

Testimony   
A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating January 26, 2020

Communications with the editor may 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 Liturgical Reading reflections are based on readings for the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Parable*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the poem is an essay from some years ago written by Professor Larry Hufford of St. Mary's University in San Antonio, which he sent to Tom Keene for distribution on the occasion of the 2020 Martin Luther King holiday.

### Calendar

#### In Austin

**Wednesday January 22**, 6:30pm-8:30pm, Part 1, hour 2, PBS video *Reconstruction: America After the Civil War*, followed by discussion. Family Life Center, Holy Cross Catholic Church, 1110 Concho St.

**Thursday January 30**, 12:30pm-1:30pm, discussion on "Colleges Must Choose: Pursue truth or Harmony/Social Justice." Read for the discussion the article at <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Are-Colleges-Failing/244544>. Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress.

**Monday February 3**, 3:00pm, documentary *Emanuel*, on the aftermath of the shooting at the Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC. Sharon Risler, whose mother was one of the victims, will be present to sign copies of her book, *For Such a Time as This: Hope and Forgiveness after the Charleston Massacre*. Austin Presbyterian Seminary, 100 E. 27<sup>th</sup> St.

#### In Dallas

**Wednesday February 5**, 12:00pm-1:30pm, "Colin Powell: Seeking Monsters to Destroy: How America Goes to War from Jefferson to Trump," Jeffrey A. Engel

(Southern Methodist University). Hughes-Trigg Student Center, Southern Methodist University Center.

**Thursday February 13-Friday February 14**, conference, “In the Face of Barbarism:’ Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Culture, Humanity and the Importance of Ordinary Life.” Perkins School of Theology. Registration for the full conference is \$10 for students and \$25 for the general public. Pricing includes lunch on Friday. Please note that both the keynote lecture on Thursday evening and the one-person play on Friday evening are free events open to the public. Perkins School of Theology, 5915 Bishop Blvd. Contact the Perkins School of Theology for details: (214) 768-8436.

**Saturday March 21**, 7:00pm-9:00pm, “and You Welcomed Me: A Catholic Meditation on Immigration and Race for a Changing *Community*,” Hosffman Ospino (Boston College). Church of the Incarnation, 1809 Maher Lane, Irving.

### **In El Paso**

**Fridays**, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Pax Christi El Paso joins Border Peace Presence in front of the Federal Courthouse (corner of Campbell and San Antonio).

### **In Houston**

**Friday January 24**, 8:00am-9:00am, “Evangelicalism and Whiteness in the Age of Trump,” Jessamin Birdsall (Ph.D. cand., Princeton U.), joining virtually. Lovett Hall, Suite 402 (accessible via building entrance C), Rice University. Information: Hayley Hemstreet, [hjh2@rice.edu](mailto:hjh2@rice.edu).

**Saturday January 25**, 6:00pm, film, *Father, Son and Holy War*, on the patriarchal culture of right-wing Hindu Nationalism. Rice Media Center, Cinema Auditorium #100. Information: [cinema@rice.edu](mailto:cinema@rice.edu).

**Mondary January 27**, 4:00pm, “The Hungarian Holocaust,” Moshe Y. Vardi (Rice U.). Sewell Hall 301, Rice University.

**Tuesday January 28**, 12:15pm-1:30pm, “Death of the Black Church: How Religious Diversity Erodes Racial Solidarity among African Americans,” Jason Shelton (U. of Texas, Arlington). Kyle Morrow Room, Fondren Library, Rice University. Information: Shirley Tapscott, [sht1@rice.edu](mailto:sht1@rice.edu).

**Tuesday January 28**, 7:00pm-8:30pm, panel discussion “Race and Evangelical Politics,” Richard Mouw (Fuller Theological Seminary), Jason Shelton (U. of Texas, Arlington), Janelle Wong (U. of Maryland). Sewell Hall 309, Rice University. Information: Hayley Hemstreet, [jhj2@rice.edu](mailto:hjh2@rice.edu).

**Sunday February 2**, 9:45am, “The Immigration Mess: One Presbyterian’s Story,” Nancy Kral, Ph.D. (Lone Star College, retired). Room 201, St. Philip Presbyterian Church, 4807 San Felipe.

**Thursday February 6**, 4:00pm, “Antisemitism, Pornography, and American Jews,” Josh Lambert (University of Massachusetts). Information: [jewishstudies@rice.edu](mailto:jewishstudies@rice.edu). Registration: [https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20200206/event\\_id/69900](https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20200206/event_id/69900)

**Friday February 7**, 8:00am-9:00am, “Making Monday Matter: American Evangelicalism and the Deprivatization of Economic Orientations in the 20th Century,” Andrew Lynn (University of Virginia). Information: Hayley Hemstreet, RPLP Program Manager, [hjh2@rice.edu](mailto:hjh2@rice.edu), 713-348-3974. Register: [https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20200207/event\\_id/69060](https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20200207/event_id/69060)

**Thursday February 20**, 10:00am-6:00pm, Workshop: The Medical Ethics of Consciousness, Sunil Kothari (Memorial Hermann Hospital), Christos Lazaridis (University of Chicago), Andrea Lavazza (CUI, Italy), and Lan Li (Rice University); discussant Tim Bayne (Monash University). Founders Room, Lovett Hall, Rice University. Information: Dr. Uriah Kriegel, [uriah.kriegel@rice.edu](mailto:uriah.kriegel@rice.edu).

**Sunday February 23**, 9:45am, “Physician-Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia after the Holocaust,” Sheldon Rubinfeld, M.D., FACP (Baylor College of Medicine). Room 201, St. Philip Presbyterian Church, 4807 San Felipe.

**Saturday February 29**, Racial Wealth and the Income Gap, presented by NETWORK. Dominican Center for Spirituality, 6501 Alameda Rd. Contact Ceil Roeger @713-440-3714 or [croeger@domhou.org](mailto:croeger@domhou.org)

### **In San Antonio**

**Tuesday January 21**, 6:00pm, agenda-setting meeting for 2020, Alamo Group of the Sierra Club. Eco Centro, 1802 N. Main.

**Thursday January 23**, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Martin Luther King Commemorative Lecture, Robert D. Bullard (Texas Southern University), scholar on the Environmental Justice Movement. Laurie Auditorium, Trinity University, One Trinity Place.

**Saturday January 25**, 1:30pm-3:30pm, “Phenology: The Living Calendar of nature,” Jon Zeitler (National Weather Service). Christus Heritage Hall, The Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway.

**Sunday January 26**, 3:00pm, Fourteenth Annual Blessing of the Peacemakers, honoring the 2020 San Antonio Peace Laureates: Lionel Sosa, Gurvinder Pal (G.P.) Singh, and Cappy Lawton. Whitley Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate Dr.

**Tuesday January 28**, 7:00pm, Lecture by Eboo Patel (Interfaith Youth Core). Jackson Auditorium, Weston Center, Texas Lutheran University, 1000 W. Court Street, Seguin.

**Monday February 3**, 3:30pm, screening, *Super Hummingbirds*. Christus Heritage Hall, The Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway.

**Monday February 10**, 7:00pm-9:00pm, LGBTQ+ and the Spiritual Journey Series: "Interfaith Insights on Human Sexuality," Father John Markey, op (Oblate School of Theology) and Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl (Temple Beth-El, emeritus). \$10 before Feb. 3, \$15 after. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Registration: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration>.

**Wednesday February 12, March 25, and April 20**, 7:00pm-9:00pm, "Living Together in Difference: Upending Violence through Alternative Community Building," Derick Wilson. \$15.00 before Feb. 5, \$20 after. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Registration: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration>.

**Monday February 17-Tuesday February 18**, 8:00am-5:00pm both days, "Conference on Justice and Social Concerns. Schedule to be announced. Conference Room A, University Center, St. Mary's University, One Camino Santa Maria.

**Wednesday February 19**, 7:00pm-9:00pm, "Activism through a Buddhist Lens," Thomas Bruner. \$15 before Feb. 12, \$20 after. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Registration: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration>.

**Tuesday February 25**, 7:00pm-9:00pm, "The Trouble with fracking," Sr. Elizabeth Riebschlaeger, ccvi. Free; register by Feb. 18. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Registration: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration>.

**Monday February 22**, 1:30pm, screening, *Journey of the Whooping Crane*. Christus Heritage Hall, The Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway.

**Saturday February 29**, 8:30am-4:00pm, Texas Coalition Against the Death Penalty 2020 Annual Conference. Whitely Theological Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate. Pre-register, \$60.00, at <https://tcadp.org/tcadp-2020-annual-conference-registration/>

### **Second Reading** (1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17)

In this section of *First Corinthians*, Saint Paul is responding to reports from “Chloe’s people” that factions had formed among the Christians of Corinth. At one level it reminds one of divisions and oppositions among different religions, all of which are inspired by a fundamental human insight. At another level it is reminiscent of divisions within the larger Christian movement, i.e. among the various denominations. Again, it is reminiscent of factions within a Christian church; for example, there are those within the Catholic Church who favor the current pope and those who oppose him. Were any of us baptized in the name of Benedict XVI? Or of Francis?

### **Third Reading** (Matthew 4:12-23)

After John the Baptizer was arrested, Jesus withdraws from Judea to Galilee. At first, this seems strange since it was the current king from the Herodian dynasty who had the Baptizer arrested, and that Herod ruled Galilee. But Jesus withdrew, according to the text, to the northern section of Galilee, which was a setting of mixed cultures, not a largely Jewish area. Then Matthew cites a text from Isaiah, as he was wont to do, which refers to a journey “beyond the Jordan.” Here and a few other places in the *Gospel of Matthew* Jesus’ ministry beyond the Jordan places the author, whom we call Matthew, east of the Jordan River. This is one of the few clues in the text itself that this gospel was written for the followers of Jesus who left Jerusalem and settled at least for a time in what is now the nation of Jordan as the Roman legions were invading to put down a rebellion and, it turned out, destroyed Jerusalem itself. The clues in the text agree with the reports of early Christian historians.

This report is of more than historical and literary critical significance. The ministry of Jesus, with its message of changing one’s heart, repenting, began in the religiously diverse environment of the Jews and Greeks north of the Sea of Galilee toward the Mediterranean and then in, as the text says, in Judea. Jesus was not converting Greeks to Judaism or converting Jews to the Greeks’ life style. It was a matter of converting hearts, not converting cultural manners for the sake of cultural imperialism.

## Poem

### *Parable*

Deeds of hope for justice  
are scatterings of seeds.  
Not all will survive – those that do multiply.

Of the harvest we know not when.  
Its coming we know  
surely as life begets life.

Tom Keene  
October 29, 2014

## **Martin Luther King , Jr. Day**

Larry Hufford

As we enter the year 2006 and stop to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr., day there is an urgent need to refocus our energy on nonviolence and the creation of a more democratic society. In the spirit of Dr. King, I would recommend that citizens of the United States reflect on the question of what it means to live in a multifaith world.

Multifaith dialogue and education are critical if the world is to avoid a clash of civilizations. This past summer I was invited to participate in a multifaith conference held at Griffith University in Australia. Of the 75 participants, the majority were Buddhist followed by Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Sikhs, Aboriginal religion, and Baha'i. Throughout Asia and Oceania, multifaith education and dialogue is being promoted with a sense of urgency. It is considered to be the key to conflict prevention and the creation of healthy, diverse communities.

Professor Kamar Oniah Kamaruzzamam, a Malaysian Muslim woman and professor of Islamic studies at the International Islamic University, made a strong case for multifaith education when she stated, "If Osama bin Laden says he is the true interpreter of Islam and those of you who are not Muslim believe him, what does that say about you?" Kamar believes that every religion has a core rooted in nonviolence and just relationships. Regardless of the particular faith, if we fail to live and model nonviolence, she says, we are failing the Divine Spirit.

My roommate at the conference was H. Salman Harun, a professor of Koran Interpretation at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Indonesia. He put forth a strong case that Islam is a religion of peace. In 2004, he organized the first multifaith conference in Indonesia and was publicly condemned by the Supreme Islamic Council for promoting “religious pluralism”. The President of his university, who holds a PhD in History from Columbia University, publicly challenged the ruling of the Supreme Islamic Council saying that its members did not understand the purpose or goal of multifaith dialogue. It was humbling to meet academics and activists who are taking prophetic stands when surrounded by dogmatists. Harun also pointed out that the Prophet Muhammad, in writing the compact of Medina, demonstrated a democratic spirit in sharp contrast to the authoritarian tendencies found in many Islamic majority countries today.

Jeremy Jones, an Australian who is President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, spoke of a multifaith dialogue group he cofounded in Sydney. For the first year, the group met to work on a common project of restorative justice with Aboriginal peoples in Australia. During this year friendships were strengthened, trust was built, and a strong sense of community was created. Community is built on just relationships and the establishment of just relationships is a slow process. The process is often conflictual and stressful. To succeed there must be a commitment to a nonviolent process and to an understanding that community, since it is by definition relational, is in a perpetual state of “becoming”. After a year of relation building, Jones stated that the multifaith group began to hold discussions on “tough” issues such as “just war”, “Holy war”, “martyrdom”, and “religious truth” found in all religions. One issue may take up to a year of dialogue, often “conflictual” to reach a point where members felt they understand “the other”, and that they have been understood by others. It requires that each religion honestly reflect on and discuss its dark side. Instant Democracy requires that each religion honestly reflect on and discuss its dark side. Dialogue requires that one speak to be understood and listen to understand. It is not about lecturing at, speaking to, or arguing. It is not about winning and it is definitely not about conversion.

Danielle Celermajer, a Jewish Australian, spoke of two contrasting paradigms for how Jews as individuals and Israel as a nation can relate to “the other”. The current paradigm Israel uses, Dr. Celermajer stated, can be found in the Biblical relationship between Sarah and Hagar. If Israel is to live in peace with Palestinians and Arab Muslims, she proposed that the current paradigm shift to that of the story of Naomi and Ruth.

Catholic Archbishop Fernando Capalla of the Philippines works to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue in the province of Mindanao, where religious violence has been a fact of life for decades. Catholic schools in Mindanao begin interfaith education at age four. Teachers are trained/educated in interfaith dialogue. The curriculum

integrates Christian and Muslim culture, faith, nonviolent themes, environmental stewardship, humility, harmony, respect, and personal responsibility.

Thailand's most well known Buddhist monk, Sulak Sivaraksa, founded the International Network of Engaged Buddhism and spoke of the environment as a way to have different faiths join together in community to work for the global common good. Sulak stated that there are two world views: earth as commodity and earth as community. Global market fundamentalism is the belief that "I consume, therefore I am". This belief runs counter to the core values of every major religion. The fourteen precepts of engaged Buddhism were written by the Vietnamese monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, a close friend of American Trappist monk, Thomas Merton. There is a great similarity between the fourteen precepts and the ten principles of Catholic Social Teaching (often referred to as the best kept secret of Catholicism).

If one takes the Christian principles in Catholic Social Teaching, engaged Buddhism's fourteen precepts, the paradigm of Naomi and Ruth, the Compact of Medina, and Hindu Vedic law, there is the foundation for a more nonviolent and just local, national, and global community.

It is imperative that those of us who are citizens of the United States encourage multifaith dialogue in our churches, temples, mosques, synagogues, meditation centers, schools, and universities. As the United States becomes more religiously diverse, multifaith dialogue will disarm the fear of the other rooted in ignorance. If this "ignorance" is not countered through education and shared values, Christian fundamentalists will continue to push Congress and the Courts to legally and constitutionally make the U.S. a Christian nation. As Sulak Sivaraksa said, "mono cropped cultures produce mono cropped souls". Such souls produce fear and violence. Multifaith dialogue is not easy. The end product, however, will be a more nonviolent and just global community.

## 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  
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