

## Testimony



### A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating August 9, 2020

Communications with the editor should be sent to [j6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com](mailto: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 Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Wild Forces*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>.

After the poem I offer a few thoughts on silence in the face of white supremacy. Quite in contrast to silence, the following reflection, by Sr. Rose Kruppa, CDP, of St. Francis of Assisi Church here in San Antonio, gives this reading to last week's gospel:

When we consider the hungers of the world today, what gifts do we have to offer? How will God bless and break them? How will we be fed? And how will we pass that "feeding" on to others? And the gathering of the leftovers—do we really believe that there will always be enough?

For me, "Feed them yourselves" means offering the gifts I have been given by God, my abilities to donate money to organizations that feed the hungry and perform the other corporal works of mercy. I vote for candidates who recognize the dignity of all persons, who support living wages for all workers, who will lead in getting all people to work together. I continue to reflect on the Word and to share my reflections with others. I both pray and work for justice for all. And I work and pray that all hungers will be fed and all will be satisfied. Yes, all of this is about building the kingdom of God on earth. May God take, bless, multiply, and distribute what we offer to feed others.

Finally, Francis Skeith and David Atwood have sent a letter, dated this coming August 6, to the Texas Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Texas Catholic newspapers, calling upon all to join the international movement to abandon nuclear weapons. The text of the letter can be accessed at: <file:///C:/Users/Anthony/AppData/Local/Temp/ABOLISH%20NUCLEAR%20WEAPONS%20BEFORE%20THEY%20ABOLISH%20US%20.pdf>

## Calendar

### Online

**Monday August 3**, 6:00pm-7:00pm (CT), Webinar *Yemen and Iran: Who Suffers in a state of Sege?* Katherine Kelley. Organized by Massachusetts Peace Action.

Register at:

[https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcuduqvjliGtaYilqFnn9tL\\_OpAu36Lxlt](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcuduqvjliGtaYilqFnn9tL_OpAu36Lxlt)

**uesday August 4**, 10:00am; **Wednesday August 5**, 3:00pm; OR **Thursday August 6**, 6:00pm, film showing *Explained: The Racial Wealth Gap*, with Senator Cory Booker (New Jersey). After the 16 minute film, discussion by breakout groups.

Before the film, you might want to read an article at

[https://www.axios.com/newsletters/axios-am-e36ae16d-80a9-43b1-bf8d-1b504d2e7328.html?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=newsletter\\_axiosam&stream=top](https://www.axios.com/newsletters/axios-am-e36ae16d-80a9-43b1-bf8d-1b504d2e7328.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axiosam&stream=top).

To register for one of the film viewing times:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfiRsdplkm7HwqRnkbqtEaS-VPK6klAo6W2diC6F5zjewiKIQ/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](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>

**Thursday August 6**, 12:00pm-1:30pm, Zoom panel, "The Church Confesses: Reflections on Health Justice and the Christian Voice in Turbulent Times," Clare Hein Blanton (theology graduate student, U. of Aberdeen), Matthew Russell (Chapelwood United Methodist Church, Houston), Fred Smith (Center for Leadership in Public Theology), and John Swinton (U. of Aberdeen). Register at: <https://spiritualityandhealth.networkforgood.com/givecart>

**Three events commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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&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](https://secure.touchnet.net/C21403_ustores/web/product_detail.jsp?PRODUCTID=1930&SINGLESTORE=true)

## **El Paso**

**Tuesday August 11**, 7:00pm, Pax Christi El Paso Zoom meeting. Contact Patricia Delgado for the link: [phdelgado3583@gmail.com](mailto:phdelgado3583@gmail.com). Observance of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and discussion of the book *Freedom in a Constant Struggle* by Angela Davis.

**Wednesday August 26** and **Friday August 28**, noon hour, death penalty vigils in front of the new federal courthouse at the corner of Magoffin and Campbell.

## Notices

**Message of Bishop Mark J. Seitz on Recent U.S. Supreme Court Decisions on the Death Penalty and Abortion.** <https://www.elpasodiocese.org/statement-from-bp-seitz-on-scotus-decision-june-29.html>

**The Texas Coalition Against the Death Penalty** has posted a webinar, *The Execution of People with Intellectual Disabilities in Texas*, with Prof. Ana M. Otero. Prof. Otero presents the case law on the subject. Recorded July 28, the recording is available until August 27 at: <https://zoom.us/rec/share/xv4saLju2EROT9bX4m-PQoEhRofjaaa8gXRNqfEOzBzSkrMOX6V2VY9H3ZASkckf>. The access password needs to be manually typed, not pasted: +\*fBS\$\$2

**Interfaith Radio livestream: *Trans in the Eyes of God***

**Part 1**, Includes an interview with Toni Newman, author of *I Rise*.

[https://interfaithradio.org/Archive/2018-](https://interfaithradio.org/Archive/2018-September/Trans_in_the_Eyes_of_God__Part_1)

[September/Trans\\_in\\_the\\_Eyes\\_of\\_God\\_\\_Part\\_1](https://interfaithradio.org/Archive/2018-September/Trans_in_the_Eyes_of_God__Part_1)

**Part 2**, Features the Anglican Church

[https://interfaithradio.org/ShowAudio/Trans\\_in\\_the\\_Eyes\\_of\\_God\\_\\_Part\\_2](https://interfaithradio.org/ShowAudio/Trans_in_the_Eyes_of_God__Part_2)

**Part 3**, Features the Jewish context

[https://interfaithradio.org/ShowAudio/Trans\\_in\\_the\\_Eyes\\_of\\_God\\_\\_Part\\_3](https://interfaithradio.org/ShowAudio/Trans_in_the_Eyes_of_God__Part_3)

**The Marianist Social Justice Collaborative has posted a video on welcoming sexual minorities.** The link is

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=\\_ItQVlyXjd4&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=_ItQVlyXjd4&feature=emb_logo)

**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>

**Online video on the Christian Nationalist Movement**, by Andrew Whitehead (Clemson University), 5 minutes:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xbLKa40T1I>

### **Second Reading (Romans 9:1-5)**

Some people accused Saint Paul of being a traitor to his people because he taught that gentiles could become Christians without observing the Jewish legal observances. So he went out of his way to affirm his attachment to his nation.

I am speaking the truth in Messiah, I am not lying; with my conscience co-testifying for me in the holy spirit: I have great sorrow and my heart unremitting grief. For I myself wished I were a curse, apart from the Messiah for the sake of my brothers and sisters of my natural kin, who are Israelites, whose are the adoption, glory, covenants, legislation, worship, and promises, whose are the patriarchs, and from whom the Messiah came according to the flesh....

The elaborate form of expression that Paul uses is distant, but the sentiment is familiar. We hear a lot these days about our nation's original sin of slavery, about how everything about American life is marked at the core with racism. All this contrasts the eighteenth century ideals with which our non-British history began: equality, God-given rights, the latter including a right to live, and to do so in liberty, the liberty to achievement a true happiness (today we would say "self-actualization"). Don't we all mix our appreciation with grief!

There is a temptation to make ancestry a matter of present guilt or innocence. That hardly seems to be the point. Should it not be a matter of assuring whether the present assemblies of Christians and the present nation are just?

### **Third Reading (Matthew 14:22-33)**

In this reading Mathew inserts the allegory about Peter walking on the water into the brief narrative found in the *Gospel of Mark* about Jesus appearing on the Sea of Galilee during a windy storm. Wind is commonly symbolic of the Holy Spirit in Christian imagery. Jesus appearing and being mistaken for a ghost is a similar reference to the Easter experience. In such a context, Peter can be understood to represent the Church.

In the early era in which the *Gospel of Matthew* was composed, the Christian movement had spread beyond Palestine to lands where most people were not culturally Judean. Indeed, the Jewish War and destruction of Jerusalem had forced the followers of Jesus into new unfamiliar lands. This is “Peter walking on the water.” When the Spirit blew where it willed, Peter, the Church, was fearful and even had doubts.

One can think of the effort of Matteo Ricci to insert Christianity into Chinese culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the Church authorities found fault with his efforts and mandated that Christian missions had to convert non-European people into a Latinized version of Christian tradition. It took three centuries for that policy to be changed, at the Second Vatican Council. Ricci, not his authorities, is still remembered with appreciation in Chinese history; in 1987, when I was asked by Chinese scholars in Taipei what “Blasi” means in English and replied that it is an Italian name, they began to exclaim “Li Ma-to! Li Ma-to!” (Matteo Ricci!).

At the present time in the United States, the composition of the society and of the Christian churches is changing. Inevitably American Christian culture will change; indeed it is already doing so. The challenge is not to be paralyzed by fear and doubt.

## Poem

### *Wild Forces*

*Beautiful, wild forces dwell in us. Let them turn  
the mills within and fill sacks that feed even heaven.*

Francis of Assisi

All of us in pain,  
all of us in poverty,  
all of us prisoners,  
all of us tortured,  
all of us terrorized,  
all of us refugees,  
all of us homeless,  
all of us cold and hungry,  
all of us lonely and afraid.

May we unveil and own  
these powers within  
and kindle the fires  
that heal; whole and holy.

Tom Keene and Muse  
January 25, 2019

## **It Is So Silent!**

Anthony J. Blasi

No lives matter until Black lives matter! Yes. Work needs to be done in the white community! Hmm, is there a white community any more than there is a unitary African American community? There are white supremacists in our society, and many people who by some accident happen to be white do not identify with them. We are not even in social circles with them. So what is to be done?

We can follow the same sequence of statements and the same question with other minorities. One may not be a Latino, but may also not be in a social circle that is hostile to Latinos or even uncomfortable with Latinos. Many of us may be aware that our own grandparents were considered inferior or *declassé*. I recall in my early teens reading in books from the junior high school library saying people from Southern Europe were intellectually inferior and less industrious compared to people from Northern Europe. Maybe that experience was a personal advantage for me individually, enabling me to disbelieve racist discourse about groups of people other than Southern Europeans. I doubt that the books I read as a child more than six decades ago are still in library circulation, but I was appalled at the geography texts that the state of Louisiana supplied for use in an eighth grade class I taught in the fall of 1969. The text described the "less vigorous" people of South America, compared to North America. I doubt that those texts, whose chapters on South America I did not use, are in use today, but high school texts in Texas recently referred to "immigrant laborers from Africa" rather than slaves in pre-Civil War America. So what is to be done now? I co-authored a text book that rejected notions of superior and inferior races—as most texts in my field also do—but will that make Black, Brown, or other lives matter?

Part of the structure that permits notions of white supremacy to persist is the separation of white supremacists and egalitarians, so that they inhabit different social spaces. I distance myself from people who brandish the battle flag of the former Confederacy. African Americans and many others would surely disapprove if I did not distance myself from the Confederate symbol. Associating with such implies approval of what it stands for. I recall quietly organizing my lecture materials before a class at the large African American ("HBCU") university where I taught, when the cell phone of a white girl in the back of the room began playing *Dixie*. I and just about everyone else, except the white girl, looked up wide eyed with mouths open in astonishment. The expectation, justified I think, was not to associate oneself with symbolic material with racist connotations. The cell phone kept on....

Given the separation into different social spaces of racists and others, there are generally few opportunities for white people who are not white supremacists to have any ameliorative effect on white supremacists. The two categories do not comprise a community. That is why, in part, our



nation is so divided politically and value-wise. It is as if the Civil War needs to be repeated and the Fourteenth Amendment reasserted.

One cannot plausibly deny that we have a white supremacist president of the United States at the present time. "White" is not taken as a biological trait so much as a social construction. Middle Easterners and South Asians, for example, are excluded from the white category by the president and his administration. The aura of legitimacy of government is lending force to white supremacist notions, so much so that other white supremacists feel that they can be more politically expressive than in the recent past. This needs to be corrected, and it does not appear possible to make the correction without the people who are not white supremacists becoming more expressive too.

It is with that in mind that I ask the question, where are the clergy? Where is the corrective preaching? Where are the religions? It is so silent!

### **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](http://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](http://www.txccedp.org)

Dialogue Institute of San Antonio  
[www.thedialoginstitute.org/san-antonio/](http://www.thedialoginstitute.org/san-antonio/)

Climate Change  
[www.creation-care.com](http://www.creation-care.com)

NowCastSA  
[www.nowcastsa.com/](http://www.nowcastsa.com/)

Migrant Center for Human Rights  
<https://Migrantcenter.org>