


Testimony
A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating February 23, 2020

Communications with the editor may 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 Liturgical Reading reflections are based on readings for the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Give Me a Teacher*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the poem I give a biographical sketch of a prophet, priest, teacher whom I had recently heard about.

Pax Christi USA has announced that it has appointed Bishop Thomas Gumbleton Bishop President Emeritus.

Calendar

In Austin

Friday February 21, 7:00pm, book talk, "A Black Women's History of the United States," Daina Ramey Berry. Book People, 603 N. Lamar.

Thursday March 5, 12:30pm-1:30pm, discussion, "Laws Treating a Fetus as a Person and the Woman Less of One." Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. Discussion article:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/05/opinion/letters/fetus-abortion-law.html>

Monday March 9, 6:30pm, video, *Reconstruction: America After the Civil War* (part 3), Family Life Center, Holy Cross Church, 1110 Concho St.

Sunday March 15 (3rd. Sunday of the month), 7:00pm, Pax Christi Austin meeting, Fr. John Payne House, St. Ignatius Catholic Church, 126 W. Oltorf St.

In Dallas

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.dfworld.org/registration/lgbtq-global-symposium>.

Wednesday February 26, 6:00 food and conversation, 7:00pm Edward Fischer on U.S. foreign policy toward Guatemala. Home of Joyce Hall, 4330 Crowley Dr.

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.

Tuesday April 7, 7:00pm, "Ending War." David Swanson. Peace Chapel at Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road.

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

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.

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

Wednesday March 25, and April 20, 7:00pm-9:00pm, “Living Together in Difference: Upending Violence through Alternative Community Building,” Derick Wilson, \$20. Three part series that began Feb. 12. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Registration: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration>.

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 (1 Corinthians 3: 16-23)

Without some context, the reading can be unintelligible. Paul heard from Chloe’s people that the Corinthian church had developed factions. He said about it, “For when someone says, on the one hand, ‘I am of Paul,’ but another, ‘I for Apollos,’ is this not human?” (1 Cor 3:4). So he is arguing against factionalism when he points out, and this is where the reading for the day begins, “Do you not know that you are a shrine of God and that the spirit of God resides in you? If someone destroys God’s shrine, God will destroy that person....” Differences that form a coherent shrine when together form instead a shambles when broken into factions. The effort to force the otherwise different members of the Church into a uniformity results in a shambles.

The talent of infighting is a human form of “wisdom,” or more exactly, cleverness; but that is not the wisdom from God: “...if someone seems to be wise among you in this age, let that person become foolish so as to be wise.”

Third Reading (Matthew 5:38–48)

“But I say to you....” This is a challenge to rise above resisting someone who would perpetrate an evil on oneself. Contrary to a common interpretation, the saying does not counsel inaction before evil, but non-resistance toward oneself

being an object of malice. The self is not to be the central concern. “You heard it said, ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth!’ But I say to you....” The occasions listed in the saying are an assailant striking someone on the cheek, wanting to sue someone in the courts, taking one’s shirt, forcing someone to go a mile. The point is to forget oneself.

“Give to the one asking for something from you.” Good is to be accorded to all, because God makes the sun rise on the evil as well as the good and rains fall on the just and unjust alike.

What is the proper response when an assailant strikes someone else, takes someone else to court, steals from someone else, or forces someone else to go a mile? It would hardly be commendable to remain inactive while someone else suffers an injustice, in order to appear as a good Bible-citing Christian. One would not endorse striking back in kind, but resisting evil in other ways is a duty for all who are able to defend and protect others. Creatively turning another cheek: “Here, hit me instead!” That cannot but shame the assailant. “Here, have some of my clothes too!”

There is a palpable need in the present hour to associate oneself with those whom some would attack, exclude, criminalize, and vilify out of prejudice. Where economic injustice causes poverty, there is a need to adopt some visible element of voluntary poverty. Some of the ancient philosophers, who called themselves “cynics” after dogs, became street people to shame the wider society. The medieval Francis of Assisi adopted the lifeways of beggars. The point is not being homeless or destitute just for the sake of being so; such states are not exactly what they were in earlier ages anyway. Perhaps the “occupy movement” of a few years ago comes closer; it led many to visit them in their camping places and listen to them talk about important matters. Important matters—so much that is wrong with the world is founded on unimportant attainments.

Poem

Give Me a Teacher

Give me a teacher who gives a damn,
needs to know more than my name,
strains for the song I have not sung,
follows me in my ennui

to find my fishing hole.
Give me a teacher who gives a damn,
seduces, surprises,
spades the soil of me,
fertilizes feelings for what is fair,
with anger at what is not,
hope for solutions,
appetite for application.
Give me a teacher who gives a damn,
who tenders truth and trust
more than rules and roles,
favors sticky freedoms
over cool controls,
who risks career and cares
to take a stand for students,
is not unknown to laugh.
I can build you a future in what I am.
when you give me a teacher who gives a damn.

Tom Keene

Don Lorenzo Milani
By Anthony J. Blasi

A November 7, 2019, press release from Pax Christi Italy came to my attention. It said in part:

Seeing the Barbiana school used and exploited and the photo of Don Lorenzo Milani made us indignant. Pax Christi (Italy) has its national headquarters in Impruneta (FI), not far from Barbiana. For us, and for many other people, the prior of Barbiana is a teacher, a witness, a prophet. We often go to his grave in the small cemetery in Barbiana, as Pope Francis also did on June 20, 2017.

So, what is the significance of Barbiana? And who was Don Lorenzo Milani? Some national, perhaps even local, knowledge appears necessary for understanding the press release. Even reading the remainder of it does not clear matters us.

According to Wikipedia, Lorenzo Carlo Domenico Milani Comparetti (May 27, 1923 – June 26 1967) was born to a wealthy family in Florence. His father, Albano Milani, and his mother, Alice Weiss, were secularists. In 1943, after studies in an arts academy, Lorenzo converted to Catholicism. He replaced an upper class complacency with a solidarity with the poor and despised. Ordained a priest in 1947, he was assigned to assist an elderly priest in a section of Florence. He established his first "school of the people" (*scuola popolare*) for students of all backgrounds, with a night section for workers; the fact that it served children from both believing and non-believing families scandalized conservative Catholics. When the elderly pastor died, Lorenzo was assigned to Barbiana, a small remote village, where it was thought he could not cause any trouble.

At Barbiana, Don Lorenzo Milani opened another school of the people and continued his radical educational program. He drew in students who had failed in the regular schools, or had been failed by the regular schools, and used a self-directed approach. He taught a critical reading of newspapers and invited craftspeople in to talk about their work. One focus was on using words—having something to say, considering for whom one was writing, no time limit when writing, removing excessive verbiage. Older children taught the younger.



Barbiana e la sua Scuola

In 1958, he published *Esperienze pastorali* (Pastoral Experiences). The Vatican's Holy Office in the very same year ordered its withdrawal although it held no errors of doctrine; the reason provided was that it was seen as "inopportune." Milani complied.

In 1965 he was put on trial after the publication of his *Lettera ai cappellani militari* (Letter to military chaplains) and *Lettera ai giudici* (Letter to judges), where he advocated conscientious objection. He was tried for "instigation to commit an offence," in that he had publicly, in writing, defended young men who had refused military service at a time when conscientious objection was punishable with a prison sentence.

Toward the end of his life he led eight students for a year to write a book, *Lettera a una professoressa* (Letter to a teacher), which has become a pedagogical classic, translated into many languages. It was written for the benefit of poor parents of school children, denouncing the social class basis of education that angers the parents for the way it rewards middle and upper class children for what they absorbed at home effortlessly.

Needless to say, many accusations were directed against Don Lorenzo Milani, but serious investigations have exonerated him. It was against one of these—likening his school to a recent case of alleged “brainwashing” of children and officials in effect selling them—that the Pax Christi press release was responding. On June 20, 2017, Pope Francis made a point of visiting Don Lorenzo’s grave.

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.sanantoniopeace.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/