explains that he is "addressing the present Exhortation to the whole world," because what is seen in the pan-Amazon region is illustrative for what already is or will be experienced across the globe.

Returning to *Laudato Si'*, we see how the notion of integral ecology governs the internal logic of this magisterial teaching. While a full exploration of the concept and its implications surfaces in the fourth of six major chapters of the encyclical, the theme of "everything is connected" appears at the outset and is echoed throughout. The pope critiques the tendency many Christians have to compartmentalize their faith and moral imaginations, arbitrarily separating themselves and their personal interests from those of the broader human and nonhuman communities.

In response, Francis makes a holistic argument about integral ecology, adverting to the Catholic truism of "both/and" reasoning, stating: "Since everything is closely interrelated, and today's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an *integral ecology*, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions."

Given that *Laudato Si'* is officially part of the church's social teaching, its insights and lessons have bearing on how we view social order, politics, scientific inquiry, theological reflection and moral norms. To talk about an integral ecology in this light is to reiterate the interconnectedness of all human persons to one another and our inextricable place within a singular cosmic web of creation.

Francis explains in *Laudato Si'*:

It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected. Time and space are not independent of one another, and not even atoms or subatomic particles can be considered in isolation. Just as the different aspects of the planet — physical, chemical and biological — are interrelated, so too living species are part of a network which we will never fully explore and understand. A good part of our genetic code is shared by many living beings. It follows that the

fragmentation of knowledge and the isolation of bits of information can actually become a form of ignorance, unless they are integrated into a broader vision of reality.

A true sense of interconnectedness suggests that one cannot merely select a single ethical issue in isolation as if it were unrelated to all others. For instance, to focus on abortion in isolation, calling it the "preeminent" issue, does not adequately reflect the church's teaching on an integral ecological approach. Such approaches reject the church's call for a "broader vision of reality." As insidious and horrifying as some particular threats to human life are, such sins and crimes against humanity always already exist within a broader context that must also be considered.

As I outlined last September, narrowly defined defenses against this or that part of the human population are futile if there is no habitable planet — "our common home" — on which such lives can flourish. The global climate catastrophe we face today, caused and exacerbated by human activity, is the most pressing life issue because it threatens not just one vulnerable or marginalized part of humanity, but it threatens the life of all human and nonhuman creatures.

In light of the church's teaching on integral ecology and the inherent dignity and value of all life, I believe it worthwhile to return to a principle made popular by the late Chicago Cardinal Joseph Bernardin — namely, the "consistent ethic of life."

Bernardin used this term in his now-famous 1983 lecture on the topic at Fordham University, stating, "I am convinced that the pro-life position of the Church must be developed in terms of a comprehensive and consistent ethic of life."

The context in which Bernardin articulated this call was the threat of nuclear annihilation, commenting as he did on the then-recently published pastoral letter from the U.S. bishops' conference titled "The Challenge of Peace."

Just three months after delivering his lecture at Fordham, he spoke at St. Louis University and described the "seamless garment" metaphor, borrowing the image from the Passion narrative about Jesus' cloak that was not divided and for which the guards cast lots. Like that garment, a Catholic pro-life ethic must be envisioned as a singular whole, constituted by all the particular issues that threaten life, but grounded in something more fundamental and consistent.

While nuclear annihilation sadly remains a real possibility, there exists today an even greater threat to all life and it is the active destruction of this planet.

When Bernardin spoke in the 1980s about the seamless garment approach to Catholic moral theology, recognizing the necessity of a consistent ethic of life, the primary emphasis was on the universal value and dignity of human life. It was certainly a comprehensive approach, one that improved on the à la carte style of most "pro-lifers" who pick and choose their issue of choice. However, it did not focus attention on the more fundamental life issue that we recognize today in terms of "our common home."

Today, with *Laudato Sí* and *Querida Amazonia* added to the universal teaching of the church, we have an opportunity to enlarge the seamless garment, redesigning it to accommodate the full panoply of life issues connected to each other as understood according to an "integral ecology." Not only does "pro-life" mean embracing the seamless garment, but it also requires that our concern for and protection of life be shaped by an integral ecology, which recognizes that "everything is connected" and nothing is meant to be treated in isolation.

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/