

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating November 29, 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 First Sunday of Advent. Tom Keene's poem is *What is His Name?* For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is an article by Veronica Fellerath-Lowell on reducing military spending.

Calendar

(Times are given for the Central Time Zone)

Friday November 27-Monday November 30: The Women's Ordination Conference 45th anniversary, "Breaking Bread at the Table of Justice: A Celebration of Prophetic Persistence." This event will be streamed over several days, without charge. Watch at your own pace to truly enjoy testimonies from theologians, members of the Young Feminist Network, and others. Learn of the first conference in 1975 which was attended by 2000 people including Sister Dorothy Ettlting and Sister Martha Ann Kirk. Information and registration: <https://www.womensordination.org/2020/09/commemorate-wocs-45-years-of-prophetic-persistence/>

Sunday November 29, 3:00pm, "The Death Penalty Is Inadmissible," Kristin Houle (Texas Coalition Against the Death Penalty), bishop John Stowe (Lexington Kentucky), and Emma Tacke (Catholic Mobilizing Network). Information: <https://www.paxchristisa.org>, or contact Arthur Dawes (arthurdawes@ATT.net). Register at: <https://uiw.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAucu6vrT0tGtEizxw5rKAVMr63CqTI9zxN>

Wednesday December 2, 5:00pm (5:00pm ET), webinar “The four Churchwomen: Allies in today’s Struggle for Social Justice,” Edward T. Brett (La Roche University, Pittsburgh) and Donna Whitson Brett (University of Pittsburgh), biographers of the four martyrs. Hosted by Fordham University. RSVP at: cacs@fordham.edu

Wednesday December 2, 6:00pm (7:00pm ET) virtual gathering to commemorate the Four Churchwomen Martyrs in El Salvador (40th anniversary), hosted by the Maryknoll Sisters. Access at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85121522778#success>

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.

Sunday December 6, 10:00am, “How Churches Can Work for Social Justice,” Rachel C. Schneider (Religion & Public Life Program, Rice University). Focuses on the case of South Africa. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86564638381?pwd=MTBtSF16eVhoTUF3SXJ2VIBWd0N2QT09#success>

Sunday December 13, 10:00am, “The Belhar Confession,” Rev. Greg Han (Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston). The online lecture concerns a protest against the use of the Bible to justify apartheid in South Africa. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86564638381?pwd=MTBtSF16eVhoTUF3SXJ2VIBWd0N2QT09#success>

Notices

Greg Boyle, S.J., August 14, 2020 keynote address to the Lay Marianist Virtual Assembly, “Barking to the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship.” Begins with faulty images of God, but goes into his account of Homeboy Industries. Access at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3X-4PH9eb8&ab_channel=MLC-NA

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 Corinthians 1:3-9)

Paul's letters usually began by identifying sender and addressee: "Paul, called to be an apostle of Messiah Jesus, by the will of God, and Brother Sosthenes, to the church of God which is in Corinth..." (1 Cor 1-2a). Following that usually came a thanksgiving for the faith of the addressees. Today's reading is the thanksgiving passage for *First Corinthians*. It concludes with the assurance that "Faithful is the God by Who you were called into the communion of His son, Jesus, Messiah, our Lord" (1 Cor 1:9).

Third Reading (Mark 13:33-37)

The First Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of a new liturgical year; the third reading selections will usually be taken from the *Gospel of Mark* rather than, as has been the case for the past twelve months, from the *Gospel of Matthew*. The passage for this coming Sunday appears in *Mark* immediately after the Markan apocalyptic end-times section. It says repeatedly and with different images, "Be watchful!"

There is a perennial danger of taking biblical passages too literally and confining transcendent insights and realities within the concrete depictions and verbalizations that we humans can manage, as opposed to the capacities of the divine. The Coming, said to be expected at the end of time, does not follow and will not follow a human bureaucratic development plan or a schedule as marked by clocks and calendars. To play detective with apocalyptic passages in the Bible in order to foretell the Day and Hour is a fool's errand.

Incidentally, I was never so vilified in my life as I was when I volunteered to teach a course on world religions at a state university and, in the treatment of the

Hebrew and Christian traditions, made this point about timing the end times. The course was much in demand, and an ordained minister who regularly taught it could not provide enough sections; he asked me to offer a section as a favor. When word reached him that I was not sticking at all to a fundamentalist line he proceeded to denounce me to university authorities and encouraged students to file complaints about my alleged anti-religious bias. Christians can be so unchristian when threatened by references to the divine escaping controllable categories—

Do I digress? Not really. If we fixate on where we imagine the divine to be found, we will not be watchful enough to notice where the divine chooses to be present.

Poem

What is his name?

He was born in a barn.
He hung around bad company.
He upset people in high places.
He comforted people in low places.
He taught people to pray that all have their daily bread
and that no one should suffer from unforgiving debt.
He believed he had come to free the prisoners
and to liberate the captives.

He asked that we visit the prisoners,
that they may have comfort and hope.
Then he got himself arrested,
imprisoned, tortured and executed.

Today, he lives on embodied in prisoners
and those who visit the prisoners,
and who mourn the executed,
fleshed out in us who hunger for justice,
and who suffer persecution for the sake of justice.

His name is Jesus.

Tom Keene and the Muse

Greater Security Begins with Practical Steps to Defund the Military

By Veronica Fellerath-Lowell
Former Pax Christi USA National Council Member

Ed. Note: This article was distributed October 30 by Pax Christi USA.

It is time to say “Defund the Military.” If U.S. leaders are truly interested in working to protect the lives of all people in the United States, then, in addition to peaceful diplomacy, they need to begin with building relationships and observing the Golden Rule, “Do unto others as you want others to do unto you.”

We should be able to uphold our federal budget as a moral document, one that includes people’s immediate needs.

It is unjustifiable that the FY2020 Department of Defense budget amounts to more than \$700 billion. Currently, half of our personal federal income tax dollars each year (not including Social Security taxes) goes to military-related expenses, including debt from prior wars. How much income tax did you pay last year? Let’s say your federal income tax return last year showed \$4,000 in federal taxes. This would mean \$2000 of it would immediately be allocated to military-related expenses before all other national priorities. It’s also worth noting that if you received a \$1200 “check from President Trump,” it is less than you contributed to military spending.



Here's a list of concrete actions that could be taken right away:

- Defund new weapons systems that many Pentagon officials do not want developed. How could this happen? Aggressive contractors lobby on behalf of weapons manufacturers and on behalf of members of Congress who fear job loss in their states. We need to dismantle the power of the military-industrial complex. **For example:** Stop upgrading the (nuclear) intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force. Many have questioned the need for this program, including former Secretary of Defense William Perry, who has argued for eliminating all ICBMs.
- Eliminate the budgeting for nuclear weapons modernization. In 2017, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projected that it would cost \$1.2 trillion to modernize and maintain nuclear weapons over the next three decades. All nuclear weapons should be eliminated. The explosion of even one nuclear bomb on a city (e.g. New York City), due to an error in judgment, misinformation, or accident would immediately kill millions of people and cause a nuclear winter (no growing season) over a large part of the earth. **Watch** Physicians for Social Responsibility former Co-President Ira Helfand's 2-minute video, [Back from the Brink](#).
- Stop the U.S. training of militia from other countries in guerrilla warfare tactics that are often used not to protect their citizens but to terrorize,

torture, and murder them. **Example:** The 30-year-old “School of the Americas (SOA)” training program at Fort Benning, Georgia. Soldiers from El Salvador, trained at SOA, were eventually convicted in the killing of the six Jesuits and two women housekeepers in 1989. [In 2000, instead of closing it, the U.S. Congress changed the name of the School of the Americas (SOA) to the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC).]

In his speech at the Peace Memorial in Hiroshima on November 2019, Pope Francis stated: “When we yield to the logic of arms and distance ourselves from the practice of dialogue, we forget to our detriment that, even before causing victims and ruination, weapons can create nightmares; ‘they call for enormous expenses, interrupt projects of solidarity and of useful labor, and warp the outlook of nations.’ [...] A true peace can only be an unarmed peace.”

As we quickly approach the end of the voting period, let us discern on this topic along with many others, and make sure we cast votes, at the national and local level, that reflect our principles not only as Catholics but also as members of the greater human 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

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

Migrant Center for Human Rights
<https://Migrantcenter.org>

Catholic Books Review
<http://catholicbooksreview.org>