


Testimony
A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating May 31, 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 Feast of Pentecost. Tom Keene's poem is *Shekinah 33 A.D.* For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the poem is a letter from Sr. Patricia McCann, RSM, to Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, protesting his associating himself with the political ambitions of President Donald Trump.

Calendar

Tuesday May 26, 7:00pm (8:00pm ET), webinar, "Palestine, Zionism, and Racial Justice." Information and registration:
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_vl55HwzGTle6PpmCH_g9yw?fbclid=IwAR08xC5TN_6o3TySPRiCyqjF5dyBTluWL5-f46CkEyzFFljci8xXUPW90os

Thursday May 28, 1:00pm (2:00 ET), Catholic Climate Covenant webinar, "Covid-19's Impacts on God's Creation and Vulnerable Communities," Fr. Sean McDonough (Missionary Society of St. Columban) and Sacoby Wilson (University of Maryland, College Park). Register at
<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7297234780213686542?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=2e0c7e07-6d36-47b6-bdb2-dd0b7324d446>

Friday May 29, 11:00am-12:00pm (12:00pm-1:00pm ET), online dialogue, "Laudato Sí after Five Years: Hearing the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor," Cardinal Peter Turkson (Vatican Diacastery for Promoting Integral Human Development), Dan Misleh (Catholic Climate Covenant), Kim Wasserman (Little Village Environmental Justice Organization, Chicago), Christiana Zenner (Fordham University), moderated by Kim Daniels. Registration:

<https://catholicsocialthought.georgetown.edu/events/laudato-si-after-five-years?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=cd40949e-e58d-4dc9-b6f4-e0405226418f#rsvp>

June, varying dates and times, San Antonio River Autroty film fest—online. For the schedule of these environmentalist films and to register for them:

https://www.sara-tx.org/whats-new/events/7th-annual-environmental-film-fest-online-edition?utm_source=TPR&utm_medium=Mobile_App&utm_campaign=Filem_Fest_2020

Friday June 5, 9:30am-3:00pm, online conference: “How Science Can Strengthen the Faith of Your Church.” 9:30 Elaine Howard Ecklund (Rice U.); 10:25, Mark Labbarton (Fuller Seminary); 11:15 Praven Sethopathy (Cornell U.), 12:30 Greg Cootsona (Cal. State, Chico) & Gus Reyes (Texas Baptists) on engaging youth and emerging adults in science; 1:20 Nichole Phillips (Emory U) & Harvey Clemons (Pleasant Hill Bapt. Church) on race, social justice, science; 2:10 Jonathan Hill (Calvin U) & Lee Hsia (First Bapt. Church, Houston) on human origins; 2:50 Closing remarks. The conference will be preceded by the release of Elaine Howard Ecklund’s book, *Why Science and Faith Need Each Other*. The first 250 people to register will receive a free copy; include your mailing address when registering. Register here:

https://riceuniversity.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_w1ouOgz2R0etvzPbnHD4Zg
Instructions to join the webinar will be sent to you after registering.

Sunday June 7, 2:00pm, Interfaith Justice Advocacy Workshop. Experts from Texas Impact, an Austin-based interfaith advocacy organization, present the training workshop online. Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/interfaith-justice-advocacy-workshop-tickets-104210211548>.

Information: Lisa Brenskelle, gcs.lrc@gmail.com.

Second Reading (Romans 8:22-27 or 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13)

At the mass for the Vigil of Pentecost, *Romans* 8:22-27 is the reading. It describes a hope we have for something better than the life we know, but what it should be we are unsure. This is not a human fault on our part but a hope inspired by the Spirit of God. No doubt this is the sort of state of mind that is often dismissed in the world as that of a “disgruntled employee”!

At the masses for Pentecost Day, the reading is from the familiar passage in *First Corinthians* where Paul recognized that there are many ministerial gifts from the Holy Spirit, and that such genuine gifts are useful to people, not present simply to give individuals a psychological high. It is important that Paul speaks of gifts rather than an office. The packaging of most ministries into one office of priesthood (a term generally used in the New Testament for the hereditary Jewish priesthoods) has led to a clericalism not envisioned in the early Christian movement. Significantly, the present pope has been preaching against that clericalism.

Third Reading (Vigil: John 7:37; Day: John 20:19-23)

The Lectionary provides two different readings from the *Johannine Gospel* for the Saturday night vigil and Sunday masses: John 7:37-39 and 20:19-23. The principal narrative and imagery for the feast of Pentecost comes not from the gospel but from the Pentecost account in the *Acts of the Apostles*, the first reading.

The vigil gospel reading features a traditional Jesus saying: “Now on the major day of the feast” (the Judean Feast of Tabernacles) “Jesus stood up and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, come to me, and let anyone who believes in me drink.’ As the scripture said, ‘rivers of living water will flow out from within him.’” The gospel situates this at a time when the Judean authorities were looking for Jesus in order to arrest him, and his neighbors in Galilee were daring him to so much as show up in Jerusalem. He was fully aware of the danger; so he slipped into the city, only to stand up and shout out his appeal to “anyone” and thereby bypass the authorities. The gospel goes on to associate this defiance against fossilized religion with the Holy Spirit, whom later Christians, for whom the gospel was written, accepted as the inspiration of their own defiance against social pressure and governmental persecution.

The gospel for Pentecost Day highlights a different traditional Jesus saying: “As the Father sent me, I also am sending you.” The gospel goes on to associate this saying too with the Holy Spirit. What a troubling thought: “I am sending you”! Me?

There is undoubtedly the temptation to bottle divinity, not to keep God safe from humans but to keep humans untroubled by the Spirit, to keep us from sensing what we are sent to do. My own experience is that when someone tries

to recruit me, it is to draw me into a social bottle, so to speak, a safe environment in which I can say prayers or associate myself with socially approved good works. There is certainly nothing wrong with most prayers and most good works, taken by themselves, but so long as they are inside the institutional bottle, the whole may well be less than the sum of the parts. When Jesus said, "come to me," he was not risking arrest in order to keep those who thirst from being disturbed. When he said, "As the father sent me," he was not referring to saying prayers and doing approved-of works within the confines of fossilized religious conventions. Dare we thirst and be sent today?

Poem

*Shekinah 33 A.D.
(Pentecost)*

With a warning howl
she burst upon them:
 praying men,
 silent women,
 playing children,
crashed into the old room
shaking its stone and wood.

She came with
pollen from the desert,
salt from the sea,
pulling their hair,
stirring their blood.

Like wine,
she loosened their tongues
to babble meaning
to the deaf.

People heard.
A fetus of hope

kicked
within the womb of destiny.

Tom Keene
September 30, 1996

**Letter from Sr. Patricia McCann, RSM, to Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Who
Associated Himself with President Trump**

Feast of St. Catherine of Siena
April 29, 2020

Dear Cardinal Dolan,

On this feast of St. Catherine of Siena, I write to you with concern about your promotion of a second presidential term for Donald Trump. It is beyond my comprehension that you who represent a voice of moral authority within the Catholic faith community could lend support to a presidential candidate who so visibly ignores basic principles of Catholic social teaching ---*i.e., the sacred dignity of all life, and the quest for the common good*. Mr. Trump rejected asylum for Central American refugee families fleeing from violence and torture; he encouraged breaking apart of families at the border to intimidate migrants; he fans flames of bigotry, racism and violence with intentionally vitriolic language, fomenting fear and xenophobia at every opportunity; he caricatured whole groups of dark skinned people as “rapists and murderers”; he repealed clean air and water laws; he disregards human rights throughout the world; he promotes economic policies which favor the already wealthy at the expense of those who are poor; he consistently demeans and mocks anyone who opposes or questions him. To identify such a person as pro-life calls into question the authenticity of the Church’s Gospel witness.

I am deeply disturbed by the venal, dishonest and self-serving politics I have watched in the White House for the past three years. Even in daily presidential briefings the last two months, I watched Mr. Trump frame the entire Covid 19 crisis solely by how it would affect his re-election. Every time questions about the number of people dying or the lack of medical equipment were raised,

the president segued into how wonderful he is, how great everything is, how all that he has done is the best it has ever been done. What a callous lack of empathy or moral sensitivity to the pain which the entire nation watched on daily TV news in New York City and elsewhere.

Creation of the “culture of life” to which people of faith aspire rests upon belief in the sacred dignity of all human life, born and unborn. Such belief mandates a broad spectrum of life affirming actions which support women/families in bearing and raising children: affordable pre-natal/post-natal maternity care, available and affordable child care, affordable housing with a family focus, accessible health care, education and employment opportunity for everyone. Social reforms which eliminate poverty and sustain life provide the only assured path toward reducing abortions. None of these social programs are actions which Mr. Trump or the Senate GOP currently promote or support.

Cardinal Dolan, I am an 84 years old Catholic Sister of Mercy, the descendant of Irish Catholic immigrants. I grew up in a world where Catholic social teaching was the bedrock upon which hope for the future stood. Its principles, along with the Sacraments, were our spiritual nourishment, the framework of our moral compass. They informed our attitudes toward immigrants, workers and labor unions, social programs focused on those who are poor, and all of life, both born and unborn. I hope the bishops do not repeat the mistake of 2016 by supporting Mr. Trump who openly flouts fundamental Catholic values while at the same time labelling himself pro-life.

Respectfully,

Sister Patricia McCann, RSM

Cc: Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley
Archbishop Jose H. Gomez

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/

Migrant Center for Human Rights

<https://Migrantcenter.org>