

Testimony



A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating April 4, 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 Easter Sunday. Tom Keene's poem is *Natividad Nekane*; that name was given to an infant by his poet father Ricardo Sanchez; Natividad turned 34 years old last Christmas. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Rather than an essay after the poem, Zoom in to the Pax Christi Texas program on environmentalism Saturday April 3; the registration can be found below in the Calendar section. April 3 is, of course, Holy Saturday; if a schedule conflict prevents Zooming into our program, try to locate an Easter Vigil service online.

Calendar

Monday March 29, 12:15pm-1:15pm, webinar "From Farmers' Market to Market Share: How the Organic Movement Has Evolved," Kathleen Merrigan (Arizona State University) and Catherine Greene (Organic Trade Association). Register at: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/1211030006619499024>

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." Register at: https://stedwards.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Jssb4gG7QsSaK_3a9WodTA

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, 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=MTBtSFl6eVhoTUF3SXJ2VlBWd0N2QT09#success>

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>

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

Saturday April 24, 12:00pm-4:00pm (1:00pm-5:00pm ET), online "Crating 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

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.

Second Reading

The celebrants of the Easter masses may opt from three readings:

Romans 6:3-11 (The "Epistle" reading at the Easter Vigil mass)

This passage invokes the imagery of baptism as a death followed by a new life: "Do you not know that we who were baptized into the Messiah, Jesus, were baptized into his death? We were buried with him, then, through baptism into death, so that as Messiah rose from the dead..." (Rom 6:3-4a). In modern times, absent discrimination or even persecution against Christians, we do not usually think of Baptism as a death. The rising to life part of the imagery appears to stand alone, as an infant or a convert is baptized. To take the genuinely Christian way of life into consideration, however, is to consider a death of sorts, a death to the giddiness of a superficial life and a new inner joy and peace.

Colossians 3:1-4 (One of the options for Easter Morning)

Here the Deuteropauline author invokes the imagery of death followed by new life in Baptism, just as Paul did in Romans (see above). The passage calls upon the reader to think about the seriousness of choosing to die to the superficial world and to seek what we moderns would call a more authentic life: "So if you were raised together with the Messiah, seek what is above, where the Messiah is seated at the right hand of God; think on what is above, not on what is on the earth..." (Col 3:1-2).

First Corinthians 5:6b-8 (A second option for Eastern Morning)

This reading uses a different image from the others described above, but it also invokes an end to one way of life and beginning of another. It speaks of a puffing up with leaven—abandoning the yeast that had been used in readying yesterday's bread for baking and using new yeast for preparing new bread. Some materials of everyday life remain the same, similar to some ingredients of bread from old stores in the cupboard; but yeast that breathes or animates must be from a new batch. The baptized live in the same world as those not baptized, but they are called upon to live in it in an entirely different way.

Third Reading

The celebrants of the Easter masses may opt from three gospel readings:

Mark 16:1-7 (vigil service)

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome come with spices to make the burial of Jesus proper. They are surprised to see the large stone that had blocked entry into the tomb moved aside, and they see within “a young man sitting to the right wearing white clothing.” Mark uses images to make associations and contrasts in his gospel. In this case, the contrast is with a bystander at the time of the arrest of Jesus at Gethsemane. A youth heard the arrest party and came out at night from a house, still lightly clad, to see what the commotion was all about: “And there was a youth who was following along with him, wearing a linen tunic over his naked body, and they (the arresting party) seized him; but leaving the linen tunic he fled naked” (Mark 14:51-52). The young man at Gethsemane, a mere witness, flees in terror, leaving the gendarmes holding only a tunic. The young man at the tomb is not a silent witness but says not to fear, and a point is made about him being dressed in white.

The baptismal imagery is evident. At the Easter Vigil those to be baptized enter the pool wearing garments (usually gray) that, after the baptism, they replace with white garments for the remainder of the celebration. However, merely seeing Mark's symbolizing the ritual symbols in a literary manner does not bring us all the way to the message. The youth at Gethsemane flees in terror from the powers of this world. The youth of Easter morning sits calmly in a scary tomb and tells the frightened women not to be afraid at all but to deliver the news to the disciples that they should go to Galilee, where Jesus will be waiting for them.

The *Gospel of Mark* was most likely written in Rome at a time when the macabre persecution of Christians by Emperor Nero was still a vivid memory. The Christians actually met in underground graves, the catacombs. Nero murdered many, but others, gathered as a church, outlived him.

John 20:1-9 (option for Sunday morning services)

“We do not know where they put him.” Different gospels tell the story from their unique perspectives. The *Johannine Gospel* adds a recollection by the Beloved Disciple, a youngster at the time of the event, running ahead of Peter; the two were reacting to Mary Magdalene’s description of the body of Jesus being gone. The non-canonical *Gospel of Peter* tells the story from the perspective of Mary Magdalene: Fearing the Judean authorities, she and some other women had gone to the tomb in the dark of the early morning to mourn and prepare the body in the customary manner. On the way they wondered who could move the great stone at the entrance of the tomb. The implication to be drawn from the problem of the stone is that a prankster in the dead of the night could not be expected to have moved it and to have absconded with the corpse.

God, it turns out, is the ultimate prankster, leaving humans to wonder where Jesus could be contained. People firmly convinced of the adequacy of everyday human knowledge doubt the reports of the empty tomb, but perhaps doubt should be directed instead to the adequacy of any effort to contain Jesus. Joseph of Arimathea undoubtedly meant well, as would later devotees with their ornate tabernacles.

Luke 24:13-35 (meant for Sunday evening services)

On the way to Emmaus: “...some women among us astounded us. Being at the tomb early in the morning, and not finding his body, they came speaking also about seeing a vision of messengers who said he was alive.” Hope does not end but begins with an Easter experience. It may lack direction, even as our footsteps lead to a definite but unimportant destination; but then hope provides its own direction when everyday plans can be put on hold. Hope lives when the one they tried to kill is nevertheless alive.

Resorts to power are frequently intended to hide facts, stifle initiatives, dampen prospects, kill the spirit. The Easter experience, in contrast, is the ultimate “nevertheless” in the face of resorts to power. In its aftermath the conversation is to go on, until those who have entered into it want to continue into the evening breaking of bread.

Poem

Natividad Nekane

(for Yvonne Libertad Sanchez and her son
Natividad Nekane Sanchez at his baptism.)

We have baptized you, Natividad:
born at Christmas,
you bear the human heritage.
The race has spoken again.
Its word took flesh in you.

We have baptized you, Nekane:
Emerged at winter solstice,
you are a new-born sun,
called to rise from darkest depths,
ride the heights and
dare to plumb the dark again.

We have plunged you, Natividad,
into the death-fraught waters of rebirth.
What those not yet born regard a curse,
we bestow as blessing:
 that your belly ever growl for justice,
 your vision ever hunger for wholeness.

We have immersed you, Nekane,
into a company of commoners,
a band of seekers,
whose souls reach to the roots of the race,
that, with us, you will feel in all,
no matter the color and tongue,
our yearning ache in your gut,
the surge of our bile in your blood.

We have pledged you, Natividad Nekane,

hijo de Libertad,
to your destiny.

Tom Keene
May 2, 1987

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>