

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating October 29, 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. Send comments on the newsletter to J6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com.

Editorial

After the calendar, the *Third Reading* commentary is based on the gospel reading for the thirtieth Sunday in ordinary time. Tom Keene's poem is *Credo*. See <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php> for more of Tom's poems. The Columban Missionaries Statement on the Persecution of the Rohingya follows.

I have translated a statement by Bishop Giovanni Ricchiuti, president of Pax Christi Italy, on the prospect of Pope John XXIII being named patron of the Italian military on the grounds that he served in the military during World War I. It is a fact that Pope John, Angelo Roncalli, was drafted into the Italian military while still studying for the priesthood, and after ordination was activated during World War I as a military hospital administrator, but Bishop Ricchiuti argues that there is far greater reason to dissociate Pope John from any military or war.

Finally, since San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg announced a forthcoming trade mission to Israel, two local NGOs—San Antonio for Justice in Palestine and the San Antonio Chapter, Jewish Voice for Peace—have issued a joint statement urging the mayor to learn about conditions in the Palestinian territories. The joint statement is given below.

Calendar

Various dates and times, Journey of Hope: From Violence to Healing. Families of murder victims speak out against the death penalty.

Sunday October 22, 3:00pm-5:00pm, Tymen Hall, Benson Theological Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate Drive.

Monday October 23, 12:00pm-2:00pm, Vista Room, Central Academic Building, Texas A & M University, One University Way.

Tuesday October 24, 3:00pm, Mabee Library Auditorium, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

Wednesday October 25, 6:00pm-7:30pm, Chapel, St. John's Lutheran Church, 502 E. Nueva.

Wednesday October 25, 6:30pm-8:00pm, Turkish Raindrop House, 4337 Vance Jackson (behind large Car Wash sign, just north of I-410). RSVP for supper: sanantonio@turkishhouse.org.

Thursday October 26, 4:00pm-6:00pm, Law Alumni Room, Sarita Kenedy East Law Library, St. Mary's University, One Camino Santa Maria.

Monday October 23, 6:00pm-9:00pm, Catholic Relief Services Solidarity Event: Global Migration seminar. 6:00 rosary; 6:30-7:30 Nahren Anweya presentation on the Syrian refugee crisis; 7:30-7:45 Q & A. Our Lady's Chapel, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

Tuesday October 24, 10:30am-12:30pm, Raising Our Children, Not Our Hand Workshop. Chapel Auditorium, Our Lady of the Lake University, 411 SW 24th St.

Wednesday October 25, UIW Peace Day. Exhibits in the Student Engagement Center (SEC, in the center of the campus) Concourse.

9:00am-10:15am, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. SEC 2nd floor, 2030-32.

10:30am-11:45am, David Armstrong, Creative Writing: Empathy as a Means to Peace. SEC 2nd floor, 2030-32.

12:00pm-1:15pm, Roger Barnes, Nazi Racial Policy, 1933-1945. Sec 2nd floor, 2030-32.

1:30pm-2:45pm, Benjamin C. Miele, Gilgamesh as a Call to Action: Feminism, Marxism, and Moral Agency in the World.

SEC 2nd floor, 2030-32.

3:00pm-4:15pm, Lapita Nash, Would You Have Tried to Stop the Jewish Holocaust? What Are You Doing in the Face of Rohingya Crisis Now? SEC 2nd floor, 2030-32.

4:30pm, Neomi DeAnda, Immigrants and Social Justice: A Theological Response. Mabee Library Auditorium.

6:00pm-7:00pm, Claudia Garcia, Girls' Leadership in San Antonio. SEC 2nd floor, 2030-32.

All at University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

Wednesday October 25, 7:00pm-9:00pm, film, “Out of Reach,” on deportations and SB4. Santikos Bijou Theater, 4522 Fredricksburg Rd., Free but rsvp at <https://outofreachsanantonio.eventbrite.com>.

Thursday October 26, 5:00pm-6:00pm, **in Austin**, Thomas P. Rausch, S.J., “Pope Francis: reclaiming the vision of Vatican II.” Jones Global Events Center, Ragsdale Center building, Saint Edward’s University, 3001 S. Congress Ave., Austin, 78704.

Tuesday November 7, 6:00pm-8:30pm, Community Conversation with San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg. Foyer and Conference Room A, University Center, Saint Mary’s University, One Camino Santa Maria.

Friday November 10, 7:30pm-9:30pm, **in Seguin**, film, *(Re)Formation*. A group of artists renovate a transition home for discarded youth and explore the meaning of church, holy ground, and Jesus’ mission. Studio Theatre at Weston Center, Texas Lutheran University, 1000 West Court St., Seguin.

Third Reading (Matthew 22: 34-40)

“You shall love the Lord your god with your whole heart with your whole soul,’ and with your whole mind...” This is the well-known response by Jesus to the question, “Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” His response continues, “And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Here Jesus is depicted quoting Hebrew scripture; the first several portions about loving God are from *Deuteronomy* 6:5, and the second commandment is from *Leviticus* 19:8. Loving God “with your whole mind” is Matthew’s own teaching, changing the wording from Mark’s “from your whole strength.”

The underlying teaching is the priority of loving God and neighbor. Regulation and practices that do not have one accomplishing those two objective can be set aside, and they ought to be set aside when they prevent one from loving God and neighbor.

Matthew was deliberate in the way that he composed his gospel. His community consisted of people who were familiar with the Hebrew scriptures and, in all likelihood, with the traditional Jesus sayings—and possibly even with the *Gospel of Mark*. Matthew’s added wording, “...and with your whole mind,” would have stood out as an emphasized point when Matthew’s version was read aloud. Here, “mind” translates *dianoia*, which means “common sense” or “intelligence in the use of knowledge.” Why did Matthew introduce this?

The Christian and Hebrew scriptures comprise a hefty volume. It can be quoted with a wrong purpose in mind; the narrative of the temptation of Jesus in the desert has even the devil quoting scripture. In addition to scripture, many religious traditions and communities have additional rules, regulations, precedents, and extrapolations. Matthew’s point is that one cannot legitimately hide behind texts, be they canon law,

customs, or even scripture itself. It is necessary for all to think for themselves with skill and circumspection, in deciding what loving God and neighbor requires. Such comes not by way of license but obligation.

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Poem

Credo

I believe in source,
that life comes from life,
knowing comes from knowing.

I believe in source made known
in shapes of trees, sounds of songs,
divulged in darkest silence.

I believe in the airy presence of source,
in faintest breeze, hurricane force,
in what we breathe.

Tom Keene
September 19, 2017

Columban Missionaries Statement on the Persecution of the Rohingya

HONG KONG — As the persecution of the Muslim minority in Rakhine State in Myanmar/Burma reaches a feverish pitch and forces thousands to flee to neighboring Bangladesh, Columban Superior General, Fr. Kevin O'Neill, sends a message of solidarity saying, "We reject persecution of any community regardless of religion, race, or ethnic identity. We urge an end to the violence and violation of human rights of the Rohingya people and hope for their peaceful return to their homes in the Rakhine State of Myanmar/Burma."

Columban missionaries urge the government of Myanmar/Burma to immediately allow international humanitarian assistance to reach people in need and to seek long term peace and protection for the Muslim minorities of the Rakhine State and ethnic minorities throughout the country. We support the Caritas Internationalis campaign for refugees and migrants, "*Share the Journey*" which launches September 27, 2017, and hope that it will contribute to a global response of support for the Muslim minorities forced to flee Myanmar/Burma due to violence and persecution.

In May 2016 Cardinal Bo, Myanmar/Burma's first Cardinal, spoke at the United Kingdom's parliament saying of the Rohingya crisis that is, "an appalling scar on the

conscience of my country... No human being deserves to be treated this way. Without [a solution], the prospects for genuine peace and true freedom for my country will be denied, for no-one can sleep easy at night knowing how one particular people group are dying simply due to their race and religion.”

In February 2017 Pope Francis delivered a message of prayer and love for the Rohingya people saying, “*They are good and peaceful people. They are our sisters and brothers.*” Columban missionaries share this feeling of unity with all people of good will and faith. Pope Francis will be visiting Myanmar/Burma in late 2017, the first papal visit to the country in history.

In a joint statement released by the Catholic National Justice and Peace Commission of Pakistan, the President of Pakistan Catholic Bishops’ Conference His Grace Archbishop Joseph Coutts and His Excellency Bishop Joseph Arshad, Chairperson of National Commission for Justice & Peace, pleaded that the State Counsellor/Noble Peace Prize Honorable Aung San Suu Kyi being the beacon of peace should ensure the full rights of Rohingya people. Furthermore, they appealed to the democratic Government of Burma/Myanmar to immediately intervene by ceasing all military operations in Northern Rakhine State. Pakistan is estimated to be home to one of the largest Rohingya population outside of Myanmar/Burma.

Columban missionaries are present in Myanmar/Burma and in Pakistan. We work with the local church in carrying out its mission of evangelization which includes working for peace, justice, and care for creation.

Fr. Kevin O’Neill
Superior General

Statement of Bishop Giovanni Ricchuiti, President of Pax Christi Italy, on the Prospect of Pope John XXIII being named Patron of the Italian Military

News has been received that Saint John XXIII, since he had been a member of it during the First World War, will soon be proclaimed Patron of the Italian Military. As president of the Italian section of Pax Christi, an international Catholic movement for peace, it seems to me disrespectful to involve him as patron of armed forces since, while pope, he denounced every war with the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* and initiated the Council that, in the constitution *Gaudium e Spes*, condemned every total war, as in fact all wars are today.

If this news is true, urged by the entire Pax Christi movement as well as other persons concerned with peace, I consider the involvement of John XXIII absurd, especially because the military of today, formed by professional warriors and no longer through a draft, is very different from that of the First World War, a war that, we cannot forget, was defined by Benedict XV, “a useless massacre.” The model of defense has also changed a lot, with very high costs (23 billion euros for 2017) and prepared to defend vital interests wherever threatened or compromised. I believe that to think of John XXIII as Patron of the Military especially disturbing in light of the strong and unequivocal affirmation contained in *Pacem in Terris*, “with the means of destruction in

use today and with the possibility of agreement and dialog, thinking that war can lead to justice and peace is beyond reason—alien to reason.”

This is crazy (*roba da matti*), to use an affirmation of Most Reverend Tonino Bello, former president of Pax Christ until 1993. Pope John XXIII is the Good Pope in the heart of all persons, the pope of peace, and not of the military. I am sure that this sentiment is not only that of Pax Christi but of women and men of good will as well, with whom we call to unite in every way to this declaration by expressing their own displeasure over a decision that does not represent a “*sensus fidei*” of those believers who knew John XXIII or who almost remember the prophetic wind that directed the Church to new sentiments of justice and peace.

Giovanni Ricchiuti
Bishop of Altamura-Gravina-Acquaviva delle Fonti
Altamura, September 11, 2017

Joint Statement of San Antonio for Justice in Palestine and San Antonio Chapter, Jewish Voice for Peace on Mayor Ron Nirenberg’s Trade Mission to Israel

We call attention to the trade mission to Israel by Mayor Ron Nirenberg and a delegation of San Antonio business and community leaders. They join a long line of similar missions from all over the US that have been drawn to Israel by its modern economy and its heavily self-promoted expertise in cybersecurity, healthcare, biosciences, water technology, and other areas of common interest. These missions are expertly organized with aspects of Israeli Jewish society and culture artfully and attractively displayed to the visitors.

Unfortunately, Mayor Nirenberg and the delegation will not be permitted to see another side of Israel that is effectively masked from the American public and delegations such as these. Here we call attention to that other side in the conviction that any business or cultural relationships with Israel should be consummated only with full awareness of those problematic policies of the state of Israel that many San Antonians will find intolerable.

Since 1967 Israel has maintained a deadly and illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank, and since 2006 a brutal land and sea blockade of the Gaza Strip that has brought that land and its people to a dire humanitarian crisis. Maintaining the occupation requires violent draconian means: restrictions of movement, military assaults and attacks against non-combatant civilians, and violent suppression of Palestinian human rights. The Israeli project includes establishment of Jewish only settlements on Palestinian land that violates international law, demolition of Palestinian homes, and torture and detainment of children that constitute war crimes. Palestinian life and society are shredded by the occupation, which has created the largest refugee population in the world and brought poverty, unemployment, fragmented health care, and loss of freedom to millions of innocent people. These tragic circumstances are consequences of proactive policies and actions taken by Israel; they are not measures taken in self-defense.

The Mayor and delegation will not be told of any of this or allowed to see any evidence of it. But they should realize nevertheless that the cybersecurity techniques they will hear about are used to oppress and punish Israel's Palestinian neighbors, and that water technologies developed and applied in Israel have come at the cost of deprivation for all Palestinians. The delegation will be impressed by health care innovations in Israel, but will not be told that policies of the Israeli government restrict health care access in Palestine, withhold medications and equipment, and retard educational opportunities for Palestinian health professionals. Because of the occupation, neonatal and infant mortality rates as well as all other measures of morbidity and mortality are several-fold higher in the West Bank and Gaza than in Israel, despite being only a few miles away.

Doing business with Israel and Israeli businesses means doing business with the occupiers, with the perpetrators of violence and suffering. It means contributing financially to continued oppression of Palestinians and it means tacit endorsement of violations of justice and human rights. The glossy agenda of the trade mission and the elaborate orchestration of it, are in part intended to cover up the practices of the government of Israel that have brought condemnation from many human rights and legal organizations around the world. It's a shame that the delegation will not meet with the many Jewish citizens of Israel who oppose the occupation, deplore the rabid militarization of Israeli society, and reject the government's claims that these policies are necessary to Jewish identity and embody Jewish principles.

We believe that San Antonians will want to consider these facts carefully before any deals are struck. In particular, citizens who are immigrants or their descendants surely will not condone Israel's practice of stripping Palestinians of their residency rights, its restrictive entry policies, and its laws that discriminate against non-Jewish citizens as well as against Jews of color.

We are not naïve about geopolitical interests of the United States or about the demands of economic growth, but we believe that principles of justice, fairness, and democracy must not be abrogated in their name. As taxpaying citizens of San Antonio, as advocates for justice, and as Muslims, Jews, and Christians, we urge the Mayor, City Council, and business leaders to understand that their actions and their choices have broader implications, and to take the time to understand all sides of this issue.

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