

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating July 26, 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 Seventeenth Sunday of Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *All Things*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the calendar and notices is an essay by Pax Christi San Antonio member Al Eisch, "Apathy in Christians."

Calendar

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/1FAIpQLSdDylX-zok222bXffJKLI75wH15aH75zOH0yb4WihEL47-Vig/viewform>

Thursday July 23, 6:00pm (7:00pm ET), Zoom presentation, "Discipleship in a Time of Radical Change," Johnny Zokovitch (Pax Christi USA). Register at: <https://justfaith.org/july-23rd-webinar-johnny-zokovitch/>

Wednesday July 27, 6:00pm (7:00 ET), screening of *Profiled*, filmed following the NYPD killing of Eric Garner, followed by panel discussion: Kathleen Foster (the filmmaker) and Chauniqua D. Young (civil rights attorney). Sponsored by the National Writers' Union. Register at:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScazfzphQqBassDWhXm1owowsYUOJVkxTMei-h_Xx7XttW6aw/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 July 30, 1:00pm-2:00pm, webinar "Faithful Recovery in a Time of Climate Change," Kim Burgo (Catholic Charities USA), Marilyn Shapely (Catholic Relief Services), Ricardo Simmonds (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops). Register at
<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/945581507697019403?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=69f649f5-33f8-4133-8542-5f36a2ef4f72>

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/hiroschimaday2020
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&eId=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

Notices

Online Resource for families or small groups:

If you're needing

some social interaction with depth,

more than just listening to zoom webinars,

longing 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/>

Webinar on building peace between Iran and the U.S., recorded July 7, 2020: Nabi Sonboli (Counselor, Iranian Mission to the United Nations), Mary Yelenick (Pax Christi USA), and Doug Hostetter (Pax Christi USA). <https://paxchristiusa.org/2020/07/07/watch-our-webinar-on-building-peace-between-iran-and-the-u-s/>

Faith and the Faithful in the 2020 Elections: Religion, Racism, and the COVID-19 Crisis, video of the July 10, panel discussion sponsored by the Georgetown's Institute of Politics and Public Service, with: Top row: John Carr of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life; Gregory Smith of Pew Research Center; and Michael Gerson of the *Washington Post*. Bottom row: Gabby Orr of *Politico*; Justin Giboney of the AND Campaign; and Jeanné Lewis of Faith in Public Life. Access at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HiU9KcHN7k>



Video: *Suppressed: The Fight to Vote*. Access at <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=video+suppressed&docid=608020274869896927&mid=1E6DBDB9C0F29E643E681E6DBDB9C0F29E643E68&view=detail&FORM=VIRE>

Second Reading (Romans 8:28-30)

This is a brief excerpt about confidence. The word itself is never used in the text, but what it is driving at is that we should not worry about ultimate matters. "(F)or those who love God, for those called according to His purpose, all things work together for the good."

There is an anecdote about Franklin Roosevelt that hints at the kind of confidence that seems to be indicated by this passage. FDR, as most politicians, was a complicated person, and the point is not that he is a model in all respects. But after he was elected and before he took office, an assassin tried to shoot him as he was riding in an open car in Miami, Florida. Present to shake his hand was Mayor Anton Cermak of Chicago, and one of the assassin's bullets wounded Mayor Cermak. FDR did not flinch, did not even duck! He set about instructing people to put Mayor Cermak in the car and directing the driver to head to a hospital. He confidently did what should have been done.

Third Reading (Matthew 13:44-52)

"Finders keepers!" That is what I accepted as common wisdom when I was a child. So the brief parable that begins the reading for the day has long mystified me: "The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure that had been hidden in the field; when someone finds it he hides it and in his joy sells all that he has and purchases that field." Why purchase the field? Well, it turns out that happening upon something of value is not an entitlement to own or control it. Even when purchasing a major item, one takes care to determine whether the seller actually owns it in the first place; one would have a title search done when purchasing real estate, for example.

It turns out that much of the wealth in our world is, legally speaking, in the hands of people who inherited it. Did they do anything to merit it? They happened upon it, but, figuratively speaking, there has been no equivalent to purchasing the field in which it had been hidden. Furthermore, there is no real inquiry whether the wealth had been accumulated justly or honorably in the first place. When it comes to governmental power, Americans are suspicious of

inheritance; it is even in our Constitution that noble entitlements to power are not to be recognized. However, people tend to be less democratically inclined when it comes to resources such as wealth that can be critical in obtaining governmental power.

The heavenly kingdom is similar to the treasure hidden in a field. One may simply happen upon it, but one takes care to establish rights to the property where it is found lest someone else, who happens to own the field, claim it. So we happen upon the realm of divine things, and we dispose of all else so that our claim upon that realm is secure.

Sometimes we forget that transcendent treasures do not come to us transcendentally but hidden in earthly life. Our grasp of the latter needs to be secure; we cannot simply assume that claims upon what is valuable do not inhere in the everyday world. We may need to dispose of what we think we possess in order to afford that field in which the treasure is hidden. We may think in terms of a spiritually childish "Finders keepers!" But a secure grasp depends upon a disposition and acquisition, a process that turns out to be a genuine project.

Poem

All Things

All things are hidden in their opposites.

Ad Darqawi (1760-1823)

*I consider the ambition of overcoming
opposites, including also a synthesis
embracing both rational understanding
and the mystical experience of unity,
to be the **mythos**, spoken or unspoken,
of our present day and age.*

Werner Heisenberg (1901-1976)

Eternity hides in time.

The infinite hides in space.

Eternal life hides in mortal bodies.

The changeless hides in change.

In hurt hides healing.
In the teena's fleeting crush hides undying love.
In the hell of holocausts and genocides
hides redemption unfolding.

In our separations hides our unity.
In knowing hides the bliss
of knowing we do not know.
And all is well.

Tom Keene and Muse
April 28, 2020

Apathy in Christians

Al Eisch

On the front cover of TIME magazine in 1966 it broadcasted that GOD IS DEAD. Really? In what sense? Many objected and others thought it confirmed their lack of belief.

What if God didn't care about us? What if God didn't send His Son to show us that He wanted something better for us? But what if Jesus came and just complained about Pilate, Herod Antipas, or against the Sadducees and Pharisees? What if Jesus had died of old age having done little but some healings and preaching like a good rabbi?

Well, then, I guess we would feel uncared for, that we weren't valued, or that Jesus' life was just a sham and a waste. I guess we wouldn't care about the insignificant life that Jesus had.

Or, maybe we would do what He did with the political figures of His time and just do similar complaining. We would point fingers at those who had power and we would point fingers and complain about the state of the world. All mouth with no bite!

But what was just written is the opposite of what Jesus did. However, when we assess present life around, we do see us complaining. We see some of us criticizing the rich and others disgruntled with those protesting lack of

opportunities. Reality portrays many disregarding those demanding that their lives matter and their lack of rights. We segregate them and not care about their substandard schools or housing. We see and then look away as if we didn't see the injustice. Often we blame the unfortunate for their own status. We appear to be apathetic about the abuse and unjust system permitting the powerful to grab for themselves land, money, and powerful leadership positions. What keeps us apathetic about the pain of those beneath us (as if we feel a bit more important than them)? The world likes to use the phrase "we and them." How often do you and I fall into that type of thinking? It is never "us."

What can we do about the status quo? We collapse in spirit before a system seemingly impenetrable and we stay apathetic. We are apathetic like that other Jesus who died of old age, that other god far away. Staying apathetic honors the phrase "God is dead."

There is another argument among some Christians, namely, that God curses some and blesses others. God might have cursed the poor or the soldier who lost his sight or legs. If that were so, then why care for the handicapped soldier or the poor? It has to be God's will and we shouldn't intervene or give them healthcare or disability pay, right? And why give the single parent a fair wage or the orphan child education and healthcare? That is God putting them in that lot, not us, no? Apathy and discrimination aim at keeping things the way they are. We are stuck in that "we and them" mentality. That other Jesus wouldn't care about them, why should we?

This narrow interpretation doesn't come from the Hebrew Scriptures or Christian Scriptures.

God wasn't apathetic. Jesus wasn't apathetic. God did something over 1,800 years before Jesus' birth and continues to act. If you wish to follow Jesus and be more like Him, wishing is not enough. One has to ACT. One must DO. One must CARE. God cared enough to give the very best! If you have read the Scriptures repeatedly stating that God loves the lowly or that passage in Matthew 25 stating "When you gave food to the poor, You gave it to me. Who could miss the identification of Jesus with the hungry, powerless, etc.? It is not Jesus there and the lowly way over there. There is no we and they. There is unity. Humanity is all in this together. There is a relationship between God and US. Now what? If one part of humanity suffers, the other parts of humanity bears the consequences. It really is US.

What are we doing to be more like God's image that Genesis says we are? God's image seen in Jesus? Why stay apathetic and not act or not care, or not

vote? Why look at this country and decide that it's good enough and that you need not do anything? It comes down to being a follower of Jesus—doing and caring—or not doing & caring but just staying stagnant and apathetic. Really—stagnant. You are not growing in your humanity. You are not maturing. You either believe that God continues to act through you or that God did everything needed and now no more is needed.

Are you for improving relationships or are you content watching groups point fingers, curse, abuse, attack those defending the weak and downtrodden? Which poster might I see you carry? Perhaps none since you are content and stagnant. What grade do you give yourself for being a Christian? Maybe studying Jesus' behavior with people in the gospels might answer a few of my questions.

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>