

Testimony 
A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating April 5, 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 Palm Sunday. Tom Keene's poem is *The Little Soul*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is the text of a letter sent to the New York City Council last January endorsing measures to divest from the nuclear weapons industry and establishing a nuclear-free zone advisory committee.

Today (March 29), Al Eisch wrote and sent out a reflection on today's gospel. He gave permission to include it in the newsletter:

LAZARUS.....

I HAVE several questions that go through my head. How did Jesus get to know these three sisters and brother? I assume he must have eaten with them at least once. Did Lazarus ever accompany Jesus along with other disciples? Was he ever one of the 70 sent out to prepare a town for Jesus? How did they get to know each other? Was Jesus just passing through the town and stopped at their door? Or did one of them, like Zacchaeus, look down from a tree or the second floor? Why didn't Jesus enter their house and wait outside the town? How did they become such good friends unless they spent a lot of free time together? We already know what is going to happen and we are almost at Easter Sunday morning so I have a bit of mixed feelings... this is not going to turn out well for Jesus as Jerusalem is just two miles away and the news will travel fast. Did Jesus stay with these three after Lazarus' clothes are untied? What was Lazarus' first, second and third question to Jesus afterwards? Did the apostles hug Lazarus and did the apostles also have a ton of questions?

Does Jesus feel the same way about me? Have I had him in my house for a meal? Have I given Him a substantial meal when I see Him in rags or under a bridge, or stuck at the border? Have I spend spent much time just sitting in silence as Mary did not asking Him questions but contemplating his continuous goodness towards me and mine? Would he come to my grave and SHOUT – COME OUT? How have I developed a relationship with Him, an intimate caring about His poor that He might take notice of my efforts? Have I used this Lent to cultivate more intimacy? What stops me from just sitting with Him? What stops me from sacrificing more of my time, money and talents to benefit His beloved poor? Do I see a system that maintains the poor, non-whites, American Indians & other religions as a second-class groups to keep us whites still on top? What would Lazarus teach me if I asked him all those larger questions? Would Lazarus just answer me as tell me to sit down and have a beer/wine with Jesus and forget about the larger socio/political questions? Was Lazarus at the foot of the Cross with his sister or there when they place Jesus in the tomb? Lazarus... teach me how you became so special to Jesus?

Calendar

Events in Texas cities 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. Originally scheduled for the Peace Chapel at Cathedral of Hope, this has been changed to a webinar due to the pandemic. No charge. Details and RSVP:

<https://limitlesslife.wordpress.com/2020/03/24/free-webinar-david-swanson-on-ending-war/>

In El Paso

Wednesday, April 1, 7am - 3pm, **Thursday - Saturday April 2-4**, 7am - 8pm, Take out red-cheese enchilada plate fund raiser for Isaiah House of El Paso, a faith based transition home for men coming out of prison. To buy tickets or to pick up tickets for your group, ministry, family...call Ana Mota at 494-4180 or Pat Delgado

740-3962. Note: Please call ahead to place your order (due to current circumstances). This is a great opportunity to support Isaiah House, and enjoy a meal in your home!

Second Reading (Philippians 2:6-11)

The reading is the text of an early Christian hymn, and it is a favorite passage of many. “Who beginning in the form of God/ Did not deem being equal to God something to seize upon....” Paul cites this hymn in the context of arguing against clericalism. The letter actually addresses a local problem of two rival leaders. He called upon them to do “nothing from factionalism or vain glory, but with humility holding one another as leaders over yourselves, not looking after each one’s own interests but those of each other” (Philippians 2:3-5). He then asks the Christians to think upon the Messiah, Jesus:

“Who beginning in the form of God
Did not deem being equal to God something to seize upon,
But emptied himself, assuming the form of a slave,
By becoming a human likeness.
And being found in figure as a human.
He humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death,
Even the death of the cross.
And therefore God exalted him and favored him
With the name above every name....

Gospel Readings (Matthew 21:1-11, Matthew 26:14-66)

There are two gospel readings on Palm Sunday. The first one precedes a procession with palms at the beginning of the service. The second is a lengthy one within the service itself. Both have the people physically enact what the readings narrate. Matthew 21:1-14 narrates Jesus entering Jerusalem amidst a celebratory welcome, with the populace waving palm branches. (The palm branches indicated an opening to symbolic goods from afar, since palm trees did not grow in mountain cities such as Jerusalem.) The congregation stands outside the church for the reading and then, palm branches in hand, processes into the church. Matthew 26:14-66 is a lengthy narrative of the arrest, trial, and execution of Jesus, which calls to mind all that contrasts what is celebrated in the narrative of

the parade with palm branches. Even when the congregation is advised to sit through the reading, rather than stand as usual, the effect required to focus for the duration can be fatiguing. The fatigue calls to mind the suffering of the Passion, as well as the many passions to be found in the world.

There are many provocative scenes in these readings, each one deserving of a meditation. I want to focus here on the very first one, which rarely receives attention: “Jesus sent two disciples, telling them, ‘Go into the village which is opposite you, and straightway you will find a she-donkey tied up and a colt with her; loosening them, bring them to me.’” After the two obtain the animals, “the disciples led the donkey and colt, and placed garments on them, and he sat on top of the garments.” In his usual manner, Matthew cites a passage from the Hebrew scriptures being fulfilled: “Say to the daughter of Sion, Behold your king is coming to you, Meek and seated on a donkey, And upon a colt, the foal of a draft animal” (see Zechariah 9:9).

Why this elaborate setup? First, it is in all likelihood historical. Jesus had two networks of followers, one in Galilee and one in Jerusalem. The narrative presented in Matthew is from the perspective of the Galilean network, in which Peter was a key figure. The lending of the animals and, later, the making available of a venue for the festival meal were the work of the, largely underground, Jerusalem network.

Second, there is some symbolic importance in the presence of a she-donkey and a colt in the scene, which explains why Mathew kept the historical detail in the written tradition. It may be lost on us, people as we are of the automobile world, but a she donkey separated from her colt would become wild and uncontrollable. Similarly, a colt taken away from its mother would immediately become anxious and highly agitated. Keeping them together kept the peace. Which animal did Jesus ride? The adult donkey would be the likely selection for most of the parade, but a few token steps on the colt to fulfil the Zechariah passage would have brought on a chorus of cheers.

If Jesus kept two lowly donkeys at peace by keeping them together rather than separate them, would he not be also disposed to keep families together rather than cause them anxiety? We live in a time in which deportations of “illegal” parents threaten to break up families, a time in which children who are citizens by birth are separated from their parents after the parents are arrested for living where they wish. And this is done in the name of law! Is there anything more likely to undermine law than exercising law in contravention to nature—nature as divinely created?

Poem

The Little Soul

*We are like lutes once held by God.
Being away from that warm body
fully explains this constant yearning.*

Hafiz 1320-1389

When I was a little soul,
born,
not out of the One
but into the One,
into sudden bliss,
utter completion,

some worm-word of wonder
nibbled at my innards:
More. I want more.

"There is a way,"
said the One I was,
"become with me a co-creator."
*"From this Oneness
plunge into otherness,
into illusions of duality:
self and others
body and soul,
evil and good,
sound and silence,
dark and light,
yesterday and tomorrow,
matter and spirit.*

"Make of your separate self

*a life of gifts to others in their separations,
that out of apparent isolation,
out of seeming division
we, creator and co-creator,
celebrate our inner secret:
That All Is One."*

Yet to know what my choice would bring,
I dared to answer, "Yes!"
The Little Soul

Letter from Pax Christi International to the New York City Council
January 13, 2020

To the Members of the New York City Council,

Pax Christi International, a global Catholic peace movement, strongly supports and commends the New York City Council for its pending initiatives: (1) *RES 976, Resolution on Nuclear Disarmament*—to instruct the pension funds of public employees in New York City to divest from any entity involved in the production and maintenance of nuclear weapons; reaffirming New York City as a nuclear weapons-free zone; and supporting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; and (2) *INT 1621, Bill to Create a Nuclear Disarmament and Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone Advisory Committee*—to establish a New York City Nuclear disarmament and Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone Advisory Committee.

Nuclear weapons pose a real, present risk of planetary extermination. Their use, whether intentionally or by accident, could easily lead to the extinction of all life on our planet. No nation or individual should be permitted, either legally or morally, to wield this horrific power of life and death over all of creation.

Pax Christi International, headquartered in Brussels, is active in more than sixty countries around the world. Pax Christi was founded at the end of World War II on the premise that human beings must find ways to coexist peacefully. Lasting peace can only be achieved through mutual recognition and respect—and not by threatening each other with mass destruction. In recognition of that reality, and in solemn memory of the horrors unleashed upon the people of

Japan, and the world, by the United States' use of nuclear weapons, Pax Christi International's 75 Anniversary global assembly this May will take place in Hiroshima.

Given the deadly history and consequences of the United States' deployment of nuclear weapons, it is particularly incumbent upon Americans to stand firmly against any further use of those weapons. And it is important that New York take a lead in this movement. New York City itself knows what it takes to create a peaceful global community. Like Pax Christi, New York City comprises people from many nations New Yorkers understand that it is not brutish or bullying death threats that motivate the establishment and flourishing of a peaceful community. Instead, it is mutual and respectful engagement that strengthens and stabilizes us.

Pax Christi International, as a long-time member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons ("ICAN"), has worked diligently for decades to abolish nuclear weapons, including most recently by actively working to secure passage and ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. New York, being the site of the United Nations, has already played a key role in the evolution and adoption of that Treaty. Those nations who have gathered to propose, negotiate, and approve this landmark Treaty have done so here, in our midst. Pax Christi will continue to work tirelessly, here in New York, with our global colleagues at the United Nations, and with the visionary members of the New York City Council, to eliminate from the earth the scourge of nuclear weapons.

Finally, those of us who live and work in New York vividly remember, firsthand, the devastation wrought by the destruction of the World Trade Towers. We who in 2001 volunteered our services to do whatever we could to help alleviate the misery and fear in New York will never forget how relatively helpless and incapable our City, and even our nation, were, in the first few weeks after the attack, in alleviating the damage and loss caused by the felling of the towers. And that isolated, low-tech event killed but a few thousand people. Imagine how incapable we would be of responding to a nuclear explosion, resulting in immediate or painfully lingering deaths by the millions. The infrastructure for response, and the potential first-responders themselves, would be incinerated. The levels of lingering radiation or dust in the immediate environment, and beyond, would preclude any outside assistance. The magnitude of devastation of life and infrastructure would be beyond any capacity to address.

The New York City Council recognizes this horrific reality. And by ceasing funding of these diabolical weapons, and declaring New York City a nuclear-free zone, the Council is taking a critical step toward ensuring that the unthinkable remains just that.

Respectfully submitted,

Presented by Mary T. Yelenick, Esq.
Main Representative, Pax Christi International
NGO Delegation to the United Nations in New York

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/