

Testimony



A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating March 7, 2021

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 Third Sunday of Lent. Tom Keene's poem is *Aha Moment*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is my review of *Preventing Unjust War. A Catholic Argument for Selective Conscientious Objection* by Roger Bergman. The review first appeared on the website Catholic Books Review.

Calendar

Monday March 1, 11:30am (12:30pm ET) online dialogue "Overcoming Poverty as a Moral Imperative and National Priority: Towards 'A Better Kind of Politics,'" Maria Cancian (Georgetown University), Robert Doar (American Enterprise Institute), Lorena Melgarejo (Faith in Action Bay area in San Francisco), and Marc Morial (National Urban League), moderated by John Carr (Initiative on Catholic Social Thought). Register at: <https://catholicsocialthought.georgetown.edu/events/overcoming-poverty-as-a-moral-imperative-and-national-priority-towards-a-better-kind-of-politics#rsvp>

Wednesday March 3, 7:00pm, online "Climate Change and People of Faith," Katharine Hayhoe (Texas Technological University. St. Mary's University McTaggart Lecture. Zoom link: <https://stmarytx.zoom.us/j/93207991805#success>

Thursday March 4, 6:30pm-8:00pm, online panel discussion "As We Forgive Those who Trespass Against Us: Lent, Forgiveness, and Restorative Justice," Sr. Donna

Liette, cpps (Precious Blood Reconciliation Team, Chicago), Leonard Rubio (Insight Prison Project), and Bill Fischer (University of Dayton). Register for Zoom link at: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYldu2vrT8pG9PGP3TKeZqHNm_AnIJIj5-

Thursday March 4, 7:00pm-8:30pm, online “Past is Present: Pandemics and the Promise of Christianity,” Daniel Reff (Ohio State University). Register for information and Zoom link at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/past-is-present-pandemics-and-the-promise-of-christianity-tickets-132338432815>

Friday March 5, 11:00am-12:00pm (12:00pm-1:00pm ET) online “Understanding Religion and Populism,” Kalpana Jain (*Times of India*) and John Fea (Messiah University), moderated by Ann Peters (Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting). Register at: https://georgetown.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_n8YvUDM4TVmnfLp6wPGI-w

Saturday March 6, 2:00pm, online Pax Christi San Antonio meeting. "Social Justice in Action, Nutrition, Community Gardening," Stephen Locke, MA (Nutrition) and Certificate in Organic Gardening, Palo Alto College. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82820478273>

Tuesday March 9, 3:15pm (4:15pm ET), “Online Ecumenical and Interreligious Guidebook, Dialogue 3,” Bishop Joseph Tyson (Catholic Diocese of Yakima, Washington), Bishop Marc Handley Andrus (Episcopal, representative to the UN Conference of Parties on Climate Change), Bishop Sally Dyck (United Methodist, President of the general Board of Church and Society), Bishop Elizabeth Eaton (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, presiding bishop), and Rev. Walter F. Kedjersky (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops). Register at: https://creation.cadeio.org/events/online-ecumenical-and-interreligious-guidebook-dialogue-3/?utm_source=mailpoet&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ecumenical-and-interreligious-guidebook-announcement_6

Wednesday March 10, 6:30pm (7:30pm ET), webinar “Birth of a Movement: Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church,” Olga Segura (*National Catholic Reporter*). Register at Fairfield.edu/cs

Tuesday March 16, 6:30pm (7:30pm ET) webinar “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing: Jewish and Christian Women as Allies in Anti-Racism,” Ann Millin (former historian, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum). Register at Fairfield.edu/cs

Friday March 19, 6:00pm (7:00pm ET) to **Sunday March 21**, 11:00am (12:00pm ET), “Lenten Virtual Retreat Sponsored by Mary’s House, Birmingham, Alabama,” Edgar Heyes (Freedom Farm), Brenna Cussen-Anglada (Saint Isidore Farm), Frida Berrigan, Jim Robinson, and Suzanne & Brayton Shanley (Agape Community). Register at [peace@agapecommunity](mailto:peace@agapecommunity.org) soon enough to receive materials by mail. Send \$30 to Mary’s House, 2107 Ave. G, Birmingham, AL 35218. More information: peace@agapecommunity.org or agapecommunity.org.

Saturdays March 20, April 17, and TBD, 10:30am-11:30am, online “Faith and Race—An Ongoing Conversation,” Bishop Trevor Alexander (Protestant chaplain, University of the Incarnate Word), Rev. Andries Coetze (University Presbyterian Church), and Dr. Doshie Piper (University of the Incarnate Word). Register by February 13 at: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration/>

Saturday April 3, 1:45pm-4:15pm, Pax Christi Texas State Conference. Keynote speakers: Daniel Castillo (Loyola University, Maryland) “Ecological Theology of Liberation”; and Jere Locke (Texas Drought Project) “Urgency of Climate Change and Consequences If Our Response Is Inadequate.” Online, link information coming soon.

Wednesday April 7, 6:30pm (7:30pm ET), “Walking with the Saints: My Writing Life,” Robert Ellsberg (Orbis Press, formerly with the *Catholic Worker*). Register at Fairfield.edu/cs

Notice

Lenten resources with a Social Justice Focus, from Maryknoll. Designed to be used virtually in a small group you can form with friends or family, or your parish small group (or your Pax Christi friends), or easy to use at home with those in your pod. Each week applies the Sunday scriptures, to an issue of global solidarity. <https://www.maryknoll.us/resources/mission-spirituality/lent-2021>

Second Reading (1 Corinthians 1:22-25)

Paul had discovered that the church he organized back in Corinth had developed factions, with some members favoring a greater adjustment to the gentile (“Greek”) culture and others conserving Jewish practices. He responds not only by criticizing the disputation between the two factions but rejecting both of the cultural trends they favored. He saw these as alternate ways of the world. “Where is the wise one? Where the litterateur? Where the fellow inquirer of this age? Did God not make the wise of the world foolish?” (1 Cor 1:20)

The reading of today picks up in the middle of his critique: “And since Jews ask for signs and gentiles want wisdom, we preach a crucified Messiah, to Jews on the one hand a scandal and to gentiles on the other foolishness...” (1 Cor 1:22-23).

This reminds me of today’s cultural chasm between traditionalists and progressives. There is nothing wrong with traditional culture in itself or with avant-garde culture in itself; there is everything wrong with disputatious constructions fashioned in the name of both and in opposition to one another. A noted twentieth century thinker, Karl Mannheim, distinguished between tradition and conservative thought; the former carried a received wisdom forward while the latter was simply a contrived opposition to the times. Similarly, there is a difference between practical ideas and utopias, the latter based on discomfort with the present, similar, in a paradoxical manner, to conservatism. Tradition is from whence we come, practical ideas are directives leading to the future. Both conservatism and utopia are dishonest in their foundation, grounded in discomfort more than in realism.

Third Reading (John 2:13-25)

[Instead of this reading, some masses may use those from Cycle A, which coordinate with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program.]

“And it was near the Passover of the Judeans.” The Christian community for which the Johannine gospel was written used a different religious calendar from that used by the Judean officials who were in charge of the Temple in Jerusalem. Thus in order to set the scene, the gospel specifies that the *Judeans’* Passover was near. Many translations render the Greek term “Jews” rather than “Judeans,” thus obscuring the meaning of the text.

There was a great deal of business going on in Jerusalem, with the buying and selling of oxen, sheep, and doves. The mention of oxen suggests secular as well as ritual-related commerce. We can compare this with our Christmas season. In addition, in the Temple precincts money changers were at work so that the purchases of animals to be used liturgically could be made without using impure imperial coinage.

Jesus targeted the money changers, overturning their tables, and he ordered dove-sellers out of the Temple area: "...do not make my Father's house an emporium." Why not? The problem seems to be that of mixed motives. There is worship, and there is money-making; and these are two separate, if not opposed, activities.

Then the Judeans—the authorities over Judea—said to him, "What sign have you to show us, since you do such things?" In other words, "Who do you think you are?" When Jesus answered this question about himself, he responded, "Destroy this sanctuary and I will raise it in three days." Why did he say, "Destroy?" Obviously, he was under threat. The gospel is making a case that those who later accused Jesus of threatening the Temple were deliberately misquoting him. He "was saying that about the shrine of his body."

The irony of it all is that the very stratagem for keeping worship from pollution was itself a source of pollution. For sure, this was, and is, not unique to ancient Judea.

Poem

Aha Moment

The flash when we get it.
Straight to meaning's heart.
Ever impacted.
Never to go back.

Words become windows, doors
to a flow beyond words.
In a universal motion
we let body dance its say.

Arms stretch up,
fingers reach out,
legs brace,
eyes glance up.

This shaman gesture we see
etched in caves, on cliffs
by ancestors announcing
what has now become clear.

Tom Keene and Muse
October 10, 2020

Book Review

Roger Bergman. *Preventing Unjust War. A Catholic Argument for Selective Conscientious Objection*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade (Wipf & Stock), 2020, pp. 199 + xiv. \$26.00 pb. ISBN 978-1-5326-8665-8. Reviewed by Anthony J. Blasi

Contemporary Catholic thought on war and peace has two schools of thought: pacifism and just war theory. Pacifism enjoys the luster of idealism but runs into trouble when asked difficult question: Should the United States have allowed the planter class in the South to secede in order to maintain slavery? Should the allies in World War II have left Hitler in power over the European nations? Should the western powers have left South Korea at the mercies of the Kim tyrants? Just war theory appears more workable, maintaining a presumption against war but grudgingly allowing for it in limited situations, but governments have abused it often, generating lies to satisfy its demands in the eyes of their citizens. Roger Bergman writes in the just war tradition, but he wants to make it difficult for governments, especially democratic ones, to abuse it. He favors non-violent resistance when it is a true alternative to violence, as well as a strict adherence to the just war limitations.

The book takes its inspiration from Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, the Austrian farmer executed in 1943 by the Nazis for refusing to serve in what he viewed as an unjust war. Jägerstätter's pastor and bishop did not support his stand but respected the primacy of his conscience. He did not look to the Church authorities but to the early martyrs, about whom he learned in 1936 in the course of his honeymoon in Rome.

Bergman reviews the approaches of St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, the neoscholastics Francisco de Vittoria and Francisco Suárez, the Protestant thinker Hugo Grotius, Pope Pius XII, *Gaudium et spes* #79 from Vatican II, and statements of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Augustine and Aquinas seem to presume that individual soldiers have insufficient information to decide matters of going to war (*jus ad bellum*) but certainly should disobey orders to perform unjust acts in a war (*jus in bello*). Vittoria and Suárez held that a soldier who believed a war is unjust should not participate. Grotius saw it as an obligation of soldiers to ascertain whether going to war would be just. Pius XII did not think soldiers should take it upon themselves to make decisions in matters of *jus ad bellum*. *Gaudium et spes* spoke of a right to conscientious objection. The American bishops, beginning in 1966, spoke of individuals having the prerogative of making moral decisions in matters of war, and from 1968 specifically endorsed selective conscientious objection—i.e., one has the right not to participate in a war that one believes unjust.

Bergman introduces the phenomenon of moral injury into the discussion. The reference is not to post-traumatic stress disorder, which could occur apart from moral injury. "Moral injury is caused by a betrayal of what's right by legitimate authority or an individual's perpetrating, failing to prevent, witnessing, or learning about an incident or its aftermath that violates deeply held moral beliefs and expectations" (pp. 82-83). The condition includes enduring and debilitating anger, guilt, and shame. The suggestion is that absent selective conscientious objection, military personnel could suffer from the condition.

In order to prevent unjust wars, Bergman proposes establishing an ecclesiastical court to issue public rulings on cases of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. The proposal is modeled after proposals for international secular tribunals, proposals formulated by thinkers since David Urquhart (1805-1877). The idea is to make it more difficult for governments to persuade their populations to participate in unjust wars. Bergman also urges that a just war consciousness be promoted in Catholic educational institutions; he notes psychological evidence that adolescents have the ability to engage in advanced moral reasoning.

What resides behind the author's sensitivity to just war thinking? He was a student during the American war in Vietnam. The legitimate authority in the United States ignored factual intelligence (as the *Pentagon Papers* revealed) and was moved by its public image as a world power rather than by the common good of the Vietnamese people. Bergman would add to the "legitimate authority" criterion in just war theory the inclusion of true factual bases for action.

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

Catholic Books Review

<http://catholicbooksreview.org>