

Testimony



A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating July 18, 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 Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Sentient Stuff*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is a review by Marc Tumeinski of a Pax Christi International publication, *Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace in the Church and the World: Biblical, Theological, Ethical, Pastoral and Strategic Dimensions of Nonviolence*. The review first appeared in the website Catholic Books Review. Thanks are due to Dr. Tumeinski and the website's editor Pierre Hegy for permission to repost the review.

Calendar

Times are given for the Central Time Zone.

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 15, 6:00pm (7:00pm ET) online, “The Fight for the Soul of America,” Lewis Brogdon (Baptist Seminary of Kentucky). Register at: <https://justfaith.org/july-15th-webinar-with-dr-lewis-brogdon/>

Thursday July 15, 6:30pm, online presentation concerning the report developed by Joyce James Consulting for the Austin Police Department: “Racial Inequalities and Institutional Racism” (November 2020). The presentation will be by Vicki Lott (Pax Christi Austin) and Joyce James (Joyce James Consulting) and will be hosted by Pax Christi Little Rock. For the text of the report, see the Notices section below. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86565528969#success>

Wednesday July 21, 6:30pm, online Courageous Conversations on Racism, sponsored by the Holy Cross Church, Austin, Social Justice Ministry. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83705545449?pwd=YjISb1NlaG1kckFRWXJjN3Aza0tkZz09>

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 4 to Friday August 6, institute “Stories of Truth and Transformation: Compassion, Solidarity in Civic Engagement, Teaching Social Justice.” Save the date. Information, including participation opportunity: <https://sites.google.com/view/stories-truth-transformation/home>

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>

Notices

Report on the Austin Police Department, "Racial Inequalities and Institutional Racism," by Joyce James Consulting. Access at:
<http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=352711>

Audio of National Public Radio Report on Christians' Reaction Against Christian Nationalism, about 6 minutes. Access at:
https://www.npr.org/2021/07/04/1013044426/faith-leaders-speak-out-against-christian-nationalism?link_id=7&can_id=e9035cd1b5d8926b085a515732c1b109&source=email-june-28-common-good-weekly&email_referrer=email_1224643&email_subject=july-5-common-good-weekly

First Reading (Jeremiah 23:1-6)

Jeremiah lived in tumultuous times in the Near East. Judah and the remnant people of the former northern kingdom of Israel were caught between the Babylonian and Egyptian empires in the 590s BCE. Various political factions in Judah favored one empire or the other, with the next to last of the kings eventually siding with Egypt. None of the monarchs after Josiah (640-609 BCE), up to the time of the writing of the passage read for today, were particularly interested in the Covenant with the Lord, the God of the Hebrew people. Jeremiah appears as particularly exasperated with the rulers of his day. He looks forward to the next monarch, be it the historical Zedekiah, whose name translates

as "Yahweh is our justice," or the trans-historical near homonym, "my justice is Yahweh."

The prophet was not reticent in his dealings with the politicians of his day, but he would not subordinate the divine perspective to what the rulers thought was politically expedient.

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 do some who are ordinary and non-privileged 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?

Poem

This touches on St. Paul's to pagans and Jews being one in Christ.

Sentient Stuff

Does the rain drop
lose awareness of itself
when falling into oceans?

Or does it even recall
once being steam in a cloud,
a crystal in ice?

Do light waves consider
the galaxies that flow
from what they be?

Can cells in our bodies,
alone or together,
grasp their doing of life?

Do these separate selves,
these single identities
all come together

in the universe's
awareness of self?

Tom Keene and Muse
June 15, 2021

Book Review

Rose Marie BERGER, Ken BUTIGAN, Judy COODE, Marie DENNIS, Eds., *Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace in the Church and the World: Biblical, Theological, Ethical, Pastoral and Strategic Dimensions of Nonviolence*. Brussels, Belgium: Pax Christi International, 2020. pp. 322, \$29.45.¹ ISBN 978-1784567163. Reviewed by Marc Tumienksi, Anna Maria College, Paxton, MA 01612.

The breadth and depth of this text powerfully illuminates the distinctive Christian call to faithful peacemaking, particularly in our own day. While daunting, this is the enduring call to disciples and Church, named in the Gospels and underscored in the Presentation of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of Church*: “Transforming social realities with the power of the Gospel, to which witness is borne by women and men faithful to Jesus Christ, has always been a challenge and it remains so today at the beginning of the third millennium.”

This text argues persuasively that nonviolence is “constitutive of the life of faith” and “a necessary foundation for a culture of peace” (7). It includes a number of descriptions of nonviolence, such as “the thorough rejection of violence combined with the power of unconditional love in action” (8); “a paradigm of the fullness of life rejecting violence and killing, returning good for evil, healing divisions, and putting sacrificial love into action for a just, peaceful, sustainable and reconciled world” (19); “a way of life, a spirituality, and a method for preventing or stopping violence without using violence, while also fostering just and peaceful alternatives” (20); and “a force that resists injustice and violence, a spiritual discipline and a powerful strategy that challenges violence without using violence, transforms conflict, fosters just, peaceful, effective and sustainable resolutions to conflict and seeks the well-being of creation and community” (59). Contributors to the text approach nonviolence and a just peace ethic from a principled theological perspective while also examining its application as a practical framework and set of strategies. The authors are not only focused on war but wisely deal with multiple forms of interpersonal as well as collective violence.

The text offers the beautiful insight that the spread of active nonviolence is a contemporary sign of the times. It explores the foundations of nonviolence in Scripture as well as in Church teaching documents, and from various theological

¹ Available from the Winchester Book Gallery: <https://www.winchesterbookgallery.com/product/advancing-nonviolence-and-just-peace-church-and-world>

perspectives (including Christology, pneumatology and ecclesiology). This sampling of 20th and 21st century Church teaching documents, and of various theological disciplines, warrants our serious consideration.

The book provides a thoughtful and nuanced call for the Church to take up a renewed moral framework for building peace. Renewal will come through embracing the rich Biblical wisdom around peace, as well as the growing understanding of how to build a sustainable peace in the face of real and often seemingly intractable conflict. Such peace is rooted in the varied experiences of Christians in every culture who are successfully living out their faith in the face of violence, as well as in the core Christian principles, norms and values that can sustain peace.

While the text describes and analyzes Church-wide teaching and international efforts, one of its more engaging aspects is the narration of concrete, local examples. The new moral framework mentioned above is illustrated with examples drawn from peacemaking efforts at the US/Mexico border, in response to gang violence in El Salvador, amidst civil war in South Sudan and in Syria, and in connection to questions that surround the role of policing within local communities, among others.

I was particularly struck by the call to parishes to practice nonviolence and embody a just peace ethic. This seems an under-appreciated emphasis today, yet it resonates with the Biblical emphasis on local Christian communities and the great potential for parishes to become schools of Christ-like nonviolent love.

A lower-level point: Though this book includes an extensive set of footnotes to relevant resources, there is no topic index, which would make using the book in some academic contexts a little more difficult. Nonetheless, the book would serve as an excellent basic text for an undergraduate course or a parish study group. Readers, instructors and facilitators may wish to get the study guide available through the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative.

The clear Gospel focus, contemporary examples from around the world, concrete recommendations and the comprehensive structure of this text lay out a clear, persuasive and passionate argument for Catholics, families, parishes and the Church as a whole to take up the call to nonviolence and just peace. I look forward to further reflection on this text, to sharing and discussing it with others, and to incorporating it into my own teaching.

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>