

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating November 8, 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 Thirty-2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *We Metaphors*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>.

After the poem is an essay by Heather Navarro, written for Pax Christi USA, concerning climate change. We have heard many issues discussed at length and with vigor, but the one of greatest magnitude, climate change, was seldom dealt with in the course of the recent election.

The magazine *Sojourners* published a news article of local interest in San Antonio, concerning Sr. Jane Ann Slater, chancellor of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. The article was sparked by her support of a proposition on the ballot, with the headline "Listen to Your Conscience, Not the Bishop or Pope, Texas Nun Urges Voters"; actually this reflects no uprising in the chancery office but an application of official church teaching that the local church authorities support.

Calendar

Times given are for the Central Time Zone.

Monday November 2 and Monday November 16, 6:30pm-8:30pm, online conference "Faith in Humanity: A Pre- and Post-Election community Conversation," hosted by Compassionate San Antonio, Interfaith San Antonio Alliance, and the San Antonio Compassionate Institute 2020, organized by Ann Helmke (City of San Antonio). Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/faith-in->

humanity-a-pre-and-post-election-community-conversation-tickets-125265347025

Thursday November 5, 2:00pm, online lecture, “...Stayed on Freedom; Our Black Experience in the U.S.,” Jan Willis (Wesleyan University). RSVP at: https://riceuniversity.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_cHJMnTHpQneFnPnIT3R10A

Saturday November 7, 10:00am, live streamed border mass, accessible on the Catholic Diocese of El Paso web page: <https://www.elpasodiocese.org/> 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, 2:00pm, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting, with Lauren Bailey from Pax Christi USA. For zoom invitation contact Anthony Blasi: J6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com

Sunday November 8, 10:00am, zoom discussion “How to Calculate Carbon and Plastic Footprints,” Jim Blackburn (Rice University). St. Philip, Houston, Church & Society Program. Access at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86564638381?pwd=MTBtSFJ6eVhoTUF3SXJ2VIBWd0N2QT09#success>

Monday November 9 to Wednesday November 11, conference “Four Years of Peace Accord Implementation: International Comparative Experience and the Colombian Case” (Kroc Institute at the University of Notre Dame). Information and registration: <https://kroc.nd.edu/news-events/events/2020/11/09/four-years-of-peace-accord-implementation-international-comparative-experiences-and-the-colombian-case/>

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>

Tuesday November 10, 7:00pm (6:00pm MT), bilingual online discussion “Pope Francis and the Current Economy of Exclusion,” Fr. Fabian Marques (El Buen Pastor Church, Sparks) and Carlos Marentes (Centro Sin Fronteras). Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85608443210?pwd=QIN2WGZHS0laeEhmU1hoMEJOUFLZz09>

Meeting ID: 856 0844 3210; Passcode: ecofran

Wednesday November 11, 12:00pm (1:00pm ET), “Drawdown for Congregations,” online presentation about congregations using less carbon in their buildings. Elizabeth Bagley (Project Drawdown). Registration information TBA.

Wednesday November 11, 7:00pm (6:00pm MT), bilingual online discussion “The economy of inclusion,” Fr. Mario Serrano, ofm.conv (chaplain, University of Texas El Paso). Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82373438626?pwd=d3pWQTVvWklKRUZ0TE9BanhJdHRwQT09>

Meeting ID: 823 7343 8626; Passcode: ecofran

Wednesday November 11, 7:00pm-8:30pm, online lecture “The Life & Witness of Ben Salmon: On the Front Line of the ‘Army of Peace,’” Michael Baxter (Regis University, Denver). Ben Salmon was an American World War I war resister. Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-life-witness-of-ben-salmon-on-the-front-lines-of-the-army-of-peace-tickets-125403490215>.

Thursday November 12, 6:00pm, online colloquium “What Scientists Around the World Think about Religion and Why It Matters,” Elaine Howard Ecklund (Rice University) and David R. Johnson (University of Nevada Reno). Register at: <http://bit.ly/scientists-around-the-world>.

Monday November 14, 12:00pm (1:00pm ET), webinar “Drawdown for Congregations,” on congregations reducing carbon emissions, with Elizabeth Bagley (Project Drawdown). Register at: <http://bit.ly/IPLDrawdown>

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>

Tuesdays November 17, 24, December 1, 8, 3:00pm (4:00pm ET) or 6:00pm (7:00pm ET), online discussion of the new encyclical by Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*.

A discussion guide will be sent upon registration at:
<https://fs18.formsite.com/rtresp/idycfr1slp/index.html>

Electronic access to the encyclical:

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

Tuesday November 17, 7:00pm (6:00pm MT), bilingual online conversation “How to Build an Economy Centered on Inclusion,” Sebastian Chacon (Just Catholics young adult group). Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84451678674?pwd=YjJPcDVLauZwd042cG9uWTUreHZ0UT09>

Meeting ID: 844 5167 8674; Passcode: ecofran

Wednesday November 18, 7:00pm (6:00pm MT), online bilingual conversation “From Reflection to Action,” Marco Rapozo (Catholic Diocese of El Paso). Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84873915944?pwd=SSSt4UEFuenJHNjQ3STlacU90a2ZDQT09>

Meeting ID: 848 7391 5944; Passcode: ecofran

Thursday November 19, 2:00pm-3:00pm (3:00pm-4:00pm ET), online conversation “Religion & the 2020 Election,” Amanda Friesen and Andrew Whitehead (both of Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis). Register at: https://iu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_J8h_mPr9QVKBjsT6wbS2Dg

Saturday December 5, 2:00pm, Pax Christi San Antonio online meeting. Gretchen Haynes of the local Quaker community, “Quakers Reflect on the Peace Process.” Information: Arthur Dawes, arthurdawes@att.net, 210-213-5919. For the Zoom invitation, send request to J6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com.

Notices

New Book: Pax Christi International and its Catholic Nonviolence Initiative are pleased to announce the publication of *Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace in the Church and the World*, the culmination of a three-year global conversation among church leaders, community organizers, activists, social scientists and theologians about how the Catholic Church might return to its Gospel nonviolence roots and transform the world. The book shares the

experiences of on-the-ground nonviolent interventions, explores the scriptural, theological and historical foundations of nonviolence, reviews the most current social science on how nonviolence has been effectively employed, and outlines a vision for how the Church might embrace active nonviolence into every aspect of its life. Order at: <https://www.fast-print.net/bookshop/2299/advancing-nonviolence-and-just-peace>

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 (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

This is the earliest Christian reference to the eschaton, the end of time. Because it is the end of time, and not a continuation of the familiar time we know, whatever can be said in a human language about it is at best metaphorical. What the metaphors try to express is hope: "but we do not want you to be mistaken, brothers and sisters, about those fallen asleep, lest you be distressed too as the survivors who have no hope" (1 Thess 4:13). Evidently some among the Thessalonians had died, perhaps from persecution.

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose up, so also will God on account of Jesus, take those fallen asleep with him" (1 Thess 4:14). Whatever is hoped for at death has for the Christian the precedent of what Jesus had at death. Those who had fallen will not be neglected at the end of time. Then in Paul's letter we come to a transition to a different kind of discourse, an awareness. It is like a curtain rising for the beginning of a play: Paul repeats a saying in early Christian oral tradition: "That at the command, at the voice of an archangel, and at God's

trumpet call, the Lord himself will come down from heaven, and the dead will rise with the Messiah first; then we living survivors will be swept up together with them in clouds into an encounter of the Lord in air; and thus we will be with the Lord always" (1 Thess 4:16-17). The action moves from description to command; the discourse shifts from that of humanity to the archangelic. The "trumpet" follows—actually the Jewish shofar that begins moments of prayer, mentioned in Exodus 19:16 and 19 as part of a great theophany. All this is a transition to a different reality; a philosopher might refer to the model of "multiple realities."

Command: God wills it. Voice: we are not inferring a sound in the usual sense here—voice of an archangel. God's trumpet or shofar: not even human ritual but God's. The encounter of the divine, the person of Jesus, the rising dead, the survivors: presence of the divine and the ordinary, not as objects to one another but in a fusional transcendence beyond the sphere of objects.

Third Reading

"Then the kingdom of heaven may be likened to ten maidens, who taking their lamps go in to meet the bridegroom." The marriage custom was for a bridegroom to visit the home of the bride's father and to bring the bride back with him. The parable has five of the maidens who brought extra oil for their lamps when they held vigil in the bridegroom's home and five who did not bring enough oil and were away buying more when the bridegroom belatedly returned and the celebration could begin. The "foolish" five were unable to get in and celebrate when they arrived afterwards with their oil.

The parable contrasts the five sensible maidens with the five foolish. All ten were to have lamps for light. Such lamps, even in our own day, symbolize wisdom and learnedness. Being supplied with enough oil for the lamps obviously refers to being ready to shed light, apply wisdom. Oil is a multi-themed symbol, calling to mind both the Holy Spirit and being anointed for personal calls and mission.

It is notable today that for some people facts do not matter when it comes to making decisions about public policy. There are people who are more impressed with the forcefulness with which claims are asserted than with carefully assembled evidence. This is particularly true with questions about such ecological phenomena as climate change and the effects of fracking. The parable favors wisdom over spin, light over noise. The symbolism in general calls upon us

to use our skills and opportunities open to us rather than simply pray for a magical intervention from God.

Poem

We Metaphors

The rabbi called himself a son of humanity
and gave out metaphors for himself and us:

A mother hen and her chicks
that we look out for the weak.

A gate that opens to all.

Bread that we nourish ourselves.

Wine that we in-spirit and inspire.

Shepherds who give their lives.

He showed us how heaven happens among us.

Tom Keene and the Muse

Injustice, inequity lie at the heart of the U.S. failure to engage on climate change

By Heather Navarro

Former Executive Director of Missouri Coalition for the Environment

October 22, 2020 paxchristiusa

It can be difficult to wrap our minds around all of the ways a changing climate touches us and the scope of action that is needed to protect people and our planet. Polar bears on melting glaciers was the rallying cry when I was in college. Then it was the news of island nations slowly being swallowed by the sea. Today, we watch wildfires rage and hurricanes trample the coast, and the science tells us time and time again that these tragedies are connected to climate change.

Here, where I write from St. Louis, landlocked in the middle of the country where there are no polar bears (save for the few at the zoo), no fear of hurricanes

or wildfires, climate change is nevertheless altering our daily lives and threatening human life. And no matter what we do about it on a city, county, or even state level, it won't be enough. We need national leadership.



While the big events capture headlines, it's easy to forget that for every day the temperature hovers around 100 degrees, more people are hospitalized because they can't breathe or they can't afford air conditioning. For every day the growing season is interrupted by flooding, spring freezing, or increased pests, we lose part of our food supply. Although flooding is common and natural in many parts of the nation, we are experiencing devastating floods in what should be dry times and in much greater frequencies and intensities. The people most affected are those who can't afford to move to higher ground or pay higher utility and food prices.

As the climate changes, the very foundations of our societies start to tremble and crack. We can't grow the crops we've been growing for centuries; our utility bills now take up more of our monthly budget; and our infrastructure, built to withstand certain amounts of rainfall or snow, needs to be re-planned and rebuilt.

All of these efforts require immediate action AND long-term planning. We need leadership that understands the decades of science and study that tell us what is causing climate change and who is most at risk. This means leadership who will take bold action to reduce the greenhouse gases that are warming our planet and protect the housing and health of people most affected.

This crisis was not caused by one country and cannot be solved by one. The United States, as the largest emitter of greenhouse gases per capita, must engage

and collaborate with other world leaders to protect current and future generations from the worst effects of climate change.

Adapting to these changes requires resilience — and therein lies the great injustice of climate change. The more financial and political power one has, the more resilient they are in the face of climate change. If you can move out of the floodplain to higher ground, purchase an electric vehicle, access health care and insurance to handle an extended allergy season, or escape the sweltering heat of the city to get fresh air and rest to lower your heart rate, ease your mind, and nurture your body and spirit, you can adapt to climate change. Millions of people around the world have already been affected by climate change, losing their homes, their neighborhoods, their livelihood, and even their lives. The delay in action itself is an injustice. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color suffer disproportionately from climate change and those in power have been able to avoid or adapt to the changes while leaving others to suffer. We can't wait any longer for action.

There are things we can do to transition away from fossil fuels that are causing climate change while providing quality jobs, making energy more affordable, and ensuring that everyone has access to healthy food. Climate action must focus on those already suffering and prioritize those most at-risk and least able to adapt. The leadership we choose in November matters to all of us, no matter whether we live on the coast or in the middle of the country. The choices made in the next four years will stay with us for the next 40 and beyond.

Listen to Your Conscience, Not the Bishop or Pope, Texas Nun Urges Voters

By Bekah McNeel¹

Oct 27, 2020



[From *Sojourners Magazine*]

As political groups across the country make their last appeals to Christian voters, often pointing to a narrow set of issues, Sister Jane Ann Slater, chancellor of the Catholic Archdiocese of San Antonio, wants the people of faith to think more broadly — looking at the total of what a candidate or ballot proposition brings to the community.

“You look at the breadth of issues under the umbrella of common good and quality of life,” she said. A pandemic and time of deep division calls for communities, including people of faith, to act, Slater said: “It’s a providential moment.”

¹ Bekah McNeel is a freelance journalist living in San Antonio, Texas. She reports on education, immigration, and inequity.

In San Antonio, one ballot proposition asks voters to consider rerouting an existing tax to those most in need by providing job training for the most in-demand middle-class jobs in the city, as well as the wraparound services needed to support the process.

The workforce development initiative, known as “Proposition B,” is as much about helping those hit hardest by COVID-19 as it is about the moral imperative to stabilize the quickly gentrifying city, argues Slater.

Getting the initiative on the ballot and campaigning for it has been a political process that some in the faith community are uncomfortable engaging, Slater acknowledged. But she sees government as a major influence in “the common good.”

Allied for the ‘common good’

For years Slater has been working with C.O.P.S./Metro, an alliance of community organizations that started with coalitions of local churches and grew over time to include labor unions and other activists to organize on immigration and living wage campaigns. The coalition powerfully campaigned for educational and economic opportunities for low-income San Antonians, winning victories throughout the 1990s and instituting programs that continue to bear fruit today, including Project QUEST, the program on which Proposition B is modeled.

A belief in a “fabric of life” has compelled people of faith, like Slater, to stay involved, even when the groups they worked alongside had other interests that would be out of line with Church teachings. Recently the group has undertaken a new challenge in a traditionally working class city: helping families stay in their homes as rents rise quickly in San Antonio.

When the pandemic hit, the Archdiocese of San Antonio quickly worked with C.O.P.S./Metro to ensure the city directed millions of dollars in COVID-19 relief funds toward housing security, but Slater said charity isn’t enough for the long term. That’s where Proposition B comes in.

C.O.P.S./Metro worked with the local community college district and employers to assure that the kind of training the new program provides will make participants eligible for jobs that already exist with room for salary growth.

The road to November

Getting the initiative on the ballot was just the first hurdle. Like with many other initiatives across the country, poor wording or misinformation can lead to voter confusion.

When the coalition saw the first draft of Proposition B, C.O.P.S./Metro volunteer Sonia Rodriguez was alarmed. “We read it and we thought ‘I wouldn’t vote for this,’” she said, “It was gobbledygook.”

The wording made it look like a new tax would be levied, which is not the case. They knew voters would have no appetite for new taxes during an economic crisis and the misunderstanding would likely kill the proposition.

Rodriguez and other volunteers spent the entire day with county elections officials, city council members, and the city attorney getting the language changed to something more clear and accurate.

“Fairness comes with clarity,” Rodriguez said.

They’ve also been trying to get word out to voters that the program Proposition B aims to replace, a popular aquifer protection program, will be funded by another revenue stream. Protecting environmental resources, especially clean water, is not a trade off C.O.P.S./Metro is asking people to make.

Again, Slater said, the goal of conscientious voting should be doing the most good where it is most needed, not pitting components of the common good against one another.

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Now, vote!

The final hurdle, Slater said, is turning people out to vote. The pandemic has not dampened voter turnout in the contentious presidential election. Lines wrapped around polling places in the extended early voting period. Still, Slater hopes that people will think beyond partisan politics, or single issues at the top and bottom of the ballot.

As people of faith, particularly Catholics, approach the ballot box, she reminds them to follow the leading of their own spirit, as encouraged by the Catholic Church for the past two centuries, and clearly reiterated by Pope Francis in 2016.²

“You don’t listen to your bishop. You don’t listen to the pope. You don’t listen to the church as an institution,” Slater said, “You vote your conscience and no one can tell you you were wrong ... well, they can, but you don’t have to listen.”

Links

Pax Christi International

<http://www.paxchristi.net/>

Pax Christi U.S.A.

<http://www.paxchristiusa.org>

Pax Christi Texas

<http://www.paxchristitexas.org>

² <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-tells-us-catholics-vote-their-conscience-november-election>

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>