

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

July 22, 2018

Pax Christi San Antonio does not solicit donations. Thoughtful comments, however, may be sent to the editor at j6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com, with the understanding that permission to publish them is implied. 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. To join Pax Christi San Antonio, contact Maria Tobin at matob@aol.com.

Editorial

After the calendar we have reflections on the second and third readings for the 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time of the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar. A poem, *San Antonio Dreaming*, by Tom Keene follows. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. A brief post by Sr. Martha Ann Kirk, *Jesus and Mary Stayed at our Convent Last Night*, follows. The privately-circulated post included pictures of her guests, but in the interest of privacy we are not publishing them, though we are publishing the text of her post. Following that, we have the text of important remarks by Sr. Patricia Chappel, the executive director of Pax Christi USA, delivered as a member of a panel on "Overcoming Polarization through Catholic Social Thought" at Georgetown University last month. A video of these same remarks and the presentations of the other panelists can be accessed at <https://paxchristiusa.org/2018/06/26/watch-sr-patty-on-panel-overcoming-polarization-through-catholic-social-thought/>

Here in San Antonio, Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller is organizing a post-card campaign on behalf of the families that our government had been breaking up at our southern border when they come, lawfully, seeking asylum. I say "lawfully" because these families, often fleeing threats on their lives, are seeking refuge under a provision of American law that the administration is choosing to ignore. A video of the archbishop's remarks on June 18 at a meeting of COPS-Metro can be accessed at <http://nowcastsa.com/blogs/san-antonio-archbishop-calls-separation-families-immoral-evil-and-sinful>. These remarks led up to his now famous call to action at San Fernando Cathedral June 30 and the post card campaign under way in the Catholic parishes.

Calendar

In Austin

Monday July 30, 9:30am-1:30PM, adult formation class on ecumenism. Diocesan Pastoral Center, St. Joseph classroom, 6225 E. Highway 290. Register at www.austindiocese.org or call (512) 949-2492.

Tuesday July 31, 5:30pm (bar opens), 6:00pm-7:30pm, Texas Tribune and KUT fam, "How Long Can You Afford to Live Here?" Panel on property values in Texas cities: Greg

Anderson (Austin Habitat for Humanity), Francine Enriques (Glasshouse Policy), Marc Fort (Texas Music Office), Ashley Phillips (Impact Hub Austin), Christine Rosales (Texas Housers), and Rey Saldaña (San Antonio City Council). Eberly, 615 S. Lamar Blvd.

In Houston

Friday July 20, 1:00pm, “No Northern or Southern Religion: Cumberland Presbyterians and the Christian Nation, 1800-1877,” William R. Black (History Dept. thesis defense). Rice University, Humanities Bldg. 315.

Saturday August 25, 9:00am-3:30pm, “Keepi9ng Faith in a Multifaith Society.” Robert Hunt (Perkins School of Theology), and Gregory Ham (Interfaith Ministries, Houston), and local faith leaders. St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, 5501 Main St. \$70-\$80; contact Denise Espinosa Lloyd (281) 437-6018.

In San Antonio

Thursday July 26, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Bexar County Commissioners and County Judge, *Bexar County Criminal Justice Reform Town Hall*. Focus will be on the court-appointed attorney system. Last Chance Ministries, 404 Brady Blvd.

Saturday August 4, 10:00am, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting, Maria Tobin host. 8715 Starcrest, #27. Tony Blasi will be at the parking lot of the church across Starcrest at 9:59 for those unfamiliar with the site.

Monday September 17, 1:00pm-Tuesday September 18, 5:00pm, “2018 Mayor’s Housing Summit.” For program, see <https://www.sanantonio.gov/Housing-Summit>. Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center, 900 E. Market. Tickets: \$30-\$55.

Wednesday September 19, 7:00pm, Kenneth R. Miller, Ph.D. (Biology Dept., Brown University), “Darwin, God, and the Cosmos: Is faith still Relevant in a Scientific World?” University Center, Conference Room A, St. Mary’s University, One Camino Santa Maria.

Wednesday November 7, 7:00pm, John F. Haught, Ph.D. (Theology Dept., GeorgetownUniversity), “Evolution ad Faith: What Is at Stake?” University Center, Conference Room A, St. Mary’s University, One Camino Santa Maria.

Second Reading (Ephesians 2:13-18)

Many Christians are aware of unchristian uses of scripture. Someone would seize upon a sentence, take it out of context, and apply it in a way the original author never meant it to be used. Here one might propose the reverse—taking the original context into account to shed light on the original teaching. *Ephesians*, written not by Paul of Tarsus but by one or more people in his school or tradition, takes up the matter of uniting ethnic Jewish Christians and Greek Christians into one community. Here is what comes right before today’s reading:

Therefore, remember that you gentiles, who were called the uncircumcision by what was called the circumcision, were then in the flesh, that you were at that time at a remove from the Messiah, estranged from the civic life of Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and godless in the world.

Then comes the key sentence, which begins the day's reading: "But now in the Messiah, Jesus, you who were then far off came to be close, by the blood of the Messiah."

By being turned over by his own people to the agents of Caesar's empire for execution, Jesus in effect had no nation, and neither did those who followed him. Having no nation, Christians could have no "other," no difference from other nations: "For he is our peace, making the two one in his flesh and tearing down the wall of division, the enmity, nullifying the law of commandments in statues, so that in him he might make the two into one new peace-making humanity...." Once making peace within their community, Christians can have peace to bring beyond it.

Third Reading (Mark 6:30-34)

"And disembarking he saw a great crowd, and he felt sorry for them because they were like sheep having no shepherd, and he began to teach them many things." The stress is not on what Jesus was teaching the crowd or how he was doing it, but *why*. He felt sorry for them; he saw a need. They were like sheep having no shepherd; they were like sheep that were unable to find their own way to places where they could thrive.

Mark will go on to a highly symbolic miracle narrative, that of the multiplication of the loaves of bread and the fishes. But first he makes it clear that it was the poor distribution of consciousness that drew Jesus' attention. So Jesus began to *teach* the crowd many things. Here it was not to his selected insiders or to a dinner of dignitaries that he spoke, but a crowd of ordinary people, who were curious enough to hike around the lake to see and hear him but who were not distinguished by anything special enough to have been remembered and written down by the evangelist.

Ordinary people tend to be pragmatic in many respects. In contrast it is usually those who have the leisure to indoctrinate themselves who follow elaborate ideologies. We can understand why some who are privileged have prejudices against the non-privileged; they sense a need to make their privilege seem merited and reasonable, and they can use their leisure to elaborate ideologies to serve such a purpose. But why are some who are non-privileged and ordinary have prejudices against one another? And in our democratic era, why do some non-privileged join political movements that favor those who need no further favors, and usually at the expense of the non-privileged themselves?

It may be said of our time that masses of the many seek to be counted among the number of the few—the arithmetically impossible "wannabe" phenomenon. But that was not the case in first century Galilee. What one was born as, one would remain, and everyone knew it. There were only the received formulae of everyday life, conventions, traditions. And when some new problem arose—and one always does—these ordinary

people were like sheep without a shepherd. Are we any better off? Does our world suffer from a poor distribution of consciousness?

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Poem

San Antonio Dreaming

Hey, San Antonio, I got a dream.

In San Anto everyone wants to work got a job.
And it pays good, man.
You can feed the kids and even take them to Disneyland
with the uncles, aunts and cousins,
even put something aside in case the kids go to college.

The jobs ain't no hamburger flippin crap either.
These jobs mean something,
like helping people out in close by hospitals,
helping kids in schools and on playgrounds,
teaching how to do hula hoops and free throws,
and how to make tortillas like Nani used to make,
soft and smooth, made with love.

In San Anto, all the barrios got their own parks,
and they always clean.
Gang kids keep'em that way.
That's how they show off their pride,
how they get respect.
And every park has a boxing ring
and a wrestling mat on a stage.
That's where the gangs duke it out,
under the Marquis of Queensbury rules,
with all the people from the 'hood there
watching to make sure it's a fair fight.

Any man or boy hit any woman or girl,
he got to fight all her brothers, uncles and cousins,
there in the park one by one
in front of the whole neighborhood.
In San Anto, we don't put up with that,
a man hitting a woman.
What kind of a man is that?

In San Anto, don't nobody get sick,
'cause everybody got their shots and they eat good.
None of that junk food.
And if they do get sick,
they get the best hospital care money can buy,
but its free for everybody
'cause you ain't got health, you ain't got nothing.
In San Anto, we ain't got time to be sick.
We get our people back to work,
back to school, back home,
where they can do some good.

In San Anto, our TV don't do none of that Hollywood crap.

All the barrios got their own production studios,
and we put on our own sit-coms,
written by our own people.
Who'd have guessed we had that kind of talent,
until we tried it?
And guess what.
No commercials.
We know what we need.
Don't need no uptown lady in a fancy dress
telling us what we want.
Who needs that stuff anyway?

Once a year San Antonio does its own Emmy awards,
all the barrios putting up their best against all the others.
Seems every neighborhood gets a San Antonio Emmy for something.
And everybody feels good.
'Cause we did it,
not some cat in Hollywood.

In San Anto, we got clean water and clean government.
'Cause we keep the fat cats with money
from building their crap over our aquifer.
And we keep their money out of city and county elections.
Anybody want to run for office,
he, she don't need money.
Just get on the neighborhood TV and say your piece.
Don't cost nothing.
Same with radio.
Hey, who owns the air waves anyway?

In San Anto every barrio got its own poets,

painters, dancers, music makers.
The barrio poets write poems
for baptisms and funerals,
weddings, even divorces.
And they get paid good:
hundred bucks a shot.

And paintings.
We got murals up and down every block.
Can't go nowhere without neighborhood pride
hitting you in the eye
with Virgins of Guadalupe and neighborhood folks,
all heroes with their own immortality.

Every barrio got ten, twenty bands,
rock, conjunto, country western,
old folks dance bands, young folks rappers.
Street dances every Friday and Saturday
somewhere in the 'hood.
Free. Except to chip in for the bands.

We want them paid good.
'Cause they do our souls good.

In San Anto, ain't got none of that violence crap,
drive-bys and all that shit.
People got a gripe with anybody else,
we got mediators, negotiators, trouble shooters, peacemakers everywhere.
No need to go to guns
when you got all that help to make things come out fair for everyone.

And schools. San Antonio got the best schools anywhere.
We put our best people teaching first, second, third grades.
Get those kids excited about learning.
Once we get them turned on,
ain't no one can stop them thinking and learning.

We got libraries everywhere.
Can't keep the kids out of them.
They lined up five, six deep waiting to get at the computers.
We getting more computers soon
so the lines be down to one or two.

In San Anto, we take care of kids and old folks.
Kids are our future and old folks our past.

We don't want nothing bad to happen to them.
They're what makes our hanging in worth it all.

San Antonio is good living, man.
Know how we did it?
We stopped asking the big dudes.
They never listened anyway.
We just went out and did it.
Yeah. It wasn't that hard
once we made up our minds,
once we stopped following and swallowing
what the fat cats said.
They wanted to jump in and help us with all their expertise.
We didn't need their shit.
We just went ahead and did it.
And we ain't going back.

That's my dream.
Anyway.
San Antonio.

Tom Keene
April 16, 1996
For the Peacemakers Circle, Guadalupe River Ranch

Jesus and Maria Stayed at our Convent Last Night!

Sister Martha Ann Kirk, CCVI

Well, actually three—two mothers from El Salvador and one from Honduras each with a precious little son, one- or two-years old.

She explained that four men had come to their home, shot her brother, and cut off his head. She took her son and fled. They traveled for over a month, any way that they could to reach our border. They turned themselves in seeking help.

All three of the mothers and sons have relatives here. Early this morning Sister Marichui took them to the airport. They are on their way to California, Florida, and Virginia---one to be with her mother whom she has not seen since she left El Salvador twenty-years ago.

How can we in the international family work together that all countries can be safe, all can stay in their homes near the rest of their families, enjoying their culture and language and uniqueness?

Until we do better figuring that out, our convent Annunciation Community feels better that we are blessed by these international guests from time to time. They teach us courage and perseverance and resilience and hope and LOVE. Their presence leads

me to hard questions about how we have contributed to the creation of unjust global economics---questions I would rather avoid.

I had some extra books by Dr. Seuss because my grandniece and nephew already had the ones I had bought for them. When Sr. Marichui and I asked the boy which he would like, he delightedly picked the one with a cow on the cover. He turned the pages pointing to the animal. Even if my Spanish is not good, I am great making animal sounds. He smiled. His mother said that he loved to be read stories. The children learn quickly. What can we learn from the children?

Remarks at Georgetown University's Panel, "Overcoming Polarization Through Catholic Social Thought."

Sr. Patricia Chappell

The causes of the polarization that we observe in our church and nation today are certainly NOT new. What is new are the *overt* manifestations of hatred, hostility and bigotry, and the equally intense reactions and feelings that get evoked in the face of such rage and anger.

The polarization in both our church and nation has ideological and political roots, it has generational and gender roots, both of which our panelists will address...the polarization also has sociological, historical, theological and philosophical roots...but I truly believe that the seed that gave birth to those roots is the seed of RACISM that runs so deeply in ALL of the social systems in the United States...and our dear Catholic Church is not exempt from this scandalous social sin.

Today, we are observing a narrative that is rooted in a sinful and warped world view being played out because that world view has become our reality. Allow me to explain:

I define racism as PERSONAL RACIAL PREJUDICE + THE MISUSE OF POWER BY SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS. For racism to work someone has to have POWER over someone, things have to be either/or, right or wrong, good or bad, and these lists of opposites keeps the systems working. This country was founded by and for the white men...laws were enacted to keep the power in their hands (and white women, when they got the right to vote, colluded with that very same system).

Because of this power dynamic, the human beings forced to come to this new country for economic reasons were not considered human nor treated as such.

Most of us in this room have read or seen films about the Middle Passage, the slave trade, plantation life and death; you may have even visited some powerful museums in this country depicting in pictures, in quilting and in sacred relics the torture and cruelty inflicted on our brothers and sisters. You leave these viewing experiences troubled, saddened and disturbed. However, we pack that experience away somewhere and go on with life. Why have we not been taught to question the stark reality of the WHY behind this brutality? Why have we not confronted the role and influence of

whiteness in the reality of racism? Why have we not sought repentance and transformation for this sin and taken redemptive actions to redress this wrong? Why has life gone on as usual for most of us?

BUT for those of us in this room of African American ancestry and heritage that nightmarish reality of racism is deeply embedded and seared into our souls and psyches and has become a vital and critical part of our historical memory. We never get a break from our racial reality.

The history of chattel slavery in the US is rooted in a sinful and warped world view that over the years has become our US reality. Racism is our reality, and we have all failed to understand HOW RACISM HAS DAMAGED ALL OF US.

We African Americans have been damaged by internalizing the racial oppression that we live with day in and day out. This oppression is defined as a complex, multi-generational process that has taught us people of color to believe, accept and live the negative social definitions of ourselves and our role in society. This has profound ramifications on our self-concept and self-esteem. It has left us never feeling competent enough, good enough, professional enough, and the stress of overcoming that is killing us.

Members of the white community have been damaged also by internalized racial superiority. That is also defined as a complex, multi-generational process that teaches white people to believe, accept and live out superior definitions of themselves and their roles in society. White privilege manifests itself in finding excuses and explanations for hurtful and/or inappropriate behavior, becoming defensive and hurt when our "looking good" strategies fail us. The thought of soon no longer being the dominant racial group in this country is, in part, what seeded the slogan, (MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN), of the last presidential election and the continuing aftermath.

Connected to racism is the other narrative that we do not make connections with what is happening in our nation today. It is easier to pit people against each other than it is to see how we are all connected. The bitter and hateful reactions to immigrants, DACA and DREAMERS and refugees seeking asylum, or those wanting to remain in the US along with the refusal of this country to admit people from certain Middle Eastern and African countries...have you connected that all these are people of color? Have you asked why is Puerto Rico still ravaged by the hurricane that destroyed the island almost a year ago and that in recent days the death toll of 50 is now estimated to be 5,000...more deaths, by the way MORE than the Twin Towers disaster in NYC? These are American citizens who are all people of color!

Do you see the connections of what is happening at the Mexican border? Those being denied due process, having their children taken from them, and living in cages are from communities of color. Young women and men of color have been murdered on our city streets and there is little to no accountability or outcry from us...but when white, upper middle class students in Florida are shot, there is a national outcry and demand for sensible gun control? Don't you see the connections?

I could go on and on with examples but will suffice to say that this is institutionalized, systemic racism at work...and we wonder why people are polarized? Right now we have at least eight people running for state and federal offices who are White Nationalists and proud of that fact. They are neo-Nazis who deny the Holocaust, have a profound hatred of Jewish, Islamic and Black people, claim association with the

KKK, fear they are becoming the white minority and who believe that diversity in any form, but especially racial diversity, is not a strength but a weakness, liability and threat. Racism is the seed at the root of this divide.

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And now to our beloved Catholic Church who also has the seed of racism embedded in its structures and its systems.

The sociology of religion tells us that religion has two functions:

- to maintain the status quo
- to engage in, and bring about social change

In order to maintain the status quo one must rely on tradition, keep a strict, impermeable border between Church and State, and “play nice,” so to speak, with the power brokers. If you want to maintain the status quo, then in the midst of social and political turmoil, the response is SILENCE.

On the other hand, in order to engage in and bring about social change one must take the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching seriously— one cannot be silent but be a risk taker and a public one at that.

It has been widely accepted, at least in this country, that the churches speak with moral authority on issues affecting the common good. However, no one can remain silent in the midst of great social turmoil and still retain any moral authority. There is no such thing as a political issue without moral consequences.

The 300+ years of racism in the United States was, for the most part, met with silence from our clergy. There were a few who spoke out against the institution of slavery pleading for their owners to allow their slaves to be Baptized. The conditions of slavery under which these children, women and men were living and working under were not challenged. Even after Emancipation a few local churches did open schools for the children but there was never a concerted effort on the part of the institutional church to address the issue and root causes of slavery.

During the Civil Rights Movement 200 years later, no real response from the Church in the US was forthcoming. The writing of Pastoral Letters on Racism was an exercise of a few Bishops, but these efforts were not proclaimed from pulpits in local parishes on Sunday, nor were the tenants of Catholic Social Teaching.

We have recently begun to see some efforts by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops to address racism, and only time will tell if these efforts and others (such as this program at Georgetown) will change anything.

The cost to healing our nation and our church of the polarization caused in it by racism will be risky; it will cost white people their comfort and will cause people of color to work together instead of pitting ourselves against one another.

The question becomes how do we create a space for the old narrative of racial oppression and privilege to pass on in order to allow what is emerging in the hearts and minds of so many of us to arrive?

What steps need to be taken towards interracial reconciliation and healing of the psychological and social wounds caused by racism?

I suspect that part of the answer lies in:

- TRUTH TELLING, allowing ourselves to truly listen to each other without interrupting, butting in, judging, or matching what we've been through with the pain of another
- MUTUALLY agreeing on what issue we will address
- Analyzing our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
- Being accountable and responsible to each other by following up and showing up
- Being courageous enough to ask our Church to assist with affirmative redress to this sin of racism.
- Needing concrete Plans of Action or else all of the above will be an exercise in futility

The face of our country and of our Catholic Church is changing...it is getting closer to the actual brown/black face of Jesus the Christ. How welcome will we make this Jesus feel?

Sr. Patricia Chappell
Georgetown University
June 4, 2018

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>

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