

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating March 11, 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 Fourth Sunday in Lent. Tom Keene's poem is *Burning*. See <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php> for more of Tom's poems. My analytical essay, *Dimensions of Social Responsibility*, follows the poem.

Tuesday February 27, the Catholic bishops of the Texas/Mexico border concelebrated a mass at San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio to express their solidarity with the "dreamers," people who were brought without documentation to the United States as children. San Antonio Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller had prayer cards printed, which were distributed on the occasion and used at the end of the mass: "Lord Jesus, today you call us to welcome the members of God's family who come to our land to escape oppression, poverty, persecution, violence, and war. Like your disciples, we too are filled with fear and doubt and even suspicion. We build barriers in our hearts and in our minds. Lord Jesus, help us by your grace, to banish fear from our hearts, that we may embrace each of your children as our own brother and sister; to welcome migrants and refugees with joy and generosity, while responding to their many needs; to realize that you call all people to your holy mountain to learn the ways of peace and justice; to share of our abundance as you spread a banquet before us; o give witness to your love for all people, as we celebrate the many gifts they bring. We praise you and give you thanks for the family you have called together from so many people. We see in this human family a reflection of the divine unity of the one Most Holy Trinity in whom we make our prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen."

Calendar

In Austin

Wednesday April 4, 12:00pm-1:00pm, "The Church and Transgender Identity." Discussion based on article: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/chuch-transgender-identity>. Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress.

Thursday April 5, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Susannah E. Prucka, former Maryland appellate prosecutor, “Is the Criminal Justice System Really Broken?” Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward’s University, 3001 S. Congress.

Friday April 15, 12:00pm-1:00pm, discussion; The Gamer’s Dilemma-Are we comfortable with children killing an average of 100,000 people in video games by the age of 18?” Recommended reading:
https://iainews.iai.tv/articles/the-gamers-dilemma-is-virtual-murder-morally-wrong-auid-827?utm_content=buffer890be&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer
Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward’s University, 3001 S. Congress.

Tuesday April 24, 6:30pm-8:30pm, film by Martin Doblmeier, “An American Conscience: The Reinhold Niebuhr Story.” Prothro Theatre, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas Austin.

In Dallas

Wednesday March 7, 12:00pm-1:30pm, Paul B. Stares, “America’s Next War and How to Prevent It.” Tower Center Boardroom, Carr Collins Hall 227, Southern Methodist University.

In Houston

Tuesday March 20, 12:15pm, Mary Patillo, “Statutory Inequality: Monetary Sanctions in State Law.” Venue TBA—check with Dept. of Sociology, Rice University.

Thursday March 22, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Susann C. Bon, Ph.D., J.D., “The Ethics of Special Education Leadership: Doing What Is Right for the Student.” Jones Hall, University of St. Thomas, 3910 Yoakim Blvd. Fee; register at stthom.edu/SEHSLectureSeries. Park at Moran Parking Center, \$5.00.

Saturday March 24, 8:45am-evening. **Pax Christi Texas State Conference: Paul K. Chappell of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, “Warrior Strategies for Waging Peace in a Time of Nuclear Weapons.” Dominican Center for Spirituality, 6501 Almeda, Houston, Texas 77021.** Doors open 8:00am. Program: 8:45am-3:45pm, closing liturgy 4:00pm. Suggested donation \$40 individual, \$50 couple/family. Mail registration check to Pax Christi Texas, 3901 Mattie St., Austin, TX 78723, by March 1. Some single rooms with shared bath available at the Center, \$40 per night; breakfast included. Contact Sr. Adrian Dover 713-440-3708.

In San Antonio

Sunday March 4, 11:00am-12:00pm, 18th Annual Empty Bowls. Purchase a hand-crafted bowl for \$25 and enjoy soup and bread from local restaurants. Proceeds support San Antonio homeless families and ones on the brink of housing disaster. Southwest School of Art, 300 Augusta.

Monday March 5, 3:30pm, film: "Winds of Heaven: Emily Carr, Carvers and the Spirits of the Forest." Christus Heritage Hall, the Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway.

Tuesday March 6, 6:00pm-9:00pm, 13th Annual Dialogue and Friendship Dinner: "Teaching Compassion and Making a Difference." Keynote speaker: John Phillip Santos (Honors College, UTSA, author and documentary producer on Mestizo culture). Proceeds support a variety of charities: \$45. Register at https://www.eventbrite.com/e/13th-annual-dialogue-and-friendship-dinner-tickets-39734988420. Rosenberg Sky Room, University of the Incarnate Word, 847 E. Hildebrand Ave.

Wednesday March 21, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Salman Hameed, Ph.D., "The Crescent in the Scientific Age: Muslim Perceptions of Science and Religion." University Center, Conference Room A, St. Mary's University, One Camino Santa Maria.

Saturday March 24, 10:00am-5:00pm, Cesar E. Chavez 22nd Annual March for Justice. Begins at 1301 Guadalupe. Participants are encouraged to bring a can of food for the San Antonio Food Bank truck.

Wednesday April 4, 11:00am-12:15pm, Multi-faith Dialogue Panel: "Beyond the Gender Divide," on gender inequality and religious traditions. Huisache Hall, Northwest Vista College, 3535 N. Ellison Dr.

Tuesday April 10, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Lauren Turek, Ph.D., "Religion, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement." SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook): \$20. Register at <http://www.upsa.org/sol-calendar/2018/4/10/religion-race-and-the-civil-rights-movement-with-lauren-turek>.

Friday April 13, 1:30pm-**Saturday April 14**, 5:0pm, interfaith conference "Religion and Climate Change: Taking Our Planet Back." Featured speakers are Sr. Linda Gibler, Oblate School of Theology; Douglas Melnick, City of San Antonio; Rear Admiral "Len" Hering, Center for Climate and Security (Washington, DC); and Gerald Durley, Providence Missionary Baptist Church (Atlanta). Chapman Center, Trinity University, One Trinity Place. Details at https://events-trinity.edu/events/religion_and_climae_change_conference. Free; required registration from the website.

Saturday April 14, 9:00am-12:00pm, Rev. Dr. Mitzi J. Smith, "Womanism, Biblical Interpretation, and Social (In)Justice." Whitley Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate Drive, \$40. For information: Thelma at 210-341-1366, ext. 230.

Tuesday April 17, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Ed Westermann, "Genocide." SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). \$20; register before April 10 at www.upcsa.org/registration.

Tuesday April 24, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Sarwat Hussain, "Causes and Implications of Rohingya Genocide." SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). \$20; register before April 17 at www.upcsa.org/registration.

Third Reading (John 3:14-21)

[At some masses, the readings from year A might be used instead, as part of an RCIA program.]

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, in this way must the son of humanity be lifted up so that everyone who believes in him would have eternal life." This allusion to a narrative about Moses and the Israelites in the desert (Numbers 21:9) appears in the *Johannine Gospel* in the discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus. It is not clear whether it actually was a part of the discourse as passed down through tradition to the time of the composition of the gospel, or a theological comment in a side bar responding to the inability of Nicodemus to understand Jesus when Jesus said one must be born again. Either way, the allusion is meant to address the problem of people not seeing and not understanding.

In the Moses narrative, the people had become impatient: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?" Soon some of them die from snake bite: "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." The Lord tells Moses to make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, "and every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live."

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, in this way must the son of humanity be lifted up so that everyone who believes in him..." The symbolism refers obviously to the crucifixion. The point, however, is to see and understand. Jesus refers to himself as the son of humanity. However "high" a Christology the *Johannine Gospel* may have, it is necessary to see the son of humanity, not the eternal Word, when the crucifixion is perpetrated.

When innocent children and educators are murdered after gun manufacturers have used their political influence to keep the gun market open and uncontrolled, one must see and realize that children of humanity have been torn away from everyday life. When erstwhile travelers seeking peaceful work are captured at a border and sent back to a "homeland" so hostile to them that they had been moved to leave it in the first place, it is the children of humanity who have been repelled as unwanted at a border; that is the time when those who would repel them need to understand that it is the son of humanity whom they are turning away. When a condemned person on death row pleads for mercy, in order to understand one must see the son of humanity lifted up. The sacrifice at Calvary was not about appeasing an angry deity but bringing an angry humanity to the point of seeing, understanding, and being converted.

Poem

Burn

"I want burning, burning...lovers who burn...."

Rumi from *Moses and the Shepherd*

When Moses wondered at the burning bush
might he have asked:
What is it that burns without consuming?

It is love, of course:
A secret fire hiding in every soul,
waiting, building for the moment
it may burst and spread without consuming,
but declaring to all our pharaohs:
Let my people go.

Tom Keene
July 4, 2013

Dimensions of Social Responsibility

Anthony J. Blasi

Social responsibility is in the first instance responsive; it is a propensity toward action. As a propensity of that nature, it presupposes a level of confidence in one's ability to act. It is also social—less a personal virtue and more a motivating grasp onto the realities of life together.

Social responsibility does not resemble elements such as hydrogen and carbon but is more like a construct of differing elements, where there are emergent properties. So the saltiness and relative non-reactiveness of table salt is not found in the two elements from which table salt is made—the two poisons sodium and chlorine. To understand social responsibility, we need to see it as an emergent phenomenon. It is not only emergent in the sense of not being reducible to whatever may help comprise it, but also in the sense of developing over time. One is not born with social responsibility, nor is one simply infused with it at some moment in time.

One element and beginning point for social responsibility is a secure point of departure. This is both individual and communal. An individual who has been treated as someone worthwhile early on in life has an easier time developing and maintaining the confidence needed for a propensity toward action. While such a life course is individual, it is also communal insofar as others are involved in treating the individual as someone who is worthwhile. Social responsibility is also communal; it is emergent in a way that goes beyond interpersonal relations and into the interplay of collectivities of people. It

develops more easily where there is a community of empowered sub-communities, where no category of people is left out. That way what emerges is more likely to be responsibility, as opposed to mere resentment.

A second element of social responsibility is altruism. Rather than being a feature that focuses on the self, as in the case of confidence, altruism focuses on the other. Self and other exist at all together, never in isolation from one another, because there is no self but in contrast to what is not the self, and no other but in contrast to what is oneself. The two are in a relation of mutual implication. In order to activate an interest on the part of the self in the other, to have an altruism and not simply an alter, one imagines oneself as if one were in the situation of the other. This can begin with the simple activity of talking to another, for in talking one must ask oneself what the other would understand by a word or sentence that one would say. However, this becomes more developed and interesting when one learns to listen, to imagine what oneself would mean by a word or sentence, or a longer discourse for that matter, if one were in the position of the other talking to oneself. Another important development is the activity of introducing some other to one's own community, especially inducing one's community to recognize and value someone.

A third element of social responsibility is curiosity. One does not simply have a memory of experiences. There are animals that have extraordinary memories by human standards, but never develop a curiosity, let alone a propensity to act for others. Rather than a memorized reaction to experience, one reaches out to factual reality. Moreover, the curiosity is predicated not only on what would be of interest to oneself but also on what would be of interest to others. One does not engage in simple exploratory behavior, as an infant crawls into new locations, but comes to import into one's own imagination the perspectives and interests of a whole society; one imports as much of a civilization as possible into one's own imagination.

A fourth element of social responsibility is suspicion. Once one has developed a sense of confidence, one may well suffer at the hands or one may witness one or more others suffering at the hands of others. This can lead to displeasure at ignorance, where the suffering of others is ignored, and a similar displeasure at lies that would cover up deeds that made others suffer.

Once some degree of social responsibility is in place, there is the question of assets to be employed in action. Among such assets are wealth, skills, and influence—items that religious organizations often have.

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 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>

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/