

## Testimony

Anticipating February 16, 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 Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Dream before Judgment*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the poem are some thoughts I penned in the wake of attacks on Senator Romney, who had the courage at least to vote to remove from office an impeached president of his own party.

### Calendar

#### In Austin

**Thursday February 13**, 3:30pm-5:00pm, "Let's Talk: The US-Iran Crisis," faculty from St. Edward's University departments. Munday Library 141, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress.

**Sunday February 16 (3<sup>rd</sup>. Sunday of the month)**, 7:00pm, Pax Christi Austin meeting, Fr. John Payne House, St. Ignatius Catholic Church, 126 W. Oltorf St.

#### In Dallas

**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.

**Friday February 21**, 8:30am-2:15pm, LGBTQ+ Global Symposium. Keynote address Fabrice Houdart. Panel 1 The Dallas Quest for Equality. Panel 2 Equality through Diplomacy. Panel 3 The Push for Corporate Inclusion. Crum Auditorium, Collins

Executive Bldg, Southern Methodist University. 3150 Binkly Ave. Information and Registration: <https://www.dfwworld.org/registration/lgbtq-global-symposium>.

**Thursday February 27**, 6:30pm, “Building the Good Society,” Lloyd Jeff Dumas (University of Texas, Dallas). Times 10 Cellars, 6324 Prospect. Books \$28. Sponsored by Nuclear Free World Committee, Dallas Peace & Justice Center.

**Thursday March 12**, 12:00pm-1:30pm, “Who Would Drop the Bomb? Attitudes towards Nuclear Weapons in the United States, Britain, France,” Benjamin Valentino (Dartmouth College). Free, register before March 8 at <https://whozin.com/QKP-YFG-WMEH-MFNX>.

**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**

**Tuesday February 11**, 7:00pm-9:00pm, film *Traces of the Trade: A Story of the Deep North*. Center for the Healing of Racism, 3412 Crawford St. Park in HCC Lot 9. RSVP at [https://www.centerhealingracism.org/event/traces-of-the-trade-a-story-from-the-deep-north-film-screening-and-dialogue/#event\\_reg\\_form](https://www.centerhealingracism.org/event/traces-of-the-trade-a-story-from-the-deep-north-film-screening-and-dialogue/#event_reg_form).

**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.

**Sunday February 23**, 7:00pm, “Interpretations of Jesus and ‘the Jews’: How Bad History Creates Bad Theology,” Deborah L. Forger (Dartmouth College). Fellowship Hall, 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

### **In San Antonio**

**Monday February 10**, 5:30pm, “Material Circularity for Sustainable Cities: Lessons from Portland,” Shawn Wood (City of Portland) and David Greenhill (Good Wood Deconstruction). AIA San Antonio, 1344 S. Flores St.

**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 Samue 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>.

**Thursday February 13**, 6:30pm-7:30pm, “Brazilian Spiritism: Bridging the Paranormal and the Religious,” Mark Lokensgard (St. Mary’s University). Turkish Raindrop House, 4337 Vance Jackson (behind the big Car Wash sign).

**Sunday February 16**, 4:00pm-6:00pm, “The Role of Cultural Heritage Preservation in Gentrification,” panelists TBA. Ruth Taylor Recital Hall, Trinity University, One Trinity Place.

**Tuesday February 18**, 6:00pm, “SAWS’ Policies Hasten San Antonio’s Growing Water Crisis,” Meredith McGuire (emeriti Trinity University). Eco Centro, 1802 N. Main.

**Tuesdays February 18 and March 24**, 7:00pm-9:00pm, discussion of being an ally to oppressed groups, Miriam Sobre and Jake Erney. \$15 one session, \$25 two sessions. . SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Registration: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration>.

**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>.

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

**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>.

**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/>

**Saturday February 29**, 9:00am-12:00pm, discussion, "Gun Violence in Our Community, Deanna Hollas (Presbyterian Peace Fellowship). Harlandale United Methodist Church, 6025 S. Flores St.

### **Second Reading (First Corinthians 2:6-10)**

This is a very familiar passage which mentions a wisdom beyond that of the "rulers of this age." If the rulers were genuinely wise, it says, they would not have crucified the incarnate Lord. Of course we still have such rulers, and the Lord has chosen to be incarnate before them as refugees and people who work to provide daily bread for their families.

"For eye has not seen...." One should not allow the lofty momentum of the Isaiah passage that Paul quotes to simply slip by. It points to a contrast to the cleverness of this age. Reaching a grade of wisdom above that of the rulers may not be very impressive, given the foolish character of the public denials of realities and insistence upon conspiracy theories so common among such people. But if one aspires to look and see beyond such, the quality of one's own consciousness is enhanced beyond one's own powers of introspection and self-awareness precisely because it is not "intro" and "self" focused.

### **Third Reading (Matthew 5:17-37)**

"Do not suppose that I came to destroy the law and the prophets; I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." I do not know what religious educators do today; they face the fundamental dilemma that the Christian ethic reaches far beyond merely following rules while children are hardly at the stage of understanding

general rules, let alone going beyond them toward principles and values. As a child I was required to memorize some rules, the Ten Commandments.

However, according to the reading, Jesus did not come merely to not destroy the law but to fulfill it, and—what is often overlooked—to fulfill the prophets, the prophets who had spoken of hope, God-with-us, justice, and peace. The religious experts at the time, and in our time too, often focused on rules; but Jesus was saying that our sense of justice had to go beyond that: “For I tell you, unless your justice exceeds that of most scribes...”

It is not enough not to murder and not to commit adultery. The Matthean passage evidently uses hyperbole when it says that growing angry is subject to judgment; expressing anger and especially acting upon it afterward are different from merely feeling it. The hyperbolic nature of the passage is evident in the statements about throwing out one’s eye or cutting off one’s hand.

While the passage as a whole calls for going beyond rules and law, two sections, ironically, are often read as rules. The first reads, “It is said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife except by reason of sexual irregularity, makes her commit adultery, and whoever should marry a divorced woman commits adultery.” The first part of the “but I say to you” saying shifts attention from the legal way of divorcing and to the situation that such an action of a man forces his wife into, since in antiquity a divorced woman usually had no option but to become a prostitute. And any man who tries to disguise his patronizing a prostitute by exercising the mere ceremonial of a quick marriage and divorce would be committing adultery. The point is not the ritual but the presence or absence of a proper intention.

The second section that is often read as a rule says, “Again you heard it said to the ancients, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but you shall keep your oath to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all... But let your word be yes, yes, no, no.” It would miss the point of the whole passage to see in it a rule against taking an oath, without one’s word being entirely reliable even without an oath. Moreover, in the first century Jesus and his hearers would not have had in mind the Anglo-Saxon legal custom of making statements in judicial proceedings “under oath.” Deceiving people, even when not under oath, is not fulfilling the law and the prophets but rather perpetrating an injustice against those who are being deceived. Justice is the issue, not the ritual used in the proceedings of a system of justice.

## Poem

### *Dream before Judgment*

Accuser and advocate

Accuser concludes:

Your honor,  
his writings were not worth reading,  
his loves were lusts for shadows,  
his deeds decomposed in acids of ego,  
his life was hardly worth living.

Turn over this runt-soul to me.

Advocate laughs:

Your honor, his choices,  
no matter how few, were his.  
(No one will take that away,  
least of all you, your honor.)  
His choices began in freedom,  
no matter how little.  
There lies some honor, your honor.

Welcome home, child of freedom.

Tom Keene  
April 5, 2001

### **Mr. Romney Votes "Guilty."**

Anthony J. Blasi

Political realism engaged uncomfortably with the demand of truth to be expressed. At first the leadership of the House of Representatives did not want an impeachment proceeding to be set in motion because such proceedings have been known to backfire politically. That was political realism. Never mind that the evidence was at hand that the successful campaign organization of 2016 coordinated with a hostile foreign power, though mere coordination was not the same thing as criminal conspiracy. Never mind that the evidence also showed that the president was soliciting perjury. It was only the most outrageous behavior on

the part of the president, engaging in a sleazy shake down of a needy ally of the nation and violating a law against impoundment of federal funds in the process, that the House leadership was all but forced to set the impeachment process into motion.

So due process duly proceeded. The facts and the law were clearly on the side of impeachment, but as a matter of political realism the votes in the House were clearly along party lines. The prosecution “managers” from the House proved to be as capable, talented, and eloquent as the president’s defense team proved to be workman-like, clever, and sophisticated. There was no doubt as to the president’s guilt and to the fact that the defense attorneys were making the best of a flawed case. The truth groaned to be extended into action: Call some knowledgeable witnesses! Political realism could not have that. The votes on the two articles of impeachment in the jury-like Senate were foregone conclusions.

And then there was the vote of Mr. Romney. His was not the sole instance of courage. Several Democratic senators voted “Guilty,” knowing it could cost them votes back home. Mr. Romney explicitly cited his faith and, tied to it, the demand of truth to be spoken. A few of his Republican colleagues literally could not understand his action—it must have been an old grudge, it must make sense in the political realities of his home state, it must be based on a desire to be a footnote in history. No, it was his conscience. He is not the practiced actor that the president is; he was moved, troubled profoundly by the truth of the situation, and it showed.

One of the interesting things that Senator Romney said in his brief remarks before the Senate vote took place was that his vote would not be a mere matter of a policy difference, that in fact he had been voting “with the president” 80% of the time. I must say, this troubles me. While we do not expect our politicians to have deep philosophical insight, the bond between the president’s self-serving misuse of his position and his policies is not obscure. However much the business acumen of the president may be exaggerated, and exaggerated it has been, he does identify with the class of big business. And while Mr. Romney’s executive abilities and accomplishments need no exaggeration, he too identifies with the class of big business.

Many did not vote for Mr. Romney in 2012 because he was dismissive of the working classes. In remarks not meant to be public, he observed that the upper classes paid most of the federal taxes, and he characterized the lower strata as financial parasites. Blinded by class position, he did not recognize the physical world around him as made by non-parasitic hands. He did not even seem to recognize the knowledge base of the new economy as the product of non-elites. So in the present it is not surprising that the policies that presuppose a mental stance of a self-serving elite would not be evident to Mr. Romney for what it is. The mental stance of self-servingness is clear to Senator Romney in the instance of the president’s misdeeds but opaque to him in the instance of the president’s policies.

## Other 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/)