

Testimony



A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating July 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 Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *This Presence*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the poem is a reflection on the connection between human and natural ecology, by Bishop Michael Pfeiffer, O.M.I., emeritus bishop of San Angelo.

Please note the July 10 Pax Christi Texas state conference, part 2. Part 1 was held online last April 3, and we anticipate a part 3 later on in the year.

Calendar

Times given for the Central Time Zone

Tuesday July 6, 11:00am-12:30pm (12:00pm-1:30pm ET) online "Religion Matters: A Conversation on Religion and Sustainable Development Goals," on a new book series. This is a panel discussion with authors of the forthcoming books—Christine Schliesser, Philip McDonagh, Ruby Quanston Dvis, and Elisabet le Roux, introduced by S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, moderated by Katherine Marshall. Sponsored and hosted by the Berkley Center, Georgetown University. RSVP at: https://georgetown.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_SE4BK0muTNGNXEJgsU3W8g

Tuesday July 6, 8:00pm (7:00pm, Mountain Time), Pax Christi El Paso online meeting. Discussion of *Fratelli Tutti* Ch. 7 Paths of Renewed Encounter, paragraphs 225-70. For access, contact Patricia Delgado: phdelgado3583@gmail.com.

Saturday July 10, 9:00am-10:00am (10:00am-11:00am ET), Zoom online “The Mysticism of Ordinary Life: Which Mysticism? Whose Ordinariness?” Andrew L. Prevot (Boston College), using Latinx and Black/Womanist sources. Register at: https://bccte.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_AKO8O0YURfCkc97QV4T7zA

Saturday July 10, 1:30pm (12:20pm MT), Pax Christi Texas state conference, part 2. The program will be Zoom-hosted by the Holy Cross Institute at St. Edward’s University. Presentation by R. Khari Brown (Wayne State University): “Religion and Black Lives Matter,” followed by Q & A. Some members expressed the wish to visit and catch up after the program. Register at: https://stedwards.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_m9xFi9ZmReG4YRdc5m4iEA

Tuesday July 13, 6:30pm-Thursday July 15, 8:00pm, *Laudato Sí and the U.S. Catholic Church. A Conference Series on Our Common Home*, sponsored by Catholic Climate Conference and Creighton University. Addresses by Blasé Cardinal Cupich (Archdiocese of Chicago), Maureen Day (Franciscan School of Theology), Bishop Joseph Tyson (Diocese of Yakima, Washington), and Sister Ilia Delio, osf (Villanova University).

Complete schedule: <https://www.creighton.edu/catholicclimate/schedule/>

Register at:

https://reg.abcsignup.com/s_reg/reg_registration_maintenance.aspx?ek=0036-0013-440150ea4e6b4155aae2e37436d164b1

Thursday July 22, 6:30pm-8:00pm (7:30pm-:00pm ET) OR Sunday August 8, 6:00pm-7:30pm (7:00pm-8:30pm ET) Trans 101 Workshop for understanding transgender members of families and communities, presented by the Marianist LGBT Trans Advocacy Committee. Register for July 22 at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/trans-101-workshop-tickets-158674811633>

Register for August 8 at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/trans-101-workshop-tickets-158802686109>

Friday July 30-Saturday July 31, 49th anniversary Pax Christi USA conference, online. Keynote Speaker: Olga Segura, author of *Birth of a Movement: Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church*. Conference mass presider: Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv. SAVE THE DATE. For further information:

<https://paxchristiusa.org/2021/06/03/registration-opens-next-week-for-the-pax-christi-usa-national-conference-july-30-31-2021/>

Wednesday August 25, 6:30pm, online "Sensory Pollution in the Anthropocene: Effect of Light and Noise Pollution on Birds in the 'Age of Humans,'" Jennifer N. Phillips (Texas A & M, San Antonio). Access at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86042962207?pwd=VnJ5cDY1SDhzMVhkZlFXNysxcDY4dz09#success>

In El Paso

Friday demonstrations for peace resume, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Mountain Time, corner of San Antonio and Campbell, in front of the Federal Courthouse.

Notices

Faith leaders, including Pax Christi USA, endorse legislation for the freedom of unions to organize. See the report at: <https://paxchristiusa.org/2021/07/01/faith-leaders-speak-out-in-support-of-the-pro-act/>

Book Discussion: *The Politics of Vulnerability: How to Heal Muslim-Christian Relations in a Post-Christian America*, by Asma Uddin, interviewed by Emma Green (*The Atlantic*). Access at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWm7KHkIOG0&t=1003s>

First Reading (Amos 7:12-15)

Amos was a prophet in the 700s, a person of modest rural origin. In fact he was a farm worker who punctured sycamore fruit so that the fruit would grow larger into something like pigs. Sycamore fruit was a poor people's fig, as it were. Despite his background, Amos was capable of remarkable Hebrew poetry. He lived in a time of peace and prosperity in the northern kingdom of Israel, but the prosperity of the times touched the lives of the upper classes only. Amos's vivid prophecies denounced the wealthy, whose riches were made off the work of the poor and who never gave the masses a fair chance in life.

Not surprisingly, the wealthy, who were also the rulers, neglected the religion of the one Lord and His covenant, which would make the whole nation a single people of equals, all entitled to fair treatment in the Lord's perspective of justice. For this, the official priest of the royal household denounced Amos and

banished him, suggesting he was not very good at religion. Amos replies that he had nothing to do with the kind of prophecy acceptable to the unjust.

Second Reading (Letter to the Ephesians 1:3-14)

In antiquity, it was commonplace to write an essay in the name of a founder of a school of thought; there were no literary property rights similar to our copyright system, and it was considered bad form for an author to parade one's own name unless actively advertising the founding of a school and recruiting students. Early Christian writers took advantage of this commonplace practice of writing in a founder's name because the Christian movement itself was illegal. Paul was a deceased founder of churches who had written personal letters to those churches; only his letter to the Romans came close to being an essay. The letter read today, *Ephesians*, is a pseudepigraphic essay, introduced by a few verses that put it into the form of a letter from Paul. We call it *Ephesians* because a few ancient manuscripts—by no means the earliest and best ones—have the phrase “in Ephesus” in that introduction. Parts of the essay resemble another such pseudepigraphic work, *Colossians*, and this would lead one to believe both works come from the same Christian group or school.

The reading for this Sunday comes immediately after the brief introduction and serves as a poetic, almost hymnic, summary of its spirituality. It is, in fact, one lengthy Greek Sentence. It presents itself as a prayer: “Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus, Messiah, Who blesses you in Messiah...” It takes as a theme adoption, which was one of the ways Paul had explained salvation. God the father of Jesus was “destining us for adoption by Him, through Jesus, Messiah, according to the pleasure of His will...” Jesus' blood had been shed, and Jesus himself had gone to be among the heavenly realities, and the people of his following are adopted as his fellow family members on earth. This eleven-verse sentence, featuring such matters as the fatherhood of God, the sonship of Jesus, adoption by the divine, the pleasure the Father took in this adoption, the will or intent in the divine plan—merits a slow reading.

Third Reading (Mark 6.7-13)

“Bring nothing on the road but a single staff—no bread, no leather pouch, no coins in the belt, but wearing sandals and not wearing two tunics.”

These seem to be odd instructions, but we need to think about them in their historical setting. A single staff was for walking; someone who did not have a horse or wagon would use a staff. A bundle of staffs was the fasces, the symbol of the ancient Roman imperialism; in our era it is the symbol of fascist authoritarian governance. Disciples of Jesus are not to elicit awe and fear from those whom they visit.

Bread was something one might offer strangers to create the appearance of a following or to form a personal clique. The expression “bread and circuses” has come down to us from antiquity with that implication. The mission of the disciples was to have nothing to do with self-advancement through attracting groupies.

And the disciples were not to carry pouches. The concern is not what might be in pouches, but that one might put something into them. The objection is to the pouches themselves. The disciples were not to gain from visiting the towns.

No coins! In our world, where anything is to be obtained with money, it is hard to imagine traveling without some. However, simple people in antiquity worked for shares in a harvest, grew their own fruits and vegetables, caught their own fish, and slaughtered their own fowl. Money was something special, and the disciples were not to be flaunting special items.

Wear sandals! One was to be prepared to travel more. The disciples were not to make the locals become religious dependents but to enable them to generate their own resources of faith, so that the disciples could go on to the next town.

There were two kinds of tunic—a simple inner tunic and a decorous outer one. Working men and women wore the plain mono-colored inner tunic, usually one that did not go below the knees. Important people wore ankle-length outer tunics as well, with decorated hems that identified the city where they were citizens, and, if of noble rank, further décor. The disciples were to make no claims to privilege or prerogative implicit by the way they attired themselves.

The point of all this was to maintain control over evil spirits—the tempting spirit of power and authority, of self-advancement, avarice, ingratiating, privilege.

No doubt the mechanics of the disciples’ missionary internship would differ today—avoiding chevrons and epaulettes, for example, rather than fasces; on-line followings rather than cliques; and hired lobbyists rather than pouches. Somehow, however, the demons remain the same.

Poem

This Presence

This presence engaging us
in a world fraught with beauty and danger,
moments of bliss, days of dread,

ever inviting us to face the fear,
dare to hope, feel to the full,
taste and digest the all.

Tom Keene and Muse
March 15, 2021

World Water Day and Earth Day Remind Us That Creation is Sacred

Bishop Michael Pfeiffer, O.M.I.

Water Day, March 22nd, and World Earth Day, April 22nd, focus on our responsibility for the reverence and enhancement of all creation. These days call all of us to develop a new respect and appreciation for “Mother Earth,” our home, for all the gifts that we receive from Earth especially water that we people, and all living things, need to survive. On these two ecological days we celebrate the beauty and wonder on God’s creation, which has its origin in a plan of love and truth. The natural world around us is nothing more and nothing less than God’s work of art, his own gallery.

God gave human beings the gracious gift of Earth for our use and that of future generations, and as his stewards we are to respect it and care for it. Our mandate from God is to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony and growth for our own good and that of all of our universal neighbors. As guardians of the environment, we are to ensure the proper balance of the ecosystems on which we depend.

The creation that surrounds us is a “chalice of grace.” It is gracious because it reveals God’s abundant goodness. This grace, this goodness, is found

everywhere, and to treat it with disrespect and abuse is blasphemy. The imprint of the creator, as the patron of the environment St. Francis teaches us, is found in all of creation, especially in humans. The environment is sacred as it comes from the holy hands of our creator, and to ruthlessly exploit it is a sacrilege.

Our engagement of the world must transcend politics, personal policy, and science and focus on human ecology, which calls for a conversion of political, economic, cultural, and social systems as well as individual lifestyles. It calls for sharing all of Earth's goods with all inhabitants. We are living in a time of crisis, fracturing the environment in countless ways, including global climate change. We see damage in the nature that surrounds us, but we also see it in men and women. Science and technology have contributed much to progress and enrichment of the gifts of creation. However, there are moral limits of their use and application which sometimes have deleterious effects on the environment. The proper ecological balance depends on international cooperation, inter-generational solidarity, and addressing the roots of poverty.

These two special days of creation call our urgent attention to biodiversity. Sadly, each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plants and animal species which are dependent on one another. Often transnational economic interest obstructs their protection. Ecology implies a system of relationships and interaction, and maintaining a proper ecology of our natural environment is only possible when we foster a truly "Human Ecology" which is inseparably linked to natural ecology. All ecology is strengthened when we promote human relationships and interaction that respect the dignity of the human person, the crown of creation, the common good and all nature.

World Water Day reminds us that water is the basic essential for all life. The water management and resource distribution ethic of this gift must be guided by consideration for the common good for the people of the world and the natural systems, for the planet itself.

What kind of world do we want to continue to live in and to leave to those who come after us? If we do not determine this, who will? If not now; when? Pope Francis reminds us that the Earth is the common home of humanity, the one we will pass to the next generations.

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>

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>