

Testimony



A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating April 11, 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 Second Sunday of Easter. Tom Keene's poem is *Take, eat, drink*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is my review of *Handing Down the Faith. How Parents Pass Their Religion on to the Next Generation*, by Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk; the review first appeared online in Catholic Books Review (see the links at the end of this issue).

Calendar

[Times are given for the Central Time Zone]

Monday April 5, 7:00pm, webinar "Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen: Impact on Population's Health. The nation's top Yemen experts discuss the world's worst humanitarian crisis," Aisha Jumaan (Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation), Hassan El-Tayyab (Friends Committee on National Legislation), and Kathy Kelly (Voices for Creative Non-Violence). Organized by the North Texas Peace Advocates, co-sponsored by Pax Christi Dallas. Register at: <http://bit.ly/Peace4Yemen>

Tuesday April 6, 12:00pm (1:00 ET) online "The Protecting Places of Worship Virtual Forum," on the U.S. federal government grant program for protecting minority places of worship. Register at: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_3ea_LizdRO6w4uqKJdNd9w

Wednesday April 7, 1:00pm (2:00pm ET), "Sacred Land, Sacred Spaces, a webinar in the spirit of Laudato Sí," Nikki Cooley (Institute for Tribal Environmental

Professionals), Deb Echo-Hawk (Pawnee Seed Preservation), and Ronnie O'Brien (Pawnee Seed Preservation). Register at:
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_bML1dJYgRqCt866UDkJHUg

Wednesday April 7, 2:30pm-4:45pm (3:30pm-4:45pm ET) online program "A Movement Takes Flight," commemoration of a historical marker of the environmental justice movement, Kelly Johnson (University of Dayton), Charles Lee (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency), Richard Moore (Los Jardines Institute), and Donele Wilkins (The Green Door Initiative), moderated by Carlton Eley (Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission). Register at:
<https://udayton.edu/artssciences/ctr/hrc/romero/romero-21.php>

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

Thursday April 8, 6:30pm-8:30pm, Courageous Conversations, Holy Cross Church, Austin, Texas. Access at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81865442304#success>

Sunday April 11, 9:30am, online "Biodiversity Loss," including why it is important; Kerri Crawford (University of Houston). Register at:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86564638381?pwd=MTBtSF16eVhoTUF3SXJ2VIBWd0N2QT09#success>

Tuesday April 13, 1:00pm-2:00pm, webinar "The Role of Mitigation Specialists in Capital Cases," Elizabeth Harvey. Presented by the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. Register at:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfSFTJEoaWu5PyZ9aVyEOuUwA07CQHddBC3NuC4LWm8AHIIBA/viewform>

Tuesday April 13, 1:00pm-2:30pm (2:00pm-3:30pm ET), EPA webcast "Saving the Rain: Green Stormwater Solutions for Congregations," Robert Goo (Environmental Protection Agency) and Naomi Edelson (National Wildlife Federation). Register at:
https://events-na6.adobeconnect.com/content/connect/c1/2448447077/en/events/event/share/default_template/event_landing.html?sco-id=2568426484&_charset=utf-8

Wednesday April 14, 2:30pm-4:00pm (3:30pm-5:00pm ET) online program "The Right to a Healthy Environment in the Americas," Rob Brodrick (The Partnership Center), Kwyn Townsend Riley (poet, Western Illinois University), Soledad Garcia Muñoz (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights). Register at: <https://udayton.edu/artssciences/ctr/hrc/romero/romero-21.php>

Wednesday April 14, 5:30-6:30pm, Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, San Antonio chapter meeting, online. Contact Mardi Baron for the Zoom link: mardibaron@gmail.com

Thursday April 15, 12:00pm-1:30pm, webinar "Bystander 101. You Can Stand Up to Identity-Based harassment," Houston Coalition against Hate/OCA Greater Houston Training. Register at: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u9dS8kZiQTW8oDtCSwmxxw

Thursday April 15 to Sunday April 18, 2021 Holy Cross Institute Convocation. This is a multi-day program with a variety of speakers and breakout groups, focusing on the history and renewal of the works of the Congregation of Holy Cross. There are parallels to the concerns of Pax Christi. Information and registration at <http://stedwardsedu/holy-cross-institute>

Friday April 23, 2:00pm-3:30pm (3:00pm-4:30pm ET), webinar "The Historic Vietnam Veterans Protest in Washington: Lessons for Today," Jan Barry (Vietnam Veterans Against the War), Adrienne Kinne (Veterans for Peace), Lauren Mottle (University of Leeds), Garrett Reppenhagen (Veterans for Peace), Carlotta Scott (former aide to the late Rep. Ron Dellums), Chuck Searcey (Operation RENEW), Lamont B. Steptoe (poet), and Steve Talbot (filmmaker), moderated by Dvid Cortright (University of Notre Dame). Register at: https://notredame.zoom.us/webinar/register/4816172188982/WN_j7WKIPDbSG2Yqd6TvwEtRw?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=4.1.2021+Event+Dewey+Canyon+Vietnam+Invite+1&utm_term=https%3a%2f%2fnotredame.zoom.us%2fwebinar%2fregister%2f4816172188982%2fWN_j7WKIPDbSG2Yqd6TvwEtRw&utm_id=476137&sfmc_id=16334564

Saturday April 24, 12:00pm-4:00pm (1:00pm-5:00pm ET), online "Creating a Culture of Life in a Divided Country," Consistent Life Network. Register at:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScFiWjfUNE_mQ8A9KOcYejVoURnte27Fh_-hazCrIYT_YBKZQ/viewform

Monday April 26, 6:30pm-7:30pm online "Becoming an Ally against racism," Lisa Stone (anti-Defamation League). Register by April 19 at: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration/>

In El Paso [Times given in Mountain Time]

Monday April 5-Saturday April 10, 7:00am-3:00pm, redeem tickets for 3 red cheese enchiladas, beans, rice, and salad, at Martita's Lunch Box, 3623 Buckner (new location), in the annual Isaiah House fundraiser. \$10.00 per order. Call Ana Ramirez 915-494-4180 or Pat Delgado 915-740-3962 to arrange ticket purchases.

Thursday April 8, 7:00pm, Pax Christi El Paso virtual meeting: Discussion of *Fratelli Tutti*, paragraphs 128-153. Contact Patricia Delgado for the Zoom link: phdelgado3583@gmail.com

Notices

Saturday April 10-Saturday April 26, any time during this span of dates, new film *Kiss the Ground*, on regenerating the world's soils. Register for free viewing at: <https://www.faithclimateactionweek.org/featured-film-kit/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=2498fb11-e0c8-4f3f-bc1f-988006d34c68>

Photo tour: the colorful art designed to welcome refugees at El Paso's Casa del Refugiado - El Paso Matters

For the refugees who have spent months (or even years) stuck waiting in Mexico, the art-covered walls of El Paso's Casa del Refugiado are a colorful and vibrant first glimpse of the United States. <https://elpasomatters.org/2021/03/01/photo-tour-the-colorful-art-designed-to-welcome-refugees-at-el-pasos-casa-del-refugiado/>

Second Reading (First Letter of John 5:1-6)

"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah has been begotten of God, and everyone loving the One begetting also loves what is begotten from Him" (1 Jn 5:1). The reading is brief; it continues for only five verses more. Note that the author, who identifies himself simply as "The Presbyter" in short letters related to this one, does not refer to everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah being created by God but "begotten of God." To beget is to father, to bring into life within the framework of creation. Other parts of the New Testament use the legal language of adoption to make a similar point. It is not a mere matter of existing but of being family.

Creation is by God, but to be begotten is of God. Not *by*, but *of*. The latter term suggests a belonging to in a way that the former term does not denote. The Presbyter draws an inference from this: "We know that we love the children of God by this: when we love God we at according to His commandments" (v. 2). To be *of* the One who begets means to be with the brothers and sisters whom God has also begotten. This familial unity involves commandments beyond those listed in the Decalogue, ones that refer to family-like activity. And "...these commandments are not burdensome..." (v. 3).

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.

Poem

Take, eat, drink

He would leave them,
these friends and relatives,
these men, women, children.
So, he gathered them
for one last meal.

Soon I'll be gone, he said.
I ask you to do this again so
when my body is dis-membered,
you can re-member me.

Take this bread, made from grains,
crushed and ground to powder,
mixed with life-giving water, living yeast,
to rise and bake in fire.

Take this wine, made from grapes,
also crushed and left to ferment,
to transform themselves to spirits.

For you this bread embodies me. Eat.
For you this wine is my spirit-impelling blood. Drink.
Let me come alive in you as food, air,
sunlight already do in you,
as friends and lovers are held in memory.

Do this, not alone, but with one another,
for meals are meant to be shared.
Do this in love, with hugs and kisses of peace.

Tom Keene and Muse
May 2020

Book Review

Christian SMITH and Amy ADAMCZYK. *Handing Down the Faith. How Parents Pass Their Religion on to the Next Generation*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2021. PP. 248 + x. \$ 29.95. ISBN 9780190093327 (hardcover). Reviewed by Anthony J. Blasi.

This is a straightforward report of research conducted by two distinguished American sociologists of religion. It is intended for the general reader, with explanations given for any important technical points. Nevertheless, I recommend that readers have some acquaintance with survey research methods, specifically an understanding of "control variables" in multivariate analysis.

The authors use two kinds of data: 1) extended interviews from their own quota sample of parents from major religious groups and non-religious parents, and 2) data from fixed-response item surveys that are representative of the United States population. Since surveys provide relatively superficial information, the extended interviews probed issues with greater depth as well as providing textual examples that humanize what could otherwise be rather sterile tables of numbers. A research team, consisting mostly of undergraduate and graduate students and research assistants affiliated with the University of Notre Dame, as well as the authors themselves, conducted the extended interviews and transcribed them; software programs derived themes from the resultant database.

Since most readers are wide-awake members of the same society from which the information has been derived, the more accurate the report is the less surprising it will be. This is a perennial paradox of sociological publishing. So most readers will not be shocked to learn that parents generally believe they should equip their children with knowledge of their religion by routinely modeling its practices, values, and ethics, which children will then hopefully absorb and

embrace for themselves. The desired result is that the children will have purpose in life, with a level of happiness and a sense for living rightly. The children, however, must find their own paths through the difficulties that their lives will present. Religion should, in the parents' thinking, provide a big picture that helps navigate everyday life. While a religion proposes a general truth, parents do not want to promote fanaticism or exclusivism. The main task of parents is to provide background resources, not to control.

The authors found what other researchers have also noted: Family solidarity, based on warm relationships among family members, is important for passing on religious commitments from one generation to the next. A shared religion can help, but it should not be demanded. Religious congregations are helps to the parents but not substitutes for them. Again, religion should be passed on primarily through modeling, especially during the children's teen years. Unforced conversation about religion proves to be particularly important.

Each chapter highlights one aspect of this general picture. Subsections frequently focus on particular groups: Christian denominations, Buddhists, Muslims, immigrant families, Latino Catholics, African Americans.... One is struck by the commonalities among these communities rather than any differences.

While the project has clearly been undertaken competently and dispassionately, there are nevertheless issues to be raised. The religiosity to be passed from one generation to the next consists largely of saying prayers, reading scriptures, attending services, and not getting into trouble with the police. These are religious goods, granted; but what about magnanimity, altruism, unselfishness, civic-mindedness, a love of justice, hearing the call to be peace makers, and a spirit that militates against ignorance, poverty, and fear? Is it the authors' fault that these religious goods are not mentioned? Maybe not. It might be that such are simply not in the minds of the people who were interviewed. It should be noted, however, that one of the tables the authors present (page 208) suggests that the parents value social justice issues more than they do religious education items.

Second, while it makes sense not to conduct extended interviews with a national U.S.A. sample—the overhead cost would simply be too large—why not focus on a smaller catchment area, Great Lakes region large cities, for example? In political sociology, it makes sense to use national representative samples, since we have nation-wide presidential and congressional elections; but the sociology of religion gains no particular advantage from that kind of national focus. It would have been nice to consider interview material from groups that were not included

in the authors' quotas—Latino Evangelicals, for example. And such added groups could have been interviewed more easily if the catchment area were smaller.

I recommend the book, but I also recommend that readers raise their sites beyond it.

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>