

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating October 18, 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 Twenty-ninth Sunday of Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Jesus in Nazareth*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>.

After the poem there is my essay on the issue of whether voting for a pro-choice candidate involves cooperating in evil.

Calendar

(Times are given in Central Daylight Time)

Tuesday October 13, 7:00pm-8:00pm, "The Innocence project: Finally Running Free," with Huwe Burton (an exonerated former inmate). RSVP at: https://identity.stedwards.edu/app/stedwardsuniversity_singlesignon_1/exk84w4vbqoYsowzi2p7/sso/saml

Tuesday October 13, 7:00pm-9:30pm, documentary film *13th*, on the Thirteenth Amendment ending slavery; followed by discussion, with Felix Ortiz, Brandon Coleman, and Sr. Martha Ann Kirk (all University of the Incarnate Word). Register at: <https://uiw.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUvf-usqTMpHtJCb3xSZnnc45LeWK5mUSIN>

Thursday October 15, 3:00pm, "Religion & Gender and Race in the 2020 Political Landscape." Center for Religion & American Culture, Indiana University/Purdue University Indianapolis. Register at: https://iu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ex4iXw_oSOy7a9ofwSVWsg

Thursday October 15, 5:00pm-6:00pm (6:00pm-7:00pm ET), “Do Black Lives Matter to God?” Amey Victoria Adkins-Jones (Boston College). Register at: https://bccte.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_rhWFKojlSzOGaM0po2gXzw?utm_source=Do+Black+Lives+Matter+to+God+Webinar+-+15+October+2020+first&utm_campaign=Do+Black+Live+Matter+to+God+webinar+-+first&utm_medium=email

Friday October 16, 9:00am-12:00pm, webinar “Displaced: Unhomeliness and Community During Times of Crisis,” a cross-cultural symposium sponsored by the University of the Incarnate Word and Atatürk University, Turkey. Register at: <https://uiw.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEpf-yqqjwsGNYcOmp1irv5IOAKfYLi8hJU>

Saturdays October 17 and **November 21**, 10:30am-11:30am, “Faith and Race—An Ongoing Conversation,” Bishop Trevor Alexander (Protestant chaplain, University of the Incarnate Word), Rev. Andries Coetzee (University Presbyterian Church), and Dr. Doshie Piper (University of the Incarnate Word). \$7.50 for both discussions, before October 12; \$10.00 after. Register at: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration/>

Tuesday October 20, 2:00pm, webinar “Immigration and Asylum: Mission and Solidarity at the El Paso-Juarez border,” Hedi Cernaka (attorney and Maryknoll missionary). Register at: https://mission.maryknoll.us/elpasajuarezborder?utm_campaign=2020%2010%20Webinars&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=95731585&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-90PwT20QEBVfhKli3Fc8g90QlqIFSoLjl-UIkk53l7-Zl4hZwjW_YQu5XJIMwQ8dl37zZ5cguv7MonU1dzQxy9wEAB6g&utm_content=95731585&utm_source=hs_email

Tuesday October 20, 6:30pm, online, Courageous Conversations, Holy Cross Church, Austin. Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89622504855?pwd=cEdDbTEzbGJTWVlaSldzSnpxVGJOUT09#success>
Zoom meeting ID 896 2250 4855; Passcode 734843

Thursday October 15, 6:30pm, Pax Christi Little Rock meeting, with a presentation, “Just War vs Just Peace: An Examination of Church Teachings on

Nonviolence,” bishop Anthony Taylor (Little Rock). Link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8769414122>

Tuesday October 20, 7:00pm-9:00pm, webinar “Voting and Catholicism, a Critical Discussion of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Bishop John Stowe (Lexington Kentucky and Pax Christi USA) and Cathleen Kaveny (Boston College). Register at:
https://creighton.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_M2bBxgeKR5ONYL6JrA6Hwg?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=96248df8-cde9-4812-b55d-34b5ab32f5f1

Tuesday October 20, 1:00pm (Part I) and **Tuesday October 27**, 12:00pm (Part II), “Texas’s ‘Future Dangerousness’ Special Issue,” Gretchen Sween (Austin, Texas, attorney). Register at:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScTGdhjmus1Z8VVPE2EivDhFmmNERaWSZzeyuHs6XrJgXF_hw/viewform

Wednesday October 21, 1:00pm (2:00pm ET), webinar “New START: Catholic-Evangelical Dialogue on Nuclear Disarmament,” concerning the February 2021 deadline for renewing the US-Russia Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. Register at:
https://notredame.zoom.us/webinar/register/9516015727938/WN_qZIZxfU4T9WdtoHe4vjzYw

Wednesday October 21, 7:00pm-9:00pm, online panel “Faith and Politics: How Does Catholic Social Teaching Address the Issues of Today,” Shirley Gonzales (San Antonio City Council), Elizabeth Lutz (The Health Collaborative), Steve O’Neil (St. Mary’s University), Donald A. Page (Faith Community Baptist Church), and Vincent D. Rougeau (Boston College), moderated by Thomas M. Engler (President, St. Mary’s University). **Further information forthcoming**

Wednesday October 21, 7:30pm, Texas Coalition Against the Death Penalty book club online discussion of *A Lesson Before Dying*, by Ernest J. Gaines. Register at:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScWORN7DdsUiXJlgb_Eyq9G0JF8uMn5JVuS9ix3wV1ihtk1_w/viewform

Thursday October 22, 5:00pm (6:00pm ET), Daniel Daley (Boston College) “Catholic End of Life Ethics and the COVID Crisis.” Register at:
https://bccte.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mJxED4O3S1SPixilnyNmuQ?utm_so

urce=Catholic+End+of+Life+Ethics+%26+the+COVID+Crisis+Webinar+-+22+October+2020+first&utm_campaign=Catholic+End+of+Life+Care+%26+COVID+webinar+-+first&utm_medium=email

Sunday October 25, 10:00am, James Anderson (University of St. Thomas and St. Mary's Seminary, Houston), "The Catholic Church's Ongoing Response to the Reformation." Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86564638381?pwd=MTBtSF16eVhoTUF3SXJ2VIBWd0N2QT09#success>

Tuesday October 27, 5:00pm-6:00pm, "Race and Religion in the Presidential Election," Gerardo Marti (Davidson College) and Stephanie Y. Mitchem (University of South Carolina). Register at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86564638381?pwd=MTBtSF16eVhoTUF3SXJ2VIBWd0N2QT09#success>

Wednesday October 28, Peace Day Events at University of the Incarnate Word.

Three online broadcasts:

1:30pm-2:45pm, Roger Barnes on three civil rights workers murdered in 1964 for registering African Americans to vote in Mississippi.

3:00pm-4:15pm, About Face: Veterans Against the War, with Jovanni Reyes, Hart Vigas, Jake Tucker, Julie Vaquera, and others.

4:30pm-5:45pm, Free Speech theory: Understanding the Controversies, with Brandon T. Metroka (University of the Incarnate Word).

Register for all three at: <https://uiw.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0pc-mpjgsE9K18KEylWRJpaUddM-V7tgL>

Thursday October 29, 7:00pm-9:00pm, documentary film *Separated: Children at the Border*, followed by discussion with Maia Felix-Ortiz and Brando Metroka (both of University of the Incarnate Word). Register at:

https://uiw.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEscemsrTMuGtZ6f0sT-Fc_J7Nxfuk-yYhp

Saturday November 7, 10:00am, live streamed border mass, accessible on the Catholic Diocese of El Paso web page. The dioceses of El Paso, Las Cruces, and Ciudad Juarez will join in the celebration of the mass, with bishop Peter Baldacchino of Las Cruces officiating.

Saturday November 7, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting, with Lauren Bailey from Pax Christi USA.

Tuesday November 10, 6:00pm (7:00pm ET), Pax Christi USA “Grassroots Leadership Call,” primarily for Pax Christi members. Link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86492056719>

Sunday November 15, 10:00am, online presentation “Carbon Offsets and How to Purchase Them,” Jim Blackburn (Coastal Exchange). Link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86564638381?pwd=MTBtSF16eVhoTUF3SXJ2VIBWd0N2QT09#success>

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://mission.maryknoll.us/reflection-guides-ordinary-time>

Second Reading (First Thessalonians 1:1-5b)

The *First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians* is the earliest known work in Christian literature. Because the four gospels situate their narratives before the

time of Paul and his followers and because they are placed before the Pauline epistles in modern New Testaments, there is a temptation to think of the gospels as chronologically prior to the epistles. In terms of date of composition, it is the other way around.

According to the *Acts of the Apostles*, Paul had spoken in the synagogue of Thessalonica with mixed results, and some who could not accept his teachings organized a riot against him. His host had to post a bond with the local authorities, so that Paul could leave town in peace. Paul wrote this early letter to assure his Thessalonian followers that the mission and church would continue despite his absence.

The reading for this Sunday consists of the address ("Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the assembly of Thessalonians") and greeting of the letter. As part of the greeting, Paul refers to what happened during his mission there: "And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, accepting the message amidst much affliction with the Holy Spirit's joy..." (1 Thess 6). Ancient Greek did not have punctuation; so modern translators mark the sentences as best they can. The translation used in churches breaks that verse, 6, into two sentences, associating "accepting the message amidst much affliction with the Holy Spirit's joy" with the next sentence, which is not included in the Sunday reading. It makes more sense, in my opinion, to associate the phrase with what comes before: The Thessalonians ran into difficulties with the synagogue and governmental authorities, just as Paul had and Jesus before them both.

Third Reading (Matthew 22:15-21)

"Then render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."
Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus by bringing along Roman allies—"Herodians," presumably agents from Galilee since there was no Herod in power in Jerusalem—and asking Jesus about paying a census tax to the Roman emperor, "Caesar." They were trying to have Jesus reported to the Romans as an anti-government agitator. It turned out that Jesus was not opposed to government: "then render to Caesar what is Caesar's..." Nevertheless, he was not going to buy in to the divinization of the emperor—"and to God what is God's."

If he wanted to, Jesus could have made an issue about the census tax, a tax exacted from slave and free persons aged 12 or 14 to 65, to be paid in Roman currency. The denarius coin that would be used, bearing an image of Emperor

Tiberius, bore an inscription as well: "Tiberius Caesar, august son of the divine Augustus, high priest." Was the late emperor Augustus divine? Was the current emperor, Tiberius, really a high priest in the eyes of Jesus and his followers? However, Jesus was not looking for an argument with the government.

There are church officials who object to filling out a form for their agencies' employees to be exempted from medical insurance coverages for birth control pills, on the theory that contraception is irreligious and that furthermore some such pills are abortifacients. They succeeded recently in the Supreme Court under the theory that having to fill out of the form was tantamount to an infringement on the free exercise of their religion. This appears to be a quest for an argument to have with the government under a previous president to accommodate them with the mere filling out of a form.

Poem

Jesus in Nazareth

He came back to our village,
this bastard son of Mary,
this carpenter, now notorious
for healings and teachings.

He came with his rabble of
women and men hanging on
to his doings and words.
Who does he think he is?

Some of us went to him for healings.
We listened to his ramblings
about this Kingdom of God,
coming soon, already growing among us.

We elders hung back.
We knew this guy as a kid
coming to synagogue,
raising befuddling questions.

Some of his healings took
but a lot more didn't.
Most of us knew him too well.
Off he went with his groupies.

Word came back about his troubles
with the Romans and temple chiefs.
The Romans dispatched him
in their Roman way.

Now, his minions disrupt our synagogues
with claims he is our urgently needed messiah,
imagine that: a crucified savior
and still making trouble.

Tom Keene

Does Voting for a Pro-choice Legislator Cooperate in Evil?

Anthony J. Blasi

Recently, a purportedly pro-life politician claimed that any Catholic who votes for a pro-choice political candidate is not a true Catholic insofar as such a voter contradicts Catholic teaching. Because of my association with a political party, I myself have received anonymous vile accusations in the mail claiming that I am a baby-killer.

First let me affirm that I am personally opposed to the abortion of a live unborn who evidentially will be viable at the projected time of birth, though I must admit that exceptional circumstances could arise. My opposition is a matter of ethics, and I do not in general impose my ethics on others. Similarly I would not want the ethics of others imposed on me. More than once for my ethical stand I have been the object of scorn from people who think they are more progressive than I. I do not return in kind because I do not want to be scornful of anyone.

In what follows, I am not referring to terminating everything that may exist after the moment of conception, the point in time of genetic individuation. Church teaching is that *life* must be protected.¹ Growth is a sign of life; genetic individuation is not. Life is a quality of intercellular structure and function; genetic individuation is a chemical reaction. The evil deed involved in abortion is one that can occur once life is present, i.e. after that explosion of growth once implantation into the uterine wall occurs; the ethical status of anything that comes before that is not the subject of the present discussion.² Just as a pregnant mother expecting to give birth has a moral obligation to avoid alcohol and the drugs that would cause the newborn to experience suffering and even deformity, so is there a corresponding right of the unborn to protection.

Second, there is a traditional concern in the morality taught in schools of philosophy and Catholic theology for centuries known as cooperation in an evil deed. Judges and justices, for example, do not cooperate in perpetrating evil deeds. They read the law and examine the nature of cases and ascertain whether the cases are instances of what laws proscribe. Similarly when they judge the constitutional status of laws, they engage in textual analysis, not the ethical status of actions to which laws may be applied. Similarly the federal executive branch in the United States as described in the Constitution is not really involved in the ethical status of actions of people outside the government. In the case of judicial decisions made on the constitutionality of laws proscribing abortion, such can only be overturned by an amendment to the Constitution, and the president of the United States, for example, plays no role in formulating or adopting constitutional amendments. So the political issue of abortion does not pertain to presidential races or what kind of justice a president might appoint to appellate courts and the Supreme Court. The focus should be on legislative candidates.³

So, is voting for a legislative candidate who takes a pro-choice stance an example of cooperating in an evil deed? The answer depends on the intent of the voter. If the voter knows abortion is unethical but nevertheless wants to facilitate the performance of abortions, the answer is "Yes." The technical term for this is *formal cooperation in evil*. It is unlikely that a given voter wishes to bring evil about, or that a Catholic voter does not know the Church's stand; rather, the

¹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes* #51: "Vita igitur inde a conceptione, maxima cura tuenda est/Therefore life, this side of conception, must be protected with maximum care."

² Specifically, the question of the "morning after pill" is not part of the present discussion.

³ I observe that people often favor or oppose presidential candidates on the basis of the fine points of their legislative preferences; they should instead evaluate presidential candidates on their general integrity and ability, since legislators, both in the state house and in Congress, are the people who legislate.

voter may not have the conviction that abortion is an evil deed. The traditional account of such a person refers to the primacy of conscience. The Church would try to convince the individual, especially in the confessional, but not condemn the individual on account of a honestly held conviction.⁴

A voter might vote for a legislative candidate not because of but despite the latter's pro-choice stance.⁵ In such a case, an unethical deed that might occur in part as a result of one's vote for a legislator is not willed by the voter. The technical term is *material cooperation in evil*. One way of considering a case of material cooperation is double effect. An anti-abortion legislative candidate may favor other evils than abortion while opposing abortion; the voter may vote against that anti-abortion candidate because of the unethical nature of the other evil(s) that the candidate favors. Examples might underfunding medical services to minorities, the death penalty, and unjust labor legislation. In the present era, a legislator's opposition to protecting the environment may also be deemed a serious evil. It is not a simple matter of comparing the grievousness of abortion versus the other actions because 1) there is no metric of grievousness, 2) the anticipated legislative vote totals for given bills may not be close enough for the electoral success of one legislator to make a difference, and 3) there may be a difference that exists between actually bringing an evil about versus simply permitting an evil.

Another approach to voting as a material cooperation in evil is *mediate* versus *immediate* relationships between the acts of voting, legislating, and performing an evil act.⁶ The sequence: vote, followed by legislator's vote for a law that permits, followed by performance of the deed, is a case of mediate cooperation. The evil ethical standing of the final deed can hardly be attributed to the voter.

One should also consider whether the voter's act of voting is necessary for the ultimate evil deed. If physicians conceal what they do, if prosecutors desist from pressing cases, if juries decline to convict, it is not necessary for the voter to vote against a pro-choice legislative candidate for the unethical act to be performed.

In the American framework, the judiciary has ruled that abortion is not a government's interest. This is in keeping with the "conservative" jurisprudential

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994, #1782, citing Vatican II, *Dignitatis humanae*, #2.

⁵ This is germane in most cases to candidates for state legislatures and state senates, since these are the bodies to pass laws regulating abortion.

⁶ Rather than "mediate" and "immediate," the alternate terms used may be "remote" and "proximate."

tradition of limited government. Indeed, in appointing the justice who authored the original *Roe v. Wade* opinion, President Nixon wanted abortions to be permitted in medical settings so that legislators close to Catholics, among others, would not vote for socialized medicine; after all socialized medicine that had to include abortion would be something that the traditional Catholic unionized working class would not favor in the 1970s. A major contributor to Richard Nixon's campaign, W. Clement Stone, was an insurance magnate. The intent was to limit government judicially so that politically the major voting block that wanted socialized medicine, Catholic unionized workers, would not support it, for fear that they would be required to pay taxes for abortions.

Let's recall what I said above, that I do not want to impose my ethics on others or have others' ethical stands imposed on me. The judicial decisions have made it so that my ethics are not being imposed on others. This is part of the conservative constitutional philosophy behind the judicial decisions. Now turn it around the other way: if I were to be required to pay for something I deem unethical, either in the form of insurance premiums or taxes, would that constitutional philosophy not be violated?

I want to return to the issue of immediate versus mediate relationships between voting and the performance of an evil deed. There is the matter of the number of steps between the voting deed and the performed evil deed. By analogy, think in terms of probability. If a deck of cards has 52 different cards, the probability of randomly selecting an ace of spades is $1/52$, or 0.192307. The probability of selecting the ace of spades twice is $1/52$ times $1/52$, which equals $1/2704$, or 0.0003698. One can readily see that as the number of steps increases, the likelihood of a given outcome diminishes. It is obvious that it does not take a great number of steps for the contribution of, say one voter's vote, to have a *de minimus* outcome.

So far we have limited the discussion to voting for or against legislators who have taken public stands on whether the state should permit or proscribe abortion. Specifically, it has been a matter of controlling medical practitioners. This is an entirely artificial consideration. In actual reality, the number of abortions is related to conditions that drive women to seek abortion in the first place. The appropriate question to ask of a legislative candidate in the first instance is whether they favor measures related to those conditions. For example, according to Catholic social doctrine, someone who works full time should be able to provide a decent standard of living for a family. This takes the discussion into largely economic provisions: mandating living wages, providing insurance against

major medical expenses, and emergency food. More mediate provisions would include legal frameworks that favor organized labor, facilitate the prosecution of rape, and enforce alimony payments. It is disengenuous, in my opinion, for legislative candidates to sermonize about abortion while neglecting what drives women to seek abortions.

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>

