

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating April 8, 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 Mercy Sunday, the Second Sunday of Easter. Tom Keene brings a poem by Mary Vineyard to our attention, *Thomas*. Following the poem is a brief consideration of the Trump administration's 2019 budget proposal.

As I write, there are news reports of another police shooting of an unarmed African American man. The city of Sacramento, California, is in turmoil, and its African American citizens are in grieving. A memory comes to my mind, as if by association. In 1974 I had been teaching an undergraduate research course at St. Anselm's College in New Hampshire, and some of the sociology majors in the course were Capuchin scholastics. One of the Capuchins, now a priest in semi-retirement after decades of working with the poor in New York City, needed help with his research project, and I spent a good deal of time in my office helping him. At the end of the academic year he graduated and invited me to a graduation party his parents had organized at their home in South Boston. After I arrived, about ten young toughs showed up; they hung their weapons on pegs by the door—knives, chains, and the like. My student explained to me that these were his childhood friends; his father, a policeman, was assigned to their "territory" and found it better to invite them into his home than to patrol during what would be off hours. Their hanging up their weapons upon entering had become a routine. My student also explained that his father no longer bothered to clean his gun—he had never used it in his career in law enforcement. The young toughs and the policeman were all white, probably all of Irish ancestry. But I do not think race or ethnicity was the only difference between South Boston in 1974 and Sacramento in 2018; one of the policemen who killed the unarmed man in Sacramento was an African American. A militarization of the non-military aspects of our society has taken place. If only people can see that there is a better way.

Also, as I write, members of Pax Christi San Antonio are going down to San Fernando Cathedral, where crowds are expected for the termination of the Passion Procession. Pax Christi members and the Texas Coalition against the Death Penalty will pass out copies of the statement of the Texas Catholic bishops that calls for the

abolition of capital punishment. For some reason, we never hear about the bishops' teaching in our churches. If only people can see that there is a better way.

Calendar

In Austin

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

Wednesday April 4, 5:00pm-6:30pm, Dr. Seyed Masoud, "Islam and Women." Carter Auditorium, John Brooks Williams—South Natural Science Center, 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.

Thursday April 12, 12:00pm-2:00pm, Deliberative Dialogue on Immigration. Participate in dialogue, with results to go to Congressman Lloyd Doggett. Study text in preparation: https://www.nifi.org/sites/default/files/product-downloads/immigration_america_g_0.pdf. Fleck Hall, Room 305. RSVP encouraged: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/center-for-ethics-deliberative-dalogue-immigration-tickets-3669514468>.

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-aid-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, 6:00pm-7:00pm, environmental justice panel with professional activists. Moody Hall 204, 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.

Wednesday April 25, 9:30am-5:00pm, live streaming conference "Redemption and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Restorative Justice, Washington, DC (8:30am-5:00pm Eastern Time Zone). To register to view the live stream: <https://catholicismobilizing.org/event/rj-conference>. Scroll down on the site to a form.

In Dallas

Monday April 2, 12:15pm-1:15pm, debate, Gun Rights and School safety: The 2nd Amendment after Parkland; Prof. Josh Blackman and Jason P. Steed. Hillcrest Classroom, SMU School of Law, 6550 Hillcrest Ave.

Wednesday April 4, 11:30am-12:20pm, chapel service: 50th anniversary, martyrdom of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Thomas Spann preaching. Perkins Chapel, 6001 Bishop Blvd.

Saturday April 7, 9:00am-5:30pm, Race and Reconciliation Symposium. SMU Plano Campus, 5228 Tennyson Parkway, Plano. Register at: <http://www.rockthepeace.org/symposium.html>. For information: Robyn Short, robyn@rockthepeace.org.

Tuesday April 10, 6:00pm-7:00pm, Prof. Nilssen (Nord University, Norway), "Feeding the World in a Time of Climate Change." McCord Auditorium, 3225 University Blvd. More information at <https://www.facebook.com/events/598434610548424/>

Monday April 16, 11:30am-1:30pm, Dave Woodyard (Catholic Charities Dallas), Faith and business. Great Hall of Elizabeth Perkins Prothro Hall, 5901 Bishop Blvd. RSVP: www.smu.edu/faithandbusiness.

Wednesday April 25, 9:30am-5:00pm, live streaming conference "Redemption and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Restorative Justice, Washington, DC (8:30am-5:00pm Eastern Time Zone). To register to view the live stream: <https://catholicismobilizing.org/event/rj-conference>. Scroll down on the site to a form.

In Houston

Saturday April 7, 6:00pm, documentary film, *All That I Sow Is Yours*. Iranian refugee family arrives in the U.S. a few days before the 2016 elections. Rice University; information at <https://vada.rice.edu/rice-cinema/rice-cinema-ticket-information-directions>

Sunday April 15, 9:30am, Leslie S. Ginzel and Julie Falcon, Beacon Law, a service for homeless people. St. Phillip Presbyterian Church, room 201. 4807 San Felipe St.

Wednesday April 18, 12:00pm, D. Mitra Barua, "Governance or Government: Comparative analysis of the Buddhist-Muslim violence in the Chittagong-Rakhine region." Ryon Engineering Laboratory, Mechanical Laboratory 209, Campanile Rd., Rice University.

Wednesday April 25, 9:30am-5:00pm, live streaming conference "Redemption and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Restorative Justice, Washington, DC (8:30am-5:00pm Eastern Time Zone). To register to view the live stream: <https://catholicismobilizing.org/event/rj-conference>. Scroll down on the site to a form.

In San Antonio

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/registration>.

Friday April 13, 1:30pm-**Saturday April 14**, 5:00pm, 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_climate_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, 10:00am, Sona Manusyan, Ph.D. (Yerevan State University, Armenia), "What and Who Make Societies Ready for Peace: How Can Psychology Join the Conversation Today." Student Engagement Center, Room 2030, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

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.

Thursday April 19, 6:30pm-7:30pm, Peacebuilding Symposium with four visiting Fulbright scholars; former Congressman Charlie Gonzales moderating. University of the Incarnate Word, Rosenberg Sky Room, 847 E. Hildebrand. To RSVP visit: <http://bit.ly/2FDg9oQ>.

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.

Wednesday April 25, 9:30am-5:00pm, live streaming conference "Redemption and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Restorative Justice, Washington, DC (8:30am-5:00pm Eastern Time Zone). To register to view the live stream: <https://catholicismobilizing.org/event/rj-conference>. Scroll down on the site to a form.

Third Reading (John 20:19-31)

The disciples were gathered behind locked doors out of fear of the Judean authorities. Most translations say it was out of fear of “the Jews,” which misses the purpose of the sentence, which is to set the scene in time and place. The disciples were in hiding because the local authorities had just arrested their leader and turned him over to the tyrannical imperial government to be whipped bloody and tied to a cross beam to bleed to death as a trouble-maker.

Jesus appears: “You have peace” (the meaning of what translates literally “peace for you”). Then he shows the wounds in his hands, where the soldiers drove nails to keep Jesus from helping himself by sliding his arms for better leverage, and the wound in his side, made when a soldier mutilated his corps. Wherein is this peace?—“Peace for you. As the father sent me, I also am sending you.” Then comes a conferral of the Holy Spirit, who becomes the soul or life principle of the Church.

A curious passage follows, with which we are all familiar: “Whatever sins you might forgive are forgiven them, whatever you might hold have been held.” That which is to be forgiven or held has already been forgiven or held; the disciples would simply join in what is already an accomplished fact.

It is into this situation that “doubting Thomas” comes. In one sense, happy or blessed are they who have not seen and do not doubt, but in another sense there is virtue in seeing wounds and not avoiding the ugly sight.

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Poem

Thomas

"Touch my wound," you say.
Trembling with dread,
I stretch out my hand.
I fall inside you,
and universes open to me.
I see that your wound
is my own, is everyone's
and it is limitless.
Yet you wrap yourself around it
so tenderly.
You become the shore
of that restless ocean.
I am too small to understand,
but I say, "My Lord, my God."
I am weeping in relief.
That is all the faith I have,

and all I need.

Mary Vinyard
Lubec, Maine
Printed in *National Catholic Reporter*

Public Morality: The Federal Budget Proposal

Anthony J. Blasi

The Trump administration has sent to Congress its budget proposal for 2019. While it is only a proposal, it represents the administration's negotiating position with Congress, with the implication that any legislative package that varies too much from that proposal might be vetoed by the president. It needs to be considered seriously from the perspective of social morality.

First the administration wants to repeal the Affordable Health Care Act ("Obamacare") and then cut funding for health care programs well below levels that the major repeal bill in Congress, the Cassidy-Graham Bill, would provide. This would involve eliminating the Medicaid expansion and leaving it up to the states to come up with replacement money within two years. It would also mean that federal subsidies for medical insurance would disappear. Financially, this would mean that the tax cuts for corporations and higher income groups that were recently enacted would be paid for by reducing medical expenditures for poor and moderate-income Americans. The administration proposal would provide some block grants to states by way of replacement, but at relatively low levels, with no adjustments for increases in medical service prices and pharmaceutical prices or to accommodate population increases.

Second, the proposal would cap the funding of the prior Medicaid program on a per capita basis. There would be citizenship and immigration requirements for participants in the program, and home-ownership could disqualify people from some coverages.

Third, the proposal would allow states to permit insurance companies to charge higher premiums for people who have pre-existing medical conditions.

Fourth, states would be allowed to reduce the list of core coverages that at present must be included in medical insurance policies.

Fifth, the proposal would reduce funding of SNAP (food stamps) by 30% over a period of ten years. It would also replace the current successful distribution program, which relies on a public-private cooperation, with government-supplied packages of nonperishable foods. Ironically, this seems to be creating a higher degree of socialism in the program, at the cost of flexibility and genuine well-being.

Sixth, the proposal would eliminate vouchers for low income housing and raise rents on low-income tenants who at present receive assistance. It would cut funding for public housing repairs in half. Home energy assistance for low income people would be eliminated.

Seventh, the proposal would cut Social Security Disability Insurance and the Supplement Disability Income benefits.

Eighth, the proposal would reduce funding for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and the current block grants to states for social services. States would be allowed to eliminate protections that current law requires for the social services block grants.

In general, non-defense funding for education, social services, and transportation infrastructure (including the highway trust fund), the Army Corps of Engineers, water treatment plants, and other items would be reduced by a massive 42%, or calculating for expected inflation 50%.

A budget is not a financial accounting scheme but rather a statement of policy, ultimately an expression of values and symptom of vices and virtues. This budget proposal values the means of war-making, which go uncut, and devalues the well-being of the non-wealthy. It reflects that imaginary world of the now bankrupt ToysRUs stores, which were replete with plastic toy replicas of guns and other weapons. Non-combat concerns are to be out of sight, minimized, devolved onto states, many of which would prefer that real needs would just go away.

Might some realism spoil such an imaginary world? Even in military affairs, who are the people who are sent out to war? Are they not generally from the ranks of the non-wealthy? Do they not include many non-citizens? And who are the productive people who make money for corporations and their wealthy owners? Are they not generally people of modest means? Even well-paid middle management does not really produce. Where does our food come from? Who builds the dwellings we inhabit? Who cares for our toddlers and who teaches our children? Most of what some writers term the "forces of production" depend on current income, and an illness on their part or in their families can make them dependent on public support. And in our civilization we do not let people who are injured in accidents or afflicted by disease to go untreated, and medical treatment will be covered in one way or another, whether a budget foresees it or not. More people will turn up in hospital emergency rooms, the most expensive way of all to provide treatment to patients.

Or do the budget drafters foresee a different society, in which the injured and the ill sit outside hospital doors begging while in their death throes? Or do they envisage a world in which far greater numbers of people go homeless and besiege us on the streets for handouts? Would they have a world in which there are fewer elderly because they die sooner? Is such what they value?

Our constitutional framework, within which we collectively budget, was never perfect; after all, it provided for slavery. However, it did eliminate the distinction between noble and non-noble. Public office was not to be inherited or, as frequently occurred in Europe in the early modern period, purchased with inherited funds. All free people in the new American republic were able to go about making their way in the world, without being prohibited from engaging in the occupations of their choice, even as peasants were still disallowed from leaving farms in Europe. The flip-side of the coin is that those born to wealth are not to monopolize the benefits of free productivity. It was entirely in keeping with this approach that the Sixteenth Amendment provided for the income tax.

The budget proposal reviewed above would, in contrast, reverse the intent of the elimination of nobility and of the evening out of life chances through the income tax.

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>

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