

# Testimony



## A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating April 18, 2021

Communications with the editor should be sent to [j6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com](mailto: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 Easter. Tom Keene's poem is *Sin Is*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the poem is a set of three statements by the Order of Friars Minor (two from from the Far East) on the military takeover of the government in Myanmar (Burma) and its brutality.

I wish to thank all the people who facilitated the Pax Christi Texas state conference, which was held online on April 3. The planning process involved members of the Pax Christi Texas Board of Directors, an ad hoc planning committee, and the Zoom host of the conference, the Holy Cross Institute at St. Edward's University. Sister Martha Ann Kirk provided the opening invocation; Fr. Richard Wahl formulated the closing prayer. Mr. Albert Valverde of the Holy Cross Institute moderated the question and answer sessions, and of course the presenters did a splendid job—Dr. Daniel Castillo of Loyola University Maryland and Jere Locke of the Texas Drought Project. A video of the conference can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/d-6QxV9FOYQ>

We are working on a second section of the conference, planned for this coming summer.

### Calendar

[Times are given for the Central Time Zone]

**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/shared/default\\_template/event\\_landing.html?sco-id=2568426484&\\_charset=utf-8](https://events-na6.adobeconnect.com/content/connect/c1/2448447077/en/events/event/shared/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](mailto:mardibaron@gmail.com)

**Thursday April 15**, 10:00am-11:30am (11:00am-12:30pm ET), panel on "Promoting Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy," David Hollenbach, S.J.; David Little; Nicole Bibbins Sedeca (U.S. Dept. of State), and Mark Lagon, moderated by Judd Birdsall (Georgetown University). RSVP at: [https://georgetown.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_t7f4Eeals8u-nUu3PK1lvw](https://georgetown.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_t7f4Eeals8u-nUu3PK1lvw)

**Thursday April 15**, 11:30am (12:30pm ET) online dialogue "Immigration challenges and Choices: People, Principles, and Policies," Rev. Walter Kim (National Association of Evangelicals), Sabrina Rodriguez (*Politico*), Bishop Mark Seitz (Roman Catholic Diocese of El Paso), and Loren (DACA recipient), moderated by Kim Daniels (Georgetown University). Register at: <https://catholicsocialthought.georgetown.edu/events/immigration-challenges-and-choices-people-principles-and-policies#rsvp>

**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](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u9dS8kZiQTW8oDtCSwmxxw)

**Thursday April 15**, 6:30pm, Donnal Walter, M.D. (Arkansas Children's Hospital) will give an overview of *Fratelli Tutti*, the encyclical of Pope Francis. Sponsored by Pax Christi Little Rock. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85833413678>

**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>

**Tuesday April 20**, 6:00pm, film *The Condor & the Eagle. Protectors of Sacred Places and Our Common Home*, followed by panel discussion. Register at: <https://event.webinarjam.com/register/190/ry2lyu25?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=5205983e-34ae-493e-a1be-85634932f4ee&eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=0f12897f-e64e-4120-9a2c-103d81c64c1c>

**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](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](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/>

### Notices

**Pax Christi Texas State Conference**, Part 1, video of the April 3 session. Link: <https://youtu.be/d-6QxV9FOYQ>

**Sr. Norma Pimental Discusses Current Migrant Surge**. Link: <https://www.wsgw.com/transcript-sister-norma-pimentel-on-face-the-nation/>

**Communities in Crisis: Interior Removals and Their Human Consequences**, a report of survey data from the Catholic Removal Impact Survey in Society, a collaboration of the Kino Border Initiative, the Center for Migration Studies of New York, and the Office of Justice and Ecology of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States. Link: <https://www.kinoborderinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/FINAL-Communities-in-Crisis-Report-ver-5.pdf>

### Second Reading (1 John 2:1-5a)

“My children, I am writing these things to you so that you might not sin.” That is not remarkable for a religious writer. But what follows goes a long way to recognizing the human condition: “And if anyone should sin, we have an advocate near to the Father, Jesus, just Messiah; and he is a sin-offering for our sins, not only for ours but also those of the whole world” (1 Jn 2:1b-3). Some biblical translations render “sin offering” as “expiation.” What is that really about?

Many of the polytheistic religions of antiquity held that gods were angered when humans, for example, neglected worshipping them. A sin-offering manipulated the deities, mollifying them so that they would no longer be angry. The Hebrew traditions contained in the Bible centered instead on a covenant with a God Who was beyond manipulation. The sin offering worked on the human side of the covenant, restoring the relationship with God.

John the Presbyter’s letter speaks of the Christ or Messiah as an advocate close to the Father, suggesting that the relationship to humanity is restorable because of who that advocate is; no further persuasion is needed to create some

change in the Father. The challenge instead is to persuade or move humans, an approach that is well within the ancient Hebrew worldview. It only makes sense, then, that John the Presbyter would write “so that you might not sin.”

### **Third Reading (Luke 24:35-48)**

The reading picks up the narrative of Jesus appearing to two disciples on their way to Emmaus; after he disappears during the breaking of the bread, they go back to Jerusalem to report to the disciples what had occurred. The disciples in Jerusalem are described as “the eleven and those gathered with them.” Jesus appears again, and they were afraid because they thought he was a ghost. Jesus sets about proving his physicality, that he was no ghost.

Somehow it seems that many Christians believe, at least in practice, that Jesus went away and became a ghost, despite the testimony of the gospels and the doctrine of the *First Letter of John* that anyone who does not love his brother or sister who can be seen cannot love God who cannot be seen (1 John 4:20). A ghost, at least in imagination, can be seen, but not fed or touched. Ghosts seem to be very much like some prayers, don't they? There are words, but nothing happens in the physical world.

The Easter narratives are tantamount to a critique of religion, at least religion of a kind. The disciples do not pray that Jesus come; he comes anyway. He does not limit himself to the spiritual or ghostly realm, where spirituality of a kind would contain him. Unlike an imagined ghost, he does not appear where he is not present, but is present rather than being an appearance. Whenever religion would be the endeavor of a puppeteer pulling the strings of a deity, Jesus would cancel the show and ask for bread.

## Poem

### *Sin Is*

Sin is reservation-concentration camps for any who came here first,  
slavery's arrogance in holding others as property,  
Auschwitz separating a "superior race" from the rest of us.

Sin is Hutus killing Tutsis in Rwanda,  
seeing others as us-verses-them,  
separations that blaspheme our holy human family.

Sin is our indifference to this.

Tom Keene and Muse  
January 18, 2021

## **Three Statements on Myanmar (Burma) by the Order of Friars Minor**

### **Urgent appeal to the UN and The International Community for the situation in Myanmar**

His Excellency Mr. António Guterres  
Secretary General  
United Nations Headquarters  
New York, NY 10017 United States

Rome, March 12, 2021

Dear Secretary General Guterres,

In the words of St. Francis of Assisi, May the Lord give you peace!

I write to you today in my capacity as the Minister General and Servant of the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans), some 12,500 Catholic religious brothers and

priests present and working in 116 countries, to express deep sadness and grave concern with the ongoing repression of millions of citizens in Myanmar following a military coup.

Our Franciscans in Myanmar have witnessed firsthand the brutality of the security forces and the insecurity this has created. Reports on the ground, and the report of your Special Rapporteur, Mr. Thomas H. Andrews (March 11, 2021) confirm that coordinated violence continues to escalate on a daily basis resulting in the deaths of at least 70 civilians, arbitrary detentions of thousands of those engaged in peaceful protests, destruction of legal protections, severe restrictions on access to internet and communications, and the subversion of the will of the people of Myanmar expressed in the November 2020 elections.

I wish to thank you for the actions that your office has taken to call attention to the situation in Myanmar, especially the work of your Special Envoy to the country. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that now is the time for the international community to act in a united, decisive manner to protect against further loss of life, destruction of property, and to ensure the restoration of the democratically elected government of Myanmar without delay. This should include requiring that the military junta immediately desist from using excessive force against the people of Myanmar, the release of those who are illegally detained, restoration of protections guaranteed by law, including the right to peacefully protest.

Our Franciscan men who are living and working in Myanmar have asked me to intercede for the people of Myanmar. I include in this mailing a letter they have asked me to forward to you.

May the people of Myanmar once again experience a return to democracy, and may the current crisis find a peaceful and lasting resolution.

Sincerely yours,

Br. Michael A. Perry, OFM  
Minister General and Servant

## OFM-EAC Solidarity Statement on Myanmar Political Crisis



*I will strengthen you; I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. (Is 41, 10)*

The East Asia Conference Ministers and the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office of the Order of Friars Minor follows with concern and great sadness over the events that followed the coup d'état which began on the morning of 1 February 2021, when democratically elected members of Myanmar's ruling party, the National League for Democracy, were deposed by the Tatmadaw—Myanmar's military.

We join the Myanmar people in their struggle for self-determination under a duly elected government. We are united with them in demanding for a peaceful resolution to the military take-over. We are with them in calling for the release of the democratically elected officials of government, of activists, and of the youth. We stand with them in their bid to defend human dignity and human rights.

The images and videos that have been successfully transmitted out of Myanmar portrays the suffering of a people who have long hoped and struggled for co-existence under a democratic rule. We are edified by the witnessing of the Myanmar people for truth and justice. We are humbled by their exercise of charity towards their brethren. We commiserate with their pain, and, together with the many Christians in Myanmar – priests, missionaries, and laypeople – we join them in praying that this period of darkness hovering over their land will soon end.

We implore the Tatmadaw: Behold your sisters and brothers. Behold the long-suffering Myanmar, victims of colonial greed, of oppression, of anger. Let us stop our hunger for blood. Let us desist from letting hatred reign in our hearts. Let us call upon the Lord, who promised to be near his people, so that justice and peace may reign in Myanmar, and the long overdue of reconciliation may begin.

In this process, may the prayer of the Holy Father Pope Francis, who himself was a pilgrim in your land, inspire all of us: “Lord, Father of our human family, move us to create healthier societies and a more dignified world, a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war.” (cf. Fratelli Tutti, 287).

May the God of Peace rest in all our hearts, and dwell in it deeply.

ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR East Asian Conference Ministers  
Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Office

**Save Myanmar, Stop Coup**

**Stand with Myanmar**



The military declared a state of emergency to protect their power, making an excuse that the general election held in November last year was a fraudulent election) Myanmar's military has seized power after detaining Aung San Suu Kyi, other democratically elected leaders, and also civil society leaders, and blocked state broadcasting and communications. Tanks appeared on the streets of the capital city of Naepido and Yangon, and even martial law was declared. The military declared that it would rule for one year until the country stabilizes.

Myanmar's democracy, which has been regained hard after half a century of military dictatorship, is faltering again. Myanmar's citizens chose in the general election was not the military rule by force, but the progress of the civil government and democracy. Citizens opposing the coup began to resist. They protest by sounding a car horn and tapping a pot, holding three fingers high which symbolize resistance and sharing. Workers, students, and even civil servants came out to the streets, shouting that the military coup is unacceptable. We are worried that the bloodshed in 1988 and 2007 will recur.

The history of democracy in Korea is similar to that of Myanmar. The military regime, which began in the 1960s, killed numerous citizens and pursued only their own self-interest. In the civil society of Korea, which is aware of the pain of the citizens of Myanmar, the campaign was carried out in prayer for the end of the violence of the military coup and the beginning of justice and peace.

The JPIC Commission of the Korean OFM Province and 17 civil society organizations were running a campaign to stop the coup in Myanmar. Many Koreans are joining the campaign by taking a picture of themselves with a sign says "Stop the coup immediately" or as they wish to say, and posting the picture on the campaign websight. The voice of solidarity from Korean citizens will be gathered and delivered to the media and to the citizens of Myanmar.

Fr. Louis Kim, OFM  
South Korea

### **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](http://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>

Texas Catholic Campaign to End the Death Penalty

[www.txccedp.org](http://www.txccedp.org)

Dialogue Institute of San Antonio

[www.thedialoginstitute.org/san-antonio/](http://www.thedialoginstitute.org/san-antonio/)

Climate Change

[www.creation-care.com](http://www.creation-care.com)

Catholic Books Review

<http://catholicbooksreview.org>