


Testimony
A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating June 7, 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 Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. Tom Keene's poem is *On telling Our Time Together*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is a homily of Pope Francis from May 5; its points are both surprising and refreshing.

This notice is from Pax Christi member Yvonne Dilling: Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers are offering reflection guides for the Sunday Gospel readings up through Pentecost Sunday, possibly beyond. The guides can be used individually but are developed for small groups (which can be those living in a household or a group that meets online in small groups:

<https://sites.google.com/a/maryknoll.us/maryknoll-mission-education-promotion/home/resources/mission-spirituality/easter-2020>

Calendar

June, varying dates and times, San Antonio River Authority 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

Tuesday June 2, 2:30pm-3:45pm (3:30-4:45 ET), „Co-Responsibility for the Mission of the Church,“ John Cavadini. Registration: <https://notredame.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMtdO-hrjorH9QQXnCns2QgCBo-l2YVgXAn>

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.

Saturday June 6, Pax Christi San Antonio online meeting. Among agenda items is a discussion of environmentalism. For a Zoom invitation, contact Yvonne Dilling: yvonedilling@gmail.com

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 (Second Corinthians 13: 11-13)

The New Testament book known as the *Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* is actually a mixture of several letters. Papyrus pages in scrolls separated from one another and got out of order before they found their way into a collection of Paul’s letters that included, evidently, all of the authentic Paulines except *Galatians*. The result is that reading *Second Corinthians* from beginning to end can be confusing. The Corinthian correspondence occurred before, during, and after three visits Paul made to Corinth. The second visit had not gone well; the passage read at masses this Sunday is the conclusion to a letter Paul wrote after that second, disastrous visit.

Paul had written, “For I fear lest upon coming I will not find you at all as I wish, and that I will be found by you not as you wish, but strife, rivalry, anger, factions, evil reports, whispering, vanity anarchy; I fear upon my coming again God will humble me before you, and I will mourn many of those who have sinned before and not repented...” (12:20-21). Nevertheless, he could not leave it at that. His conclusion to the letter reflects a broader goodness and unity that transcended the temporary faults and irritations: “...brothers and sisters, farewell, be restored, take courage, be like minded, be at peace; and may the God of love and peace be with you” (13:11).

Third Reading (John 3:16-18)

The *Johannine gospel* has a Pharisee and ruler of the people, Nicodemus, interview Jesus secretly. The reading for this Sunday follows some dialogue from that interview scene. It is unclear whether the reading is meant to be part of that dialogue or a separate reflection occasioned by it. Inexplicably, the Lectionary editors skip the introductory clauses to the passage. What they omit reads, “No one indeed goes up to heaven except he who has come down from heaven, the son of humanity.”

There is a temptation to project our earthly condition, with its time and space coordinates, onto God. Thus there would be a time in which the Word existed but had not been yet spoken. There is a truth in that kind of statement—that the Word is not “created” by being “spoken” in time—but also an untruth—that there is a sequential time coordinate to divine existence and activity. Thus speaking of the one “who has come down from heaven” not only imposes “up” and “down” coordinates in language that can only be taken metaphorically, but also “before” and “after” coordinates. The message, set apart from the coordinates, is the elevation of humanity in the Word. This is an act of the Word; humans only help make the Word audible. The text uses the language of visibility rather than audibility: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness in this way must the son of humanity be lifted up so that everyone who believes in him would have eternal life....”

And this is where the gospel reading takes up the discourse: “...for God loved the world in this way; therefore He gave the only begotten son so that all who believe in him would have eternal life.” Early on in Christian history there was a tendency to substitute a judicial process for one in which the son “coming down from heaven” shows in a human way what the divine life is like. “For God

did not send the son into the world to condemn the world but that the world would be saved through him.” This salvation is not a judicial reward for good behavior but a revelation of the good life.

What might be called a strong doctrine of original sin can lead one to approach others in a judicial or judgmental frame of mind. In that frame of mind, people are to be kept at a distance until they are proven acceptable. The *Johannine Gospel*, in contrast, counters judgment with an unconditional welcome to all. When it rejected Jesus on account of various conditions spelled out in the Law, religion “lifted up” Jesus as some sort of snake.

Poem

On Telling our Time Together

Against what cosmic calculus may we tally the time we took
or mark the depths we plumbed in psychic waters we went?

What whirring wheels of clocks or plodding of planets,
what patterns of waking and sleep, eating and bathing
can measure the stretch of ventures, involutions,
our love has made?

Can we time it with the tingle of our skins
that carry within the tacit echoes of touch?
Or the beat in the dance of our hearts'
give and take, follow and lead?
Or with our cell-made-music,
its strains coursing in our veins?

We find it not in what we did,
or even time's doing we let be done to us,
but being, being, being,
present, present, present,
to our attuned attending oneness.

Tom Keene
July 9, 1988

**MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
*DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE***

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

“Attitudes that prevent us from knowing Christ”

Tuesday, 5 May 2020

Introduction

Today let us pray for the departed who have died due to the pandemic. They died alone; they died without the caress of their loved ones, many even without a funeral. May the Lord welcome them in glory.

Homily

Jesus was in the Temple. It was close to the Feast of the Dedication (cf. *Jn* 10:22-30). During that time the Jews, too, “gathered round him and said to him, ‘How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly’” (v. 24). They would make one lose patience, but with gentleness “Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe’” (v. 25). They continued to say: “But is it you? Is it you?” – “Yes, I said so, but you do not believe!”. “But you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep” (v. 26). And this, perhaps, raises a doubt: I believe and I belong to Jesus' sheep; but if Jesus says to us: “You cannot believe because you do not belong”, is there a faith prior to the encounter with Jesus? What is this *belonging* to Jesus' faith? What is it that stops me at the door which is Jesus?

There are attitudes prior to professing Jesus. For us too, who are in Jesus' flock. They are like “prior aversions”, that do not allow us to go forward in knowledge of the Lord. The first of them is *wealth*. Many of us too, who have entered through the door of the Lord, stop and do not go forward because we are imprisoned in wealth. The Lord was harsh, about wealth, he was very harsh, very

harsh. To the point of saying that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. *Mt 19:24*). This is harsh. Wealth is an obstacle to moving forward. But must we fall into pauperism? No. But do not be slaves to wealth, do not live for wealth, because wealth is a lord, it is the lord of this world, and we cannot serve two lords (cf. *Lk 16:13*). And wealth stops us.

Another thing that prevents moving forward in knowledge of Jesus, in belonging to Jesus, is *rigidity*: rigidity of heart. Also rigidity in the interpretation of the Law. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, the doctors of the Law for this rigidity (cf. *Mt 23:1-36*). Which is not faithfulness: faithfulness is always a gift to God; rigidity is a security for myself. I remember a time when I was entering a parish and a lady – a good lady – came up to me and said: “Father, a piece of advice...” – “Go on” – “Last week, Saturday, not yesterday, last Saturday, we went as a family to a wedding: it was with a Mass. It was Saturday afternoon, and we thought that with this Mass we had fulfilled the Sunday precept. But then, upon returning home, I thought that the Readings for that Mass were not those for Sunday. And so I realised that I am in mortal sin, because I did not go on Sunday because I had gone on Saturday, but to a Mass *that was not real*, because the Readings were not *real*”. That rigidity.... And that lady belonged to an ecclesial movement. Rigidity. This distances us from the wisdom of Jesus, from the wisdom, beauty of Jesus: it takes away your freedom. And so many pastors cause this rigidity to grow in the souls of the faithful; and this rigidity does not help us enter through the door of Jesus (cf. *Jn 10:7*): observing the law as it is written or as I interpret it is more important than the freedom of moving forward following Jesus. Another thing that does not allow us to move forward in the knowledge of Jesus is *sloth*. That weariness.... Let us think of that man at the pool: 38 years there (cf. *Jn 5:1-9*). Sloth. It takes away our will to go forward, and everything is “yes, but ... no, not now, no, but ...”, which leads you to get cosy and makes you tepid. Sloth is another thing that prevents us from moving forward.

Another which is rather ugly is the attitude of a *clericalist*. With clericalism one places himself in Jesus' place: He says: “No, this must be like this, like this, like this...” – “But, the Teacher” – “Leave the Teacher be: this is like this, like this, like this, and if you do not do like this, like this, like this, you cannot enter”. Clericalism takes away the freedom of believers. This is an ugly disease in the Church: the clericalist attitude.

Then, another thing that prevents us from going forward, from entering to know Jesus and profess Jesus, is *the worldly spirit*. When the observance of faith,

the practice of faith ends up in worldliness. And everything is mundane. Let us consider the celebration of a few sacraments in some parishes: how much worldliness there is! And one does not really understand the grace of Jesus' presence.

These are the things that prevent us from belonging to Jesus' sheep. We are "sheep" [in pursuit] of all these things: wealth, sloth, rigidity, worldliness, clericalism, methods, ideologies, forms of life. Freedom is lacking. And you cannot follow Jesus without freedom. "But sometimes freedom goes beyond, and one slips". Yes, it's true. It is true. We can slip while moving. But it is worse to slip *before* moving, with these things that prevent us from beginning to move. May the Lord enlighten us to see, within us, that there is freedom to pass through the door which is Jesus, and to go beyond Jesus in order to become a flock, to become sheep in his flock.

Prayer for spiritual communion

Those who cannot receive communion can now partake in spiritual communion:

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if you were already there, and I unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.

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>