

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating May 27, 2018

Pax Christi San Antonio does not solicit donations; however, anyone wishing to join should make a donation to Pax Christi U.S.A. and notify Maria Tobin, matob@aol.com, to receive email messages sent to members. 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.

Please do not respond to this newsletter's address; but send comments on the newsletter to J6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com.

Editorial

After the calendar, the *Third Reading* commentary is based on the gospel reading for the Solemnity of the Trinity. Tom Keene poem is *Behold*. See <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php> for more of Tom's poems. Following the poem are some thoughts on morality in representation, occasioned by the problem of gerrymandering.

Calendar

In Austin

Friday June 1, 6:00pm-**Sunday June 3**, 6:00pm, ATX Hack for Change 2018. ATX Hack for Change brings together members of the Austin community to tackle unique issues "facing our weird city" and to use technology to create a lasting impact. It reflects a commitment to social justice in the community and beyond. See <http://atxhackforchange.org>. St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress.

Saturday June 9, 9:00am-5:00pm, The Nation at a Crossroads: A National Latino Policy Conference. Texas Capitol, Auditorium E1.004, 1100 Congress Ave. Free, RSVP at <https://eventbrite.com/e/the-nation-at-a-crossroads-a-national-latino-policy-conference-tickets-45084367557>.

Saturday June 23, 9:00am-5:00pm, Junteenth Health Festival. 2018 theme: Reproductive Justice. The event is an annual celebration of Black Health and Weallness in the context of liberation. See <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/junteenth-health-fest-2018-tickets-45395760943?aff=efbeventix>. Tickets (free) by May 30. Huston-Tillotson University, 900 Chacon St.

In Houston

Wednesday May 23, 8:00am, to **Thursday May 24**, 2:00pm, “Drawing the Line: Ethical, Political and Scientific Perspectives on U.S. Embryo Research.” James A. Baker III Hall, Baker Institute, Rice University, 6100 Main.

Wednesday June 6, 8:00am-9:00am, Greg Cootsona (California state University at Chico), Science at a Particular Crossroads: Bringing the Religious Implications of Mainstream Science to evangelical Christians. Rice University, Humanities Bldg. 117. Register at <http://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20180606/event-id/6295>.

In San Antonio

Monday May 21, 7:00pm, “Preserving Our Cultural Heritage”—San Antonio Missions Preservation Workshop. Downtown, University of Texas San Antonio, Buena Vista Street Building, Aula Canaria (BVB 1.328).

Tuesday May 22, 1:30-4:30, Convening of the San Antonio Faith-Based Initiative. Pre-K4 San Antonio Education Center, 4230 Eisenhower Rd.

Saturday June 9, 10:00am, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting, home of Al Eisch, 3130 Clearfield (off Vance Jackson, north of I-410).

Monday June 18, 4:30pm to **Wednesday June 20**, 8:30pm, Summer Institute: Downward Mobility. Presentations by Shane Claiborne, Robert Elsberg, David Haas, and Sue Mosteller. Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate dr. \$85 registration; meal plan and lodging available. For information: <https://ost.edu/continuing-education/>, or (210) 341-1366 X 406.

Third Reading (Matthew 28:16-20)

In the post Easter appearances as narrated in the *Gospel of Matthew*, Jesus gives instructions that the disciples were to meet him at a mountain site in Galilee. The eleven core disciples did so. And at the mountain Jesus had two things to tell them—that all authority had been given to him, and that therefore they were to make disciples among all the gentiles, baptize them with the Trinitarian formula, and then teach them his commands. He concluded by promising to be with them up to the end of the age.

The “therefore” after the recognition of the authority of Jesus the Messiah is interesting. The authority of the humble Jesus was superior to that of states and empires, and therefore people should be baptized into his teachings. But Jesus did not reveal anything about authority and government; and his method of instruction was to formulate parables that left people to draw their own conclusions. This is where the Trinitarian formula comes in. God the father, as revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish culture in general, was the creator. The will of the creator is reflected in creation. Humans, having the power of reason, can recognize the divine will by observing creation. What Jesus, the human son, revealed was a reiteration of what could be

observed in creation. The dynamism of recognizing and reckoning is the work of the Spirit.

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Poem

Behold

This source,
life coming from life,
knowing from being known.

This source, showing itself
in shapes of trees, in sounds of songs,
in darkest silence.

This source's airy presence,
in faintest breeze, in hurricane force,
in what we breathe.

Tom Keene
February 24, 2018

Representation as a Moral Problem

Anthony J. Blasi

Representation is a tactic that people employ as a collective when they select someone to act on their behalf. A representative acts as if those who are being represented were acting. Political theorists often argue that representative government is superior to direct democracy because it involves deliberation and negotiation by agents over a longer period of time rather than on-the-spot decisions in crowd situations. They also argue for the empowerment of elites who have specialized knowledge and who can act for the best interests of populations that lack such knowledge. The present discussion does not focus on such political theories but on the problem of representation *per se*.

Representation is a special case of agency. An agent is someone who acts on behalf of another. Someone who needs actions to be taken may not be able to be present for the activity, or the very nature of the activity may require someone with specialized legal or negotiating skills. The executor of a will, for example, is an agent for someone who has died. Someone who owns stock in a corporation may agree to allow an executive committee to vote one's shares. An attorney may represent a client in a negotiation or in a court proceeding. A labor union and a company management may interact through practiced negotiators.

Sometimes the representative has little latitude of action. If a party to a wedding cannot be present, a stand-in can only agree to matrimony to the intended spouse, not select an

alternative. I once represented a former student in executing his withdrawal from university courses; he was a fugitive from the law and had sent me a letter (with no return address) requesting that I do that on his behalf; I did not have the latitude to sign him up for different courses! In presidential elections Texas Electors to the College of Electors by state law cannot vote for anyone but their party's candidates; in states that do not have such a law, voting for some other candidate would be socially if not legally illegitimate.

At other times, representation may be more broadly structured. When medical personnel consult the family or a designated agent of an unconscious patient about a medical decision, the patient usually has not been able to leave detailed instructions because the nature of the array of decisions that could be made may not be known in advance. Or a company's management may have great latitude within broad parameters that have been set by the stock holders. When candidates for the U.S. presidency offer detailed policy proposals that require congressional action, we can only read the proposals as examples of the quality of the candidates' thinking since they can only act within the parameters that Congress sets. In contrast, when it comes to international relations, presidential latitude is usually much wider.

Legislative political representation involves an agent answerable to a general will of a territorial unit rather than the will of a single individual or of a small group. Choosing instead to answer to a special interest is to fail to represent. The general population of a territorial unit may be wrong on a matter and the representative may feel morally bound to vote against the prevailing position of the population, but that is something different from making oneself answerable to a special interest.

The general will of a territorial unit can arise from either a public or from a mass. A mass acts as if it were a crowd assembled in close quarters, readily swayed by the emotions and rhetoric of the moment. The same feeling or opinion is to be found in virtually everyone present. If some few were to get up and oppose the outcry of a mass, it could turn on them savagely. A public, in contrast, enters into a deliberation with different people holding different viewpoints but being open to hearing and even being persuaded by the viewpoints of others. Formally by vote or informally through prior minded discussion in the press or other media, an initial proposal can become amended or nuanced. Representation of publics is more meaningful and answerable to the general will of a collectivity of people than representations of masses, if for no other reason than the common feeling of a mass is subject to change as soon as the short-term feeling has passed.

In matters of agency, morality focuses on honesty, on integrity on the part of the agent, as well as on the part of "outside" parties who might seek to interfere with an agent's performance of duty. There are a number of moral problems that arise in the representative form of agency:

1) Catering to prejudices and deliberately disseminating misinformation can create conflict and distrust, and thereby dissolve a community and prevent any genuine representation from taking place.

2) The deliberate dilution of communities by drawing representative district lines can create districts that do not genuinely represent communities. This is one of the motives behind gerrymandering. A community is a system of balanced interests; people with different assets and skills live together by contributing distinctive services to the local population. While no sector of a community may get everything it wants, the result has a legitimacy on the basis of the common good. A district that lacks such a community also lacks a balance of interests and lacks the legitimacy attendant upon such a balance. Instead, gerrymandering risks creating masses, which have a lower common denominator on the basis of a narrow commons.

3) There can be restrictions on who can become an agent, eliminating someone whom a public might otherwise select. This takes the form of overt interference in authoritarian nations, but it can also come about because of the expense involved in maintaining a credible electoral

campaign. The moral aspect of the problem enters in where there are deliberate efforts to block the public funding of campaigns or other reforms.

4) Office holders may abdicate from making difficult decisions. This is particularly likely to occur where a district is, in effect, a mass rather than a community.

5) Imposing limitations on the latitude of agents' prerogatives can be a problem. This can happen where agents are disallowed from taking up certain topics; one thinks of former president John Quincy Adams being gavelled out of order for raising the question of slavery in the House of Representatives. Something similar occurs when a chamber's leadership deliberately sends a bill to a hostile committee, irrespective of whether that committee has the issue at hand within its purview. Again, a chamber's leadership may simply prevent a bill from coming to a vote. In Texas, incidentally, the Lieutenant Governor in the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives have the power to both assign bills to committees arbitrarily and to keep bills from coming to a vote.

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>

Interfaith Radio, (*Interfaith Voices*)
<http://www.interfaithradio.org/>

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