

Testimony 
A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating March 29, 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 Fifth Sunday of the Lenten Season. Tom Keene's poem is *We Bodies*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the poem there is a statement by numerous European and international organizations on the treatment of refugees, mostly from violence in Syria. One can make similar observations about much that the United States government does to refugees at our southern border, mostly from Central America.

There are many televised or live-streamed Sunday masses as well as prayer services of various religious traditions. I have many memories from Sacred Heart Basilica at the University of Notre Dame, which had student masses in the main sanctuary and the masses of Sacred Heart parish in a crypt. The main Sunday mass is live-streamed at 9:00am central time and is available online afterwards: www.catholictv.org/masses/notre-dame-mass. The daily masses are live-streamed at 10:30 central time at <https://campusministry.nd.edu/mass-worship/basilica-of-the-sacred-heart/watch-mass/special-masses/>. Also worth sampling are the daily masses from Bishop Robert Barron's chapel, available at <https://wordonfire.org/daily-mass>.

Bishop Barron has an interesting reflection on the Coronavirus Quarantine: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_VJhBBqE5Y.

Calendar

All events involving a gathering of ten or more people in the month of March have been canceled because of the global pandemic.

In Dallas

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).

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

Friday April 10, 12:00pm, Good Friday Walk for Justice Stations of the Cross, organized by Pax Christi, Houston. City Hall, 901 Bagby Street.

In San Antonio

Tuesday March 24, 6:00pm-8:00pm, online meeting, Caring for Creation, an urgent invitation to all of us from Pope Francis. In this fifth anniversary year of Pope Francis’ urgent invitation to care for creation, *Laudato Si*, we gather to discuss what progress we have made and how important it is to organize and do more. While this discussion has been initiated by the Catholic Archdiocesan Task Force to promote *Laudato Si* in parishes, it is also for any person of faith who wishes to deepen in spirituality and action in the face of climate change and environmental degradation. Register now <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/respond-to-the-popes-invitation-to-care-for-creation-tickets-99841117470> and get directions how to join the on-line ZOOM meeting March 24, 6 to 8 pm. Contact kirk@uiwtx.edu.

Second Reading (Romans 8:8-11)

In his *Letter to the Romans* Paul argues that observance of religious law does not save because it is part of the world. Because of the inability of the law to save, God entered the world. Paul would have Christians pay attention not to the world but to what would break with the world. “But if Messiah is among you, though the body be dead through sin the spirit is alive through justice. But if the spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead dwells among you, He Who raised Messiah from the dead will enliven your mortal bodies too, through his spirit dwelling among you” (Romans 8:10-11).

Third Reading (John 11:1-45)

In this part of the Catholic liturgical calendar, the assigned Sunday readings are lengthy. The meanings that the symbolism in the readings call to mind are often self-evident and require no explanation. The selection for the Fifth Sunday of Lent is a case in point. It features Martha, industriously preparing the household for the mourning rituals on the occasion of the death of Lazarus as well as preparing the household for the visit of Jesus, her sister Mary whose emotion and weeping lead Jesus to weep as well, and Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Repetitions and breaks in the story suggest that three early Christian legends had been edited together to form the narrative as we now have it. Here, I will leave the images that the legends present to speak for themselves.

The introduction to this part of the Johannine Gospel is an interesting one. The two sisters in Bethany, a Judean village, send word to Jesus, who had taken refuge “beyond the Jordan,” in the wilderness beyond the place that John the Baptist used to conduct his ministry: “Sir, the one whom you love is ailing.” Jesus procrastinates two days; the Judean authorities posed a real threat to him. Finally, he makes his decision: “Let us go back to Judea.”

“Rabbi, the Judeans are seeking to stone you now, and you are going back there?”

“Are there not twelve hours of daylight? If people walk in the day, they will not stumble because they see the light of the world. But if people walk in the night, they stumble because the light is not in it.” He had decided not to hide in the “darkness.”

Light is a symbol known throughout the world for mental insight and knowledge in general. Darkness is a similar symbol for ignorance, including willful ignorance. It is often “safe” to play dumb, to ignore truths that anger powerful authorities. But the narrative has Jesus decide that he will go about in the daylight, and if there are people who want to do him harm he would let them do so and reveal themselves for what they are—reveal themselves to others and perhaps even to themselves.

Why are evil deeds evident in the world? Sometimes it is because people stop hiding themselves and thereby stop hiding the unseen evil that propels such deeds.

Poem

We Bodies

We lungs, taking in-letting out
precious air,
We hearts,
drawing in, pumping out,
living blood,

working as one,
skin and skeleton,
muscles and nerves,
cells in trillions,
knowing and aware
of what we do
and how to do it,
in moment to moment celebration,
yearning for one thing only:
 appreciation.

Tom Keene and Muse
March 9, 2020

"Protect our laws and humanity!" Open Letter by 85 Organizations

To:

Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, Kyriakos Mitsotakis
President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli
President of the European Council, Charles Michel
President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen

Athens, 6 March 2020 –The undersigned organisations are deeply concerned about recent developments at the Evros border and the Aegean islands where people are stranded at the borders of Europe, instrumentalized for political purposes, and subject to violations of their rights. We are also deeply concerned about the way the authorities of Greece and the European Union are handling new arrivals. Equally alarming are the extreme actions by security forces against

refugees and by civilians against staff of human rights and humanitarian organizations. We would also like to point out that the climate of panic and rhetoric of 'asymmetric threat' –also promoted by the authorities–does not reflect reality and seriously affects not only vulnerable refugees-but also our society and the rule of law as a whole.

Specifically: We firmly express our opposition to the recent decisions of the Greek Governmental Council on Foreign Affairs and Defense (KYSEA), and in particular the adoption of the Emergency Legislative Decree, which stipulates the suspension of the right to seek asylum for all people entering the country and their return without registration, to their countries of origin or transit. Applying such a regulatory provision is inhumane and illegal as it violates the fundamental principle of *non-refoulement*, incurs international responsibilities for Greece and endangers human lives. It is beyond dispute that Greece has the sovereign competence to control its borders and to manage any crossings there. Nevertheless, the right to seek asylum is a fundamental human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

We also denounce the attacks on organizations that defend human rights and humanitarian organizations, noting that without the support of these organizations, the refugee management system in Greece would collapse. In addition, solidarity has been stigmatized and become the target of suspicion, which has been also exacerbated by members of the Government, fomenting violence and lawlessness in society in general. We denounce any statements, actions or policies that foment or tolerate bigotry.

We call upon the Greek Government to:

- **Withdraw the illegal and unconstitutional Emergency Legislative Decree** and to respect the obligations of the Greek State concerning the protection of human life and rescue at sea and at the land borders.
- Immediately stop returning people to states where their lives and freedom are at risk, or where they are at risk of being subjected to torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

- **Immediately alleviate overcrowding on the islands by relocating asylum seekers to the mainland, protecting their well-being and health.** Priority should be given to the most vulnerable, unaccompanied minors and families with children.

- Take the necessary measures to protect every person from acts of violence, victimization and racism.

We recall that the EU should assume substantial responsibilities for the protection of people on the move in a manner that demonstrates respect for human dignity and lawfulness and as a matter of shared responsibility among EU member states in the context of managing what is, first and foremost, a European issue. The right to asylum and the respect for the principle of *non-refoulement* are fundamental elements of international and EU law and therefore the authorities of the European Union must take the necessary measures for their protection.

Therefore:

- **The European Commission, as the guardian of the Treaties,** should protect the right to asylum as enshrined in EU law. Therefore, it should reverse the “aspida (shield)” rhetoric used by Greece and urge it to assume its legal obligations.

- EU Member States should re-establish immediately the **mechanisms for the relocation of refugees and asylum seekers from Greece** to other Member States, in a fair and rational manner, with priority given to unaccompanied children. EU Member States should increase resettlement of refugees directly from Turkey.

- EU Member States and institutions should revise the EU-Turkey Statement, which –in addition to legal lacunae– has now proven to be an unpredictable and unsustainable political tool for border management.

In closing, we call on all sides to respect the law and safeguard European democratic values. Any further backsliding will have major consequences on European societies, European democracy and the rule of law.

List of Signatories

ACTIONAIDHELLAS
ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL
ACTIONAID ITALIA
ADDART(Greece)
AITIMA (Greece)
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
ANTIGONE(Greece)
ARSIS –ASSOCIATION FOR THE SUPPORT OF YOUTH(Greece)
ASSOCIATION FOR INTEGRATION AND MIGRATION (Czech Republic)
ASSOCIATION FOR LEGAL INTERVENTION(Poland)
ASOCIACIÓN POR TI MUJER (Spain)
BABEL DAY CENTER (Greece)
CARITAS HELLAS
CENTRE DIOTIMA(Greece)
CHANGE MAKERS LAB(Greece)
CHILD AND YOUTH CARE ASSOCIATION (SMAN)(Greece)
DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL (DRC)
DEFENCE FOR CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL GREECE
DUTCH COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES (DCR)
ECOLOGICAL MOVEMENT OF THESSALONIKI (Greece)
ECHO100PLUS(Greece)
EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION (Greece)
ELIX (Greece)
END FGM EUROPEAN NETWORK
EPAPSY (Greece)
EQUAL RIGHTS BEYOND BORDERS (Greece)
EUROPEAN ANTIPOVERTY NETWORK (EAPN)
EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON REFUGEES AND EXILES (ECRE)
FIX IN ART (Greece)
FORENSIC ARCHITECTURE (Greece)
FUNDACION CEPAIM (Spain)
GENERATION 2.0 RED (Greece)
GREEK COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES (GCR)
GREEK FORUM OF MIGRANTS
GREEK FORUM OF REFUGEES
GREEK NETWORK FOR THE RIGHT TO SHELTER AND HOUSING

HELLENIC ANTIPOVERTY NETWORK
HELLENIC LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (HLHR)
HELP REFUGEES / CHOOSE LOVE
HIAS GREECE
HUMANRIGHTS 360(Greece)
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH
IMMIGRANT COUNCIL OF IRELAND
INITIATIVE FOR THE DETAINEES' RIGHTS (Greece)
INTER ALIA (Greece)
INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE (IRC)
INTERSOS HELLAS
IRISH ANTIPOVERTY NETWORK
LEGAL CENTRE LESVOS (Greece)
LEROS SOLIDARITY NETWORK (Greece)
LESVOS SOLIDARITY (Greece)
MED.IN MEDICAL INTERVENTION (Greece)
MEDECINS DU MONDE –GREECE (MDM -GREECE)
MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES –GREECE (MSF –GREECE)
MELISSA NETWORK (Greece)
METADRASI (Greece)
NETWORK FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS (Greece)
OMNES (Greece)
ORGANIZATION EARTH (Greece)
OXFAM
PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL (Belgium)
PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION ON UNDOCUMENTED
MIGRANTS (PICUM)
PRAKSIS (Greece)
RED ACOGE (Spain)
REFUGEE LEGAL SUPPORT(RLS) (Greece)
REFUGEE RIGHTS EUROPE (RRE)
REFUGEE SUPPORT AEGEAN (RSA)
REFUGEE TRAUMA INITIATIVE (Greece)
SAFE PASSAGE INTERNATIONAL
SCHEDIA STIN POLI –ARTISTIC PEDAGOGIC YOUTH ORGANIZATION (Greece)
SEA OF SOLIDARITY(Greece)
SERVICE CIVIL INTERNATIONAL-HELLAS

SOLIDARITYNOW (Greece)
SOS RACISMO (Spain)
STATE OFCONCEPT (Greece)
STIL-UTRECHT (Netherlands)
SYMBIOSIS-SCHOOL OF POLITICAL STUDIES (Greece)
SYNDICAT INTERPROFESSIONNEL DE TRAVAILLEUSES ET TRAVAILLEURS (SIT)
(Switzerland)
TERRE DES HOMMES HELLAS
THE HOME PROJECT (Greece)
THESSALONIKI PRIDE (Greece)
THESS DICTIO –VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS’ NETWORK OF THESSALONIKI
(Greece)
TRANSGENDER SUPPORT ASSOCIATION (Greece)
VICTORIA SQUARE PROJECT (Greece)
WORLD WITHOUT WARS AND VIOLENCE (Greece)

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.sanantoniopeace.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/