

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating June 25, 2017

Pax Christi San Antonio does not solicit donations; however, anyone wishing to join should make a donation to Pax Christi U.S.A. and notify Maria Tobin, matob@aol.com, to receive email messages sent to members. 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 *Third Reading* commentary is based on the gospel reading for the twelfth Sunday in ordinary time. Tom Keene's poem is *A Tale of Two Planets*.

As my visits over the years to relatives who lived in rural Scott County, Kentucky, coincided with Sundays and major feasts, I would drive down to the county seat, Georgetown, to attend mass in a small church that served the few Catholic families in the area. In recent decades, Georgetown grew into a small city because an auto plant was established nearby, and the little parish church could barely keep up with the growth. There was also another change: the countryside parish's mission, the oldest Catholic church in the Commonwealth, became the site of Spanish masses for farm workers. And the Christmas Midnight Mass became bi-lingual, with a refreshing youth group singing comfortably in both English and Spanish. I mention this because last February the bishop of Lexington, Kentucky, in which diocese Georgetown is located, issued a statement on American immigration policy and how Christians should respond to it. Bishop John Stowe endorses, among other things, adopting sanctuary church policies and exerting political pressure to reform U.S. immigration law. His statement follows the poem.

Calendar

Thursday June 22, 9:00am-?, San Antonio City Council meeting, "A resolution of the City of San Antonio Affirming the Charter for Compassion." Item 17 on the agenda. Council Chamber, 1st floor, Municipal Plaza Bldg., Main & Commerce Streets.

Saturday June 24, 7:00pm, affirmation of the Paris Climate Agreement through word, music, and dance. University of the Incarnate Word campus, 4301 Broadway: Blue Hole at the Headwaters Sanctuary, by the George Brackenridge Villa.

Sunday June 25, 12:15pm, film, *From the Ashes*, on the legacy of the coal industry. First Unitarian Universalist Church, 7150 I-10 West.

Monday June 26, rally against the "show me your papers law." 8:30am rally begins; 9:00am teach-in & rally; 11:00am-1:00pm, major rally & press conference: "No Hate in

Our State, SB4 Rally. RSVP at <http://bit.ly/NoSB4>. 655 E Cesar E. Chavez Blvd. (federal courthouse)

Tuesday June 27, 5:30pm-7:00pm, Human Tragedies of Turkey's Purge—Special Fundraising Dinner. Raindrop Turkish House, 4337 Vance Jackson, behind the large "Car Wash" sign just north of I-410. RSVP and ticket at <https://specialfundraising.eventbrite.com>. Info at sanantonioturkishhouse.org.

Sundays, July 2, 9, 16, 23, & 30, 1:30pm-3:00pm. Dr. Fatma Arslan, Golsum Arslan, Dr. Dawn Martin, and Sumetra Tek lead discussions of *Crafting a Life That Matters*, by Emily Esfahani Smith. Raindrop Turkish House, 4337 Vance Jackson Road (just north of I-410, behind the big car wash sign). \$15 for 5 sessions. Register by June 23. For details, see www.upcsa.org/classes.

Wednesday July 5, 3:30pm, film viewing: "Watershed—Exploring a New Water Ethic for the New West." The film concerns the Colorado River. Christus Heritage Hall, the Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway.

Sunday July 23, 4:00pm-6:00pm, Michal Lemberger, Finding the Voice of the Voiceless in the Hebrew Bible. \$17. Register by July 14. For details see www.upcsa.org/classes. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook).

Tuesday July 25-Thursday July 27, 10:30-12:00 noon, Rev. Traci Smith, "Cloud of Witnesses: The Community of Christian Hebrews." \$35 for 3 sessions. Register by July 17. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook).

Third Reading (Matthew 10:26-33)

The gospel passage is the one about preaching from the roof tops. The point is not simply to be bold, but to stand for what might elicit retaliation. "And do not be afraid of those killing the body but cannot kill the spirit." "So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." The heavenly Father will protect what is worth saving.

I do not think human retaliation would be elicited by most Sunday homilies. Most of them consist of feel good discourse and appeals to be nice and give to the poor. So it is worth taking pen in hand and listing what should be said in public but which one might be weary of saying because of retaliation. Different people will likely create different lists. A caution about trying to enter the ranks of the undeserving rich would make most people's lists.

I once had a pastor who was courageous or foolish enough to let me help out in the RCIA program—the formation program for adults wanting to become Catholics. In leading a discussion on the problem of materialism, I posed the question, should a Christian spend good money on an impressive car rather than on one that is simply good enough for getting around. I thought the question was straightforwardly Christian

enough, but it was a pedagogical disaster. The local cult of race cars, flashy cars, cars with psychological implications that I could not quite fathom—this cult of chrome and motor simply had too strong a hold over the otherwise open-minded and “liberal” people. Vocal members of the class objected to the very idea that one might question the value represented by THE CAR. I was surely failing as a catechist.

One week later, a young lady pulled me aside. She told me that she had been embarrassed by her own beat-up car with a side door that was a different color from the rest of the body. She actually parked it at her in-laws’ house every Sunday and would borrow their car to show up at the middle-class Catholic church for mass. Not this Sunday: She came in her own car, and onlookers in the parking lot could think what they may.

Poem

A tale of two planets

One has Coca Cola up for grabs
everywhere to any who can pay
and lets twenty-one thousand
hungry children die every day.
The other does just the reverse.
Which to bless, which to curse?

Tom Keene
November 4, 2016

25 February 2017

Pastoral Message on Immigration

“Then the king will say to those on his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for when I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’” (Matthew 25:41–43)

The United States has been functioning with a broken immigration system for decades. This is recognized by many leaders in the agricultural and business world, as well as the social services and human rights sectors. The U.S. economy depends on the labor of undocumented immigrants, the social security system has been supported by contributions from undocumented workers, and undocumented workers have often been exploited by employers and others who know that these workers have little access to justice.

For as long as the immigration system has been broken, most of the solutions proposed have focused exclusively on the enforcement of inadequate laws rather than the comprehensive reform that is needed. The most recent immigration raids following the president's executive orders are the latest attempt at an enforcement-only approach.

Under the guise of removing criminals and "bad people" who threaten public safety, people who lack documentation are facing increased threats of deportation. Many hardworking individuals without criminal records are being held in detention and/or deported. As a result, families are being separated and many good people in our own communities are living in fear. Law enforcement agents are setting up checkpoints across the State of Kentucky.

It is a critical matter of our faith to recognize that all people are made in the image and likeness of God and that we will face final judgment based on the way we treat the most vulnerable.

As people of faith, we are called to open our hearts to our brothers and sisters in need. We recognize that the right to support one's family is a basic human right that sometimes necessitates migration. When migration laws are outdated or not helpful, there is no legal path for the desperate to come to the United States so they resort to overstaying visas or to unauthorized crossing of the border. We should be slow to judge the actions of people who are trying to survive and support a family.

The policies of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) state that they do not target sensitive areas such as churches, schools and hospitals for deportation and removal activities. Our faith communities will need to hold them accountable to these policies. Worship and church activities should be safe places where the immigrant community can gather and participate. Parish or mission communities may consider whether to offer their churches as sanctuaries for those who would face deportation.

Some parish and mission communities have identified members who will take care of children if their parents are deported. Others are helping with financial aid to those who lack the resources for proper legal representation at immigration hearings.

All of us can be engaged in creating a more welcoming environment for immigrants. We can be informed about the threats the immigrant community faces by following updates on www.justiceforimmigrants.org and we can examine our own attitudes towards immigrants in the light of our faith tradition. We can also call for a more compassionate approach to immigrants by contacting the president, congress and local officials. We can voice opposition to the use of local law enforcement for the detention and removal of immigrants.

Focusing exclusively of the enforcement of immigration laws does not fix a broken system. Our nation should not add to human suffering, especially for vulnerable segments of the population. Comprehensive and fair immigration reform is long overdue. Increased deportation is a costly investment in increased suffering, it makes no one safer.

Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv.
Bishop of Lexington

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 San Antonio
<http://www.paxchristisa.org>

COPS / Metro Alliance
www.copsmetro.com/

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>

Interfaith Radio, (*Interfaith Voices*)
<http://www.interfaithradio.org/>

Texas Catholic Campaign to End the Death Penalty
www.txccedp.org