

# Testimony



A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating December 6, 2020

Communications with the editor should 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 Sunday Liturgical Reading reflections are based on readings for the Second Sunday of Advent. Tom Keene's poem is *Did We Not Know?* For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>.

After the poem is an editorial statement by John Krejci about Pope Francis's encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. The editorial was first published in a newsletter of Nebraskans for Peace. I have known John for just under fifty years. Some may recognize his name from headlines of some years back when a bishop, out of disordered priorities, excommunicated him and other members of the local Call to Action chapter in Lincoln, Nebraska. Call to Action is a Catholic group to which even some other bishops at the time also belonged.

Please note the November 29<sup>th</sup> listing in the Calendar; that is the afternoon of the day this has been sent out. Pax Christi San Antonio is the principal organizer.

## Calendar

(Times are given for the Central Time Zone)

**Friday November 27-Monday November 30:** The Women's Ordination Conference 45<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:cacs@fordham.edu)

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

**Thursday December 3**, 10:00am-11:00am (11:00am-12:00pm ET), “Who is my neighbor? An Abrahamic Dialogue during the time of COVID,” Ayatollah Seyed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad (Shahid Beheshti University), Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb (formerly of Congregation Nahalat Shalom, Albuquerque, NM), and Bishop John Bryson Chane (retired Episcopal Bishop, Washington, DC). Pax Christi USA is one of many sponsors of this webinar. Information and registration: <https://www.luke10.faith/events/who-is-my-neighbor>

**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](mailto:arthurdawes@att.net), 210-213-5919. The Zoom link is: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84035243688?pwd=c1JrQjFoUWNXR2xmUnlJQ08zQWZlZz09>

**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>

**Saturday December 12**, 9:30am-11:30am (10:30am-12:30pm ET), “Moving Beyond Victimization & Privilege: The Anti-Racism Challenge,” with Tom Cordaro and Cathy Crayton (former members, Pax Christi USA National Council), sponsored by Pax Christi Metropolitan New York. Obtain Zoom link from [info@nypaxchristi.org](mailto:info@nypaxchristi.org). Suggested contribution \$10.00

**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>

### Notice

**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 (2 Peter 3: 8-14)

*Second Peter* is the latest work in the New Testament. It has a quotation from the *Gospel of Matthew* (ca 90 CE), refers to *First Peter* (also ca 90 CE), and in a central section is dependent on the *Letter of Jude* (ca 100-110 CE). It is included

in a papyrus from the 200s (P<sup>72</sup>) and is cited in the Christian work *Apocalypse of Peter* (ca 135-140 CE). The Christian historian Eusebius did not consider it canonical but still found it useful for many people. Christians tend to neglect it. So if you are not as familiar with it as you might be with other works in the New Testament, that is understandable.

The reading is about the End Times. What is unique to it is a reference to the delay in the coming of the End being an act of mercy on God's part, giving us time to reform our ways. "So we await, according to His promise, new heavens and a new earth where justice dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

### **Third Reading (Mark 1:1-8)**

This brief introduction in the earliest of the four gospels clearly aligns the "good news" of Christianity with the Hebrew prophetic heritage. "The origin of the good news of Jesus, the Messiah, son of God," is to be found in that tradition. Mark cites a famous prophetic text: "A voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord.'" Mark goes on to introduce John the Baptizer with language reminiscent of the description of the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:8). Prophetic concerns are not to be at the fringes of normal religion and pastoral care but rather comprise the origin, the very root, of the Christian tradition.

Historically prophets had condemned the rulers of Juda and Israel who abandoned God and God's people, not only by adopting cults brought in from foreign allied powers but also by failing to secure the common people's loyalty through justice; instead the rulers allied themselves with seemingly mighty empires. John the Baptizer's message was a call to turn away from the cult of power and quest for influence to be had from the Roman Empire. All Judea and Jerusalem, says Mark, went out to repent and be baptized by him, voting with their feet, as it were, against the ritual baths available in the centers of power.

It is more than a coincidence that the *Gospel of Mark* was composed in the imperial center of power, Rome, where the followers of Jesus had been persecuted by order of Emperor Nero. What was it about the small Jesus following in the imperial capital that Nero and his court feared?

## Poem

### *Did We Not Know?*

*Father forgive them. They do not know what they are doing. (Luke 23:34)*

*I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever. Thomas Jefferson*

Did we not know,  
when we the people drove natives from their ancestral lands,  
killed their herds of buffalo, put them in concentration camps?

Did we not know,  
when we the people took our African brothers and sisters  
to be slaves for hundreds of years and wrong them still?

Did we not know,  
when we the people made war with Iraqi people, killed hundreds of thousands,  
mostly women and kids, made millions of refugees, created civil war?

Of whom will we ask forgiveness?

Tom Keene and Muse  
November 12, 2020

**FRATELLI TUTTI = TO ALL MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS**  
**Pope Francis' Encyclical Analyzing and Responding to Social Ills facing Us all**  
John Krejci

I must admit I rarely read papal documents beginning to end. First, they are often dry and overly pedantic!! Besides I, rather righteously, think "Been there, heard that." In my defense, I have had 26 (sic!) years of Catholic education –

fortunately most of it was progressive and avant garde. I experienced the modernization of Catholic thinking in Rome in 1963 – the Second Vatican Council. However, for most of us long-time Nebraskan for Peace members, my early life was sheltered and narrow. Mine was an urban ethnic community – not unlike small town Nebraska, a farm or other sheltered environments. But like many, we expand our horizons and become more aware of the shortcomings, injustices, and needs of our communities, our country and the world .

“Fratelli tutti” speaks to those issues and injustices that have been and continue to be perpetrated by individuals, rival groups, and rival nations. But Pope Francis does not stop at analysis and critique; he boldly puts forth recommendations to address and eradicate them. His basis is LOVE. The Good Samaritan parable serves as a model for action. Joshua McElwee, brilliant Rome correspondent for the National Catholic Reporter, begins his analysis with these words:

“Laying out a comprehensive vision after the corona virus pandemic, Pope Francis imagines societies that are more caring, more focused on helping those in need and fundamentally less attached to the principles of market capitalism... (He) says the continuing global health crisis makes it all the more urgent that we rethink our styles of life.

“Among other things the pope puts up for discussion: trickle-down economics, the world’s unfair distribution of wealth, continued use of the just war theory and the death penalty, and populist leaders who appeal to people’s ‘basest and most selfish inclinations.’”

“Fratelli Tutti” urges dialogue and cooperation among many peoples, traditions, and cultures—working together to address and mitigate these evils.

One might rightly ask: Why should I listen to a religious leader who heads a flawed institution that has been guilty for two millennia of anti-Semitism, the Crusades, the Inquisition, cooperation with colonial exploitation—not to mention the still unresolved sins of sex abuse of children and oppression of women? Aside from the obvious defense that all institutions are imperfect and sinful, I will note the metaphor: Even stopped clocks are correct twice a day!

Pope Francis is a Third World person and a Jesuit . He is cut from a different cloth than previous Popes—a breath of fresh air. Some say he is an advocate of Liberation Theology. He has moved the dialogue of previous popes from the culture wars of abortion, birth control, and narrow sexual morality to a focus on social justice.

Francis first catalogues the “dark clouds” hanging over our planet. (Recall that his first Encyclical letter addressed the dangers of climate change and our obligation to change our way of life and deal with it.)

As mentioned previously, his biblical basis is rooted in the commandment of love, the parable of the Good Samaritan. He urges this kind of care for one another, especially the stranger, the alien and the oppressed.

As mentioned previously, Francis rejects the just war theory, the death penalty, trickle-down economics, exploitation of the poor and migrants, selfish populism, and narrow nationalism. He counsels dialogue and cooperation among nations. He gives a shout out to the United Nations, noting that it too needs reform. The ideas offered by “Fratelli Tutti” are very much in line with the goals and ideals of Nebraskans for Peace. Frankly, the U.S. bishops need to read encyclical thoughtfully more so than members of NFP!

The Pope is not speaking directly to the United State, but the application of the principles are obvious. He cautions that conquering the COVID-19 virus and not changing our selfish individualistic, consumerist way is not acceptable.

Fundamental societal change is necessary. Although during this pandemic, we are less active at meetings or on streets. Due to age and other limitations we may participate less in Black Lives Matter rallies or anti-death penalty vigils or lobby less against police reform or a new prison. But we can still read, write, use social media, Zoom meetings and our quiet time sheltering or in quarantine to reflect on and ponder these issues. We should not forget to be loving and caring for our families.

St. Francis of Assisi confronted the corruption of the 13<sup>th</sup> century church. Pope Francis is asking us to love our neighbor in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And despite all – never give up hope.

## **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.sanantoniopeace.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)

Migrant Center for Human Rights

<https://Migrantcenter.org>

Catholic Books Review

<http://catholicbooksreview.org>