


Testimony
A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating July 12, 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 Fifteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Word and Silence*, which he associates with the second reading from Romans 8. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>.

Following the poem is a June 25th essay by Robert Moore of Pax Christi Metro DC—Baltimore, "The Knights of Columbus Needs a New Name." Christopher Columbus was clearly an imperialist in the worst senses of that term; perhaps the closest modern equivalent would be King Leopold of Belgium, who so embarrassed Belgium with his exploitation of the Congo and its people as his private property that the Belgian government expropriated it from him. When Columbus brought enslaved indigenous people from Santo Domingo to Spain, he kept one as a gift for his son's friend Bartolomé de Las Casas. Queen Isabella was so upset with Columbus' treatment of these enslaved people that she had them transported back to Santo Domingo. Las Casas befriended his slave and missed him when he was returned to the "new" world. One can only speculate what connection there may have been between the young Las Casas' experience and his later conversion to the cause of indigenous people's rights.

A cult of a sanitized Columbus legend emerged among the United States. Catholic immigrants, who were not accepted as real Americans early in the twentieth century. They seized upon the Columbus figure; after all, the federal district and many cities were named for him. Italian Americans promoted the legend following the Second World War, a war in which Fascist Italy was an ally of Nazi Germany and enemy of the United States and allies. The whole cultivation of the legend was a contrivance in its entirety; there was no nation called *Italy* until the nineteenth century, well before the time of Columbus, and Columbus himself

was more greedy and ambitious than heroic. At the present time, the racist conduct of Columbus can no longer be hidden.

Notices

Online Resource for families or small groups:

If you're needing

àsome social interaction with depth,

àmore than just listening to zoom webinars,

àlonging for the social time that used to happen before and after Mass,

consider using the *Maryknoll Weekly Reflection Guides*. Gather as family or small

group and use these guides in Facetime, Skype, Zoom etc. This an easy online

structure with prayer, an introductory theme, a link to the Sunday Readings and

some reflection questions to guide group conversation. Using the SeeJudgeAct

methodology, you will be led as a group to consider where, in light of the shared

reflection, the Spirit is calling you this week. The Global Solidarity charism of the

Maryknoll family will feed you spiritually for these challenging times. Find the

Guides in both Spanish and English at:

<https://www.maryknoll.us/home/resources/mission-spirituality/ordinary-time-2020>

Wednesday July 1-Friday July 31, website for plastic free eco challenge. Check out <https://plasticfree.ecochallenge.org/>

Pax Christi International has issued a statement opposing Israel annexing of any West Bank Land: <https://paxchristi.net/2020/06/19/pax-christi-international-opposes-israels-plans-for-annexation/>

The Independent Lens documentary, *True Conviction*, on the work of three exonerated former Texas prisoners, is available through July 26 at:

<https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/videos/true-conviction/>

Calendar

(Unless otherwise indicated, times are those of the Central Zone)

Online

Monday July 6, 12:00pm, Zoom webinar “Movements, Monuments and racism on Campus: A Conversation with Historians,” Leslie Harris (Northwestern University), James Campbell (Stanford University), Hilary Green (University of Alabama), and Anne Twitty (University of Mississippi); sponsored by Rice University. Access at <https://riceuniversity.zoom.us/j/92303938418>, password 151225.

Tuesday July 7, 6:00pm, film screening by Amnesty International, *State vs. Reed: A Question of Justice on Texas’ Death Row*, on the Rodbey Reed case, followed by panel discussion. RSVP at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSce4gXu0rq-Pgyk3ndWlmQKjBN8a6b0Ed5pQSLWO-nEDh1UJg/viewform?fbzx=-9030781502406394526>

Sundays July 12, 19, 26, & August 2, 1:30pm-2:30pm, SoL and Raindrop Foundation book club, discussion of Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for Whites People to Talk about Racism*. Beacon Press, 1918. Contact stek@thedialoginstitute.org.

Wednesday July 15, 7:30pm, Texas Coalition Against the Death Penalty book group discussion of John Grisham, *The Guardians* (Random House, 2020). RSVP at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScWORN7DdsUiXJlgb_Eyq9G0JF8uMn5JVuS9ix3wV1ihtk1_w/viewform

Tuesday July 21, 12:00pm-1:00pm, webinar, *The Evolution of the “Modern” Era of the Death Penalty*, Anna Otero (Thurgood Marshall School of Law). Registration, information, and Zoom invitation: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdDyIX-zok222bXffJKLI75wH15aH75zOH0yb4WihEL47-Vig/viewform>

Tuesday July 28, 12:00-m-1:00pm, webinar, *The Execution of People with Intellectual Disabilities in Texas*, Anna Otero (Thurgood Marshall School of Law). Registration, information, and Zoom invitation:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdDyIX-zok222bXffJKLI75wH15aH75zOH0yb4WihEL47-Vig/viewform>

Thursday August 6, 12:30pm-1:30pm, webinar: "The History, Present and Possible Future of Gandhian Nonviolence and the Nonviolent Way of Jesus in Methodism," Natalya Cherry. \$15.00, Register at:
https://secure.touchnet.net/C21403_ustores/web/product_detail.jsp?PRODUCTID=1929&SINGLESTORE=true

This registration site is actually quite cryptic; check out the information at:
<https://www.smu.edu/Perkins/PublicPrograms/Webinars/United-Methodist-Studies-Webinar-Series>

Three events commemorating the 75th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki:

Thursday August 6, online commemoration of the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with Ira Helfand. Free. Register at:
paceebene.org/hiroshimaday2020

Friday August 7, online nonviolence training by Pace e Bene. \$20.00

Saturday August 8, online conference, "Educating and Advancing a Nonviolent World (Rev. Richard Rohr, Dr. Erica Chenoweth, Rev. Lennox Yearwood, Jr., Dr. Ira Helfand, Kazu Haga, George Martin, Dr. Kit Evans-Ford, Veronica Pelicarić, Dr. Ken Butigan, Rev. John Dear). \$50.00

Information and tickets for all three:

<https://paceebene.org/cnvconference2020?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=7c490eaa-7087-4e9f-b3ab-6e0553d76d0a>

Thursday August 13, 12:30pm-1:30pm, webinar : "Social Responsibility of Religious Communities: New Traditions," George Mason (Wilshire Baptist Church, Dallas). \$15.00. Register at:
https://secure.touchnet.net/C21403_ustores/web/product_detail.jsp?PRODUCTID=1930&SINGLESTORE=true

In Austin

Monday July 13, 6:30pm-8:30pm, Courageous Conversation, focusing on Black Lives Matter. Please read ahead of time:

<https://learningenglish.voanews.com/amp/pope-sends-strong-message-to-us-catholics-after-floyd-death/5457528.html>

Zoom meeting information: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82264184969?#success>

Meeting ID: 822 6418 4969

Password: 024557

In El Paso

Tuesday July 7, 7:00pm, Pax Christi El Paso online meeting. Listen to this Ted Talk beforehand:

https://www.ted.com/talks/alicia_garza_patrisse_cullors_and_opal_tometi_an_interview_with_the_founders_of_black_lives_matter?utm_source=tedcomshare&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=tedsread.

Contact Patricia Delgado for the Zoom invitation: phdelgado3583@gmail.com

Wednesday July 8, 12:00pm-1:00pm, death penalty vigil Kansas Street, side entrance/exit of El Paso County Courthouse. (hopefully, a stay of execution may make this unnecessary.)

In San Antonio

Wednesday July 8, 12:00pm-1:00pm, death penalty vigil across the street from the San Antonio Justice enter, 300 Dolorosa. (Hopefully, a stay of execution may make this unnecessary.)

Second Reading (Romans 8:18-23)

This brief passage speaks of hope, of our anticipating a going beyond the burdened world as we know it. "For the earnest anticipation of creation expects the revelation of the son of God...in the hope that indeed creation itself will be freed from servitude to destruction, for the freedom in the glory of the children of God." The grammar of ancient Greek allowed for what translates as lengthy sentences with parenthetical insertions in modern languages. What I deleted was a parenthetical insertion about creation's vulnerability. In arguing against a servitude to ritual requirements, Paul points to hope in the Christian life that he preached, a hope that would lead to a freedom.

Third Reading (Matthew 13:1-27)

“On that day when leaving the house Jesus sat by the sea. And a great crowd congregated about him; so boarding a boat he sat down, and the whole crowd stood on the shore.” This is the set-up for the parable of the sowing of the seed. It would be a mistake to dismiss the set-up as interstitial material between more important passages. This “framing” distances the speaking done by Jesus and the hearing—be the latter merely hearing or engaged listening—done by the crowd. Lest the point be missed, right after the parable comes, “Someone who has ears, listen.”

“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand, the evil one comes and seizes what was sown in that person’s heart.” It is obvious but frequently forgotten that this pertains to church members, who hear the word, not people who have not heard the word. One might think of medieval tales of malevolent devils when mention of the “evil one” is made, but thinking of political clergy who propagate hate fits better. “That is the one sowing on the roadway.”

“And the one sowing on rock ground, this is one hearing the word and straightway accepting it with joy. This one does not have a root within but is tentative, and when affliction or persecution on account of the word occurs, this one is straightway caused to stumble.” There is not much affliction or persecution on account of the word today, especially when the word is clothed with comfortable conventionality and feel-good verbiage. After two millennia, unrooted Christians have devised ways to avoid being afflicted or persecuted.

“And the one sowing among thorns...” Thorns, or thistles, were used in ancient Palestine to mark off property lines and repel roving animals. It was the barbed wire of the day. “And the one sowing among thorns, this is the one hearing the word, and the worry of the age and deceptions of wealth crowd out the word...” Worrying about boundaries and holding onto property ironically crowds out what is of value.

“And the one sowing on good ground, this is the one hearing the word and understanding it...” Note that the one hearing and understanding is not merely inert ground; it is the person sowing on the good ground. Hearing and understanding is an activity in itself, not a passive reception.

There is a temptation to limit hearing to our responsiveness to scripture. One also needs to be attentive to the “Book of Life,” i.e. the world around us. Is it simply there, merely sensed, or do we make it into an environment to be comprehended?

Poem

Word and Silence

To express and not to express.
Lovers silent together,
yet bursting to say it over and over:
 We love.

Sunlight warming our fields,
dark revealing our galaxy.

Absence that yearns,
presence that heals.

Joy and pain,
delight in being,
while taking on the cost.

To know and know not,
ripening into wisdom,
surrendering to mystery.

Creative tensions,
making our lives alive.

Tom Keene and Muse
June 26, 2020

The Knights of Columbus Needs a New Name

by Robert More

Pax Christi Metro DC-Baltimore

“Our national DNA clearly includes racism,” Joseph Nangle, OFM, observed in his June 4 column for Pax Christi USA. “The celebrated foundational document of our country, the Declaration of Independence, was steeped in racism.” But while our nation traces its birth to that 1776 document, the racist strain in its DNA predates the Declaration by centuries.

In recent days, Black Lives Matter and Indigenous protesters have recognized that history in attacking statues of Christopher Columbus in St. Paul, Richmond, and Boston. Columbus is our continent’s first racist, and an exceptionally brutal one at that.

Writer Bayard Johnson recounts the disturbing history of Columbus’s interactions with the inhabitants of the Caribbean islands he visited:

At every landfall, the Indians either greeted Columbus with friendship or fled into the jungle. The Spanish were never attacked or treated with hostility. In his journal, Columbus describes the Indians as “generous to a fault.” He repaid this hospitality by demanding gold and taking slaves.

In *A People’s History of the United States*, historian Howard Zinn describes how Columbus had his men round up 1,500 Arawak men, women, and children, then picked the 500 “best specimens” and took them to Spain to sell as slaves. Two hundred died en route.

When he returned to Haiti with more ships and men, Columbus ordered all persons 14 years of age or older to collect a certain quantity of gold every three months. Those who failed had their hands cut off and bled to death. “The Indians had been given an impossible task,” Zinn writes. “The only gold around was bits of dust garnered from the streams. So they fled, were hunted down with dogs, and killed.” (*A People’s History of the United States*, p. 4.)

“Things got so bad,” Johnson says, “that Indians began committing suicide *en masse*.” As Indians died off from disease, malnutrition, overwork, murder, and suicide, Columbus needed a new source of labor. He “solved the problem by creating the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, importing slaves from Africa. Columbus was not only the first but also possibly the largest Trans-Atlantic slave-trader in history, bringing in over 5,000 Africans to work gold mines and plantations.” Johnson continues,

Many Columbus apologists try to excuse his crimes by saying he was a product of his times, that his values and ethics were no different from anyone else's. This is nonsense. Several of his own contemporaries condemned his actions at the time, disgusted by his cruelty. The Spanish Crown, during some of the darkest days of the Inquisition, was so repelled by Columbus' actions in the New World that they publicly condemned his brutality toward Indians. . . .

Another Spaniard, Bartolomé de Las Casas, came to America as a conquistador, but was so appalled by the treatment of Indians that he became a priest and lifelong advocate for Indian people. Las Casas wrote, "I saw here cruelty on a scale no living being has ever seen or expects to see."

Given Columbus's shocking record of racist violence, isn't it long past time for the world's largest Catholic fraternal service organization, the Knights of Columbus, to change its name? Surely many of its members would agree if they thought about the kind of person their order so honors.

While it's at it, the organization should change the first part of its name as well. By including "Knights" in its name (and having its Fourth Degree members carry actual swords), the organization associates itself with the warrior class of medieval Europe, also known for brutality.

According to historian Richard Kaeuper, the defining characteristic of the medieval knight is violence—"sword-swinging, limb-chopping, blood-soaked carnage . . . 'prowess,' as it was called. . . ." Knights fought constantly against each other and used their military superiority to brutalize other segments of the population, to such an extent that "noble violence becomes the major social problem during the High Middle Ages," according to historian Philip Daileader.

The Church initially tried to deal with the problem through the Peace and Truce of God movement, but these efforts met with limited success. Some clerics then turned to the writing of literature to reshape the warrior aristocracy. As Daileader explains,

The fables of the heroic chivalric Knights are just that, fables. The modern notion of a Knight in shining armor, who fights evil, defends the weak, and rescues maidens, is not historically factual nor is it based on any actual events. Quite contrary, the chivalric stories were in fact just another attempt at tackling the very real problem of noble violence. ...

The chivalric romances tried to get Knights to internalize the chivalric code and, thereby, restrain their propensity to engage in constant violence and theft.

Constant violence and theft are obviously not gospel values. Jesus "was always a man of peace . . . totally without violence," as Pope Benedict XVI has

said. By word and example, Jesus taught a way of nonviolent love of both neighbors and enemies (e.g., Matthew 5:9, 21-24, 38-45, 22:39, 26:51-52). His gospel is peace (John 14:27; Ephesians 2:14-18, 6:15). The medieval knighthood is, therefore, the antithesis of gospel discipleship.

Recent criticism of the Knights of Columbus has focused on its hosting President Trump at the St. John Paul II Shrine in Washington, and a petition has been sent to the Knights' Supreme Chaplain, Archbishop William Lori, calling on the organization to acknowledge its racist past, including its reported exclusion of African Americans during the Jim Crow era.

Earlier in the 20th century, however, "the order established . . . the Knights of Columbus Historical Commission which combated racism," and it published the works "of the broad array of intellectuals," including W. E. B. DuBois. The organization should reclaim this older, anti-racist side of its history by now choosing a more appropriate name.

No doubt the Knights of Columbus has a strong investment in its current name. But given the atrocious historical reality of both knights and Columbus, that name stands as a stark counter-witness to the gospel. Other successful businesses and organizations have changed their names and logos without giving up their core mission and activities, and the Knights of Columbus should do the same.

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>