

Testimony



A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating September 19, 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 the readings for the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *The Man Misunderstood*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is a review by Benjamin Brown of Christine Fierer Hinze, *Radical Sufficiency: Work, Livelihood, and a US Catholic Economic Ethic*. Christine Fierer Hinze is a professor of Christian Ethics at Fordham University. Her new book is an extension of the approach to social justice of Monsignor John A. Ryan, an important ethicist from the middle of the twentieth century. Building on that American Catholic heritage requires noting its strong and weak points, and the very process of doing so is itself a work in progress, as reviewer Benjamin Brown makes clear. The review was first posted in *Catholic Books Review* (see the links section at the end of this issue). I wish to express thanks to Benjamin Brown and the *Catholic Books Review* editor Pierre Hegy for their permission to repost the review.

There is an addition in the Links section, the Beloved Community Project, which Pax Christi Texas member David Patwood has called to our attention. The site is worth exploring.

It is with a blend of sadness and happy memories that we received news of the passing of John Krejci, who contributed to previous issues of this newsletter. John, a classmate in the graduate sociology program at the University of Notre Dame of editor Anthony Blasi, appeared in the news not for a good thing he had done—co-founding Call to Action Nebraska—but for being excommunicated by a bizarre bishop. By his gentlemanly conduct through the experience, the excommunication came to be exposed as the ignorant and mean-spirited deed that it was. For an obituary of John Krejci, see:

https://journalstar.com/news/local/former-priest-and-activist-john-krejci-dies-at-84/article_3daa33c0-3ac6-5429-8af9-a543f7dfbe39.html

Calendar

Times are given for the Central Time Zone.

Tuesday September 14, 11:00am-12:00pm, online forum about the way social determinants of health have an impact on pandemic preparedness and how the city and state can close gaps. Panelists are Marissa Bono (Every Texan), Claude A. Jacob (San Antonio Mental Health), and Lyssa Ochoa (San Antonio Vascular and Endovascular Clinic), moderated by Iris Dimmick (*San Antonio Report*). Register at: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-local-and-statewide-approach-toward-health-equity-tickets-166178699965?aff=odeimcmalchimp&utm_campaign=c52ffe261c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_11_01_COPY_01&utm_term=0_1576c62124-c52ffe261c-84819212&utm_source=San+Antonio+Report&utm_medium=email&mc_eid=7eb1929c3a&mc_cid=c52ffe261c

Thursday September 16, 11:30am (12:30pm ET), online "Moral Principles, National Priorities, Budget Choices: The Human and Moral Dimensions of the Budget Reconciliation Debate," Ashley Kenneth (Commonwealth Institute), Mary Novak (Network), Rev. Carlos Malavé (Christian Churches Together), Ramesh Ponnuru (American Enterprise Institute), and Elana Schor (*Politico*), moderated by John Carr (Georgetown University). RSVP at: <https://catholicsocialthought.georgetown.edu/events/moral-principles-national-priorities-budget-choices#rsvp>

Thursday September 16, 2:00pm-3:00pm (3:00pm-4:00pm ET) online panel discussion "Religion and Refugees and Immigration," Salah Ansary (Lutheran Community Service) and Eddward Flores (University of California, Merced), co-hosted by Melissa Borja (University of Michigan) and Soulit Chacko (Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis). Register at: https://iu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Yf7DQS75RI2dCdwanYh4Yw

Thursday September 16, 6:30pm, online Duffey-Marie Arnoult (Climate Reality Project, a group first co-founded with Al Gore) will discuss her group's latest projects. The event is hosted by Pax Christi Little Rock. Access at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83829933017>

Tuesday September 21, 3:00pm-4:30pm (4:00pm-5:30pm ET), online (or in person at the Hesburgh Center for International Studies, auditorium, U. of Notre Dame) International Day of Peace: Recovering Better for an Equitable and Sustainable World; Catherine Bolten (Anthropology and Peace Studies, U. of Notre Dame), Maira Hayat (Environment and Peace Studies, U. of Notre Dame), Hop Hopkins (Sierra Club), Emmanuel Katongole (Theology and Peace Studies, U. of Notre Dame), Luis Miranda (Sierra Club), and Roy Scranton (Krok Institute, U. of Notre Dame). Register at:

https://notredame.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_fkOCYhYrQJqTbtX2Z2NVlg

Wednesday September 22, 10:00am-11:00am (11:00am-12:00pm ET) online dialogue "Faith for Earth: A Call for Action," Iyad Abmoghli (United Nations), David Hales (Parliament of World Religions), Kusumita P. Pedersen (Parliament of World Religions), and Mary Evelyn Tucker (Yale Divinity School), moderated by Michael Lynch (Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers). Register at: https://creation.cadeio.org/events/faith-for-earth-dialogue/?utm_source=mailpoet&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ecumenical-and-interreligious-guidebook-announcement_6

Wednesday September 22, 8:00pm, online "Science and Religion: Why Hong Kong and Taiwan Are Different," Elaine Howard Ecklund, David R. Johnson, and Di Di (all Rice University). Information: Bethany.boucher@rice.edu. Register at: <https://bit.ly/science-religion-hongkong-taiwan>.

Friday September 24, 8:00am-Friday October 8, 11:30pm, online Environmental Film Fest, hosted by the San Antonio River Authority. To receive notices of the films, register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/8th-annual-environmental-film-fest-virtual-registration-165455151813>

Saturday September 25, 10:00am (11:00am ET), online interfaith prayer service on the occasion of the United National International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Sponsored by a number of organizations, including Pax Christi New York State. Register at:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0qcemspzkiGd0cYXWKV62-XslreVIFxP_1

Sunday September 26, 9:45am, online "Rachel Carson and Glimpses of God," on the religious, spiritual, and literary influences on Rachel Carson's environmentalism. Presentation by Bruce Yeager. Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86564638381?#success> ; Zoom passcode: pwd=MTBtSFI6eVhoTUF3SXJ2VIBWd0N2QT09

Wednesday September 29, 10:00am-11:00am (11:00am-12:00pm ET) online dialogue about *Healing Earth*, a publication of the International Jesuit Ecology Project: Michael J. Schuck (Loyola University, Chicago), hosted by Michael Terrien Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officer). Register at: https://creation.cadeio.org/events/healing-earth-dialogue/?utm_source=mailpoet&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ecumenical-and-interreligious-guidebook-announcement_6

Monday October 4, 10:00am-11:00am (11:00am-12:00pm ET) online webinar on the *Ecumenical and Interreligious Guidebook: Care for Our Common Home* (published by U.S. Conference of Catholic bishops, Catholic Assn. of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers, and Catholic Climate Covenant), Sister Pamela Smith, SS.C.M., hosted by Rev. Walter F. Kedjierski (USCCB). Register at: <https://creation.cadeio.org/events/care-for-our-common-home-an-overview/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=06358db3-6954-4ad5-bce9-ffe94950bfb#02232021anchor>

Friday October 8, 5:00pm-7:00pm (6:00pm-8:00pm ET), online "Developing Catholic Moral Teaching: A 30,000-foot View," Dr. Helen Marie Burns, RSM. First in a series on moral theology as it pertains to sexual minorities. Register at: <https://fs18.formsite.com/jennhardin/1w3acsjqd3/index.html>

Saturday November 13, 11:00am-1:00pm (12:00pm-2:00pm ET), online "Catholic Moral Teaching: Centrality of Conscience," Dr. Linda Hogan (Trinity College, Dublin). Second in a series on moral theology as it pertains to sexual minorities. Register at: <https://fs18.formsite.com/jennhardin/1w3acsjqd3/index.html>

Friday December 10, 6:00pm-8:00pm (7:00pm-9:00pm ET) online "Catholic Moral Teaching: What It Is and Is Not," Dr. Jamie Manson (National Catholic Reporter). Third in a series on moral theology as it pertains to sexual minorities. Register at: <https://fs18.formsite.com/jennhardin/1w3acsjqd3/index.html>

In Dallas

Thursday September 16, 8:15am-3:30pm, Jno Owens Conference: Impact of Migration on Economic and Human Development, at Federal Reserve Bank, Dallas. Information and registration: <https://calendar.smu.edu/site/centersinstitutes/event/owens-conference-2020/>

In San Antonio

Wednesdays September 22 and October 13, 7:00pm-8:00pm, discussion class: "Dr. King's Beloved Community: Where Do We Go from Here—Chaos or Community?" with Bishop Trevor Alexander. \$15.00 registering before September 15, \$20.00 after. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell Ave.; park off Shook. Register at: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration/>

First Reading (Wisdom 2:12, 17-20)

Wisdom, or *The Wisdom of Solomon*, is a Greek-language work from the first century BCE. It quotes the Septuagint Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures (dating from the 2nd century BCE), and St. Paul appears to have cited it (Romans 1:18-32). The attribution to King Solomon was a standard literary device of the time. The anonymous author was concerned with the temptation in the Jewish diaspora, such as that in Alexandria, to abandon ethnic Jewish ways, including the monotheist religious tradition, in favor of Hellenistic Greek culture. The reading for the day is an extract from the author's depiction of how the non-Jewish majority despised Jewish believers in God.

Second Reading (James 3:16-4:3)

The second reading in the Lectionary begins in the middle of a statement. To see what the author of *James* is saying, it helps to begin with the full thought.

Who are wise and knowledgeable among you? Let them demonstrate their works from the good way of life with the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and ambition in your heart, do not boast and do not tell lies against the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but earthly, physical, demonic; for where there is jealousy and ambition, there is unruliness and every evil deed.

Wisdom and understanding are not like points in a contest where an advance by one player creates a deficit for the other to overcome. It is not a matter of winners and losers. A person is not better off on account of someone else being unwise and unable to be knowledgeable. So the author calls for the workings of the good way of life “with the gentleness of wisdom.”

Peace among people and nations is a consequence of wisdom. Demanding peace is laudable, demanding wisdom strategic.

Third Reading (Mark 9.30-37)

“‘The human son will be turned over to the hands of people, and they will kill him, and having been killed he will rise after three days.’ But they did not understand....” What is there not to understand? At a simple verbal level, the teaching is straightforward. But it takes some time and consideration for the implications to “sink in” and become the basis for everyday action. That the teaching had not yet really done that was evident when the twelve proceeded to discuss which of them was the greatest.

“‘If anyone wishes to be first, that one will be the last of all and servant of all.’” Mark goes on to say Jesus took a *paidion* and stood him in their midst. *Paidion* can be translated either as a *child* or a *slave child*. Given the context, “servant of all,” the meaning is *slave child*. Imagine the scene in a slave-holding society. Imagine telling Jefferson Davis: “Whoever receives one of such slave children in my name receives me, and whoever receives is not receiving me but the One who sent me.”

The late Otto Maduro was a philosopher, social scientist, and media personage in Venezuela. He had been a Catholic reformer, then a Marxian thinker, and eventually a non-marxian independently thinking liberation theologian. I played a minor role in arranging a temporary academic appointment

for him in the United States, and his combined innate brilliance and charm earned him a permanent stay. A year before he died he was the president of the American Academy of Religion, and he made a point of visiting those of us who were his old friends.

Thirty years before he made his last visit to me, almost a decade into his American stay, I persuaded the Toronto School of Theology to invite him as a guest speaker in Canada. He charmed everyone, and after his presentation the graduate theology students and the professors migrated into a lounge to hobnob over evening wine and cheese with him. After a while, no Otto. We were looking around but did not see him. He had found the cleanup crew, consisting mostly of Salvadoran refugees, and he blended into them, chatting in Spanish. He was no longer visible to us. Suddenly, his stentorian voice: "Let's go. We are keeping these people from their homes and suppers!"

Poem

The Man Misunderstood

"Don't *cling* to me,"
I am said to have said
to Mary, my friend.
I had to go.
Unless I did,
you wouldn't get
the spirit of it all.
You wouldn't get
the whole point of my life,
or of yours.

So surrender forever
the notion you can own me.
It is enough to remember me
with wine and bread,
where you can taste
the blood-spurting, fleshy
meanings of me.

And please don't reduce me to doctrine
or trivialize me with comfy feelings.
If you want God's kingdom,
dump your images of kings.
If you want God's peace,
let go the hope that war will bring it.

If mythologize me you must,
let the myths *be* myths,
doors to the Unknown.
Don't bury my meanings
in tombs of words taken literally.
If you would explain me with words,
let them be lyrics to music.

So don't cling.
If you want to meet me, feed the hungry,
free the prisoners, touch your enemies with love.
They are the Unique Particularities
in which Universal Compassion abides,
and where I wait for you.

Tom Keene
February 26, 2008

Book Review

Christine Firer HINZE. *Radical Sufficiency: Work, Livelihood, and a US Catholic Economic Ethic*. Washington, DC: Georgetown UP, 2021. Pp. x + 349. \$39.95 pb. ISBN 978-1-64712-026-9. Reviewed by Benjamin J. BROWN, Lourdes University, Sylvania, OH 43560.

Christine Firer Hinze offers an analysis of what ails the U.S. economically, grounded in a vision of human communal flourishing, which she calls a radical inclusive sufficiency agenda that “embraces inclusive, sustainable livelihood as its *concrete historical ideal*” (265). She builds upon Monsignor John A. Ryan’s well-

known thought and approach to social justice in the early to mid-1900s, referred to as a living wage livelihood agenda.

After an introduction, the first chapter summarizes the context, thought, and agenda of Msgr. Ryan, focusing on the positive. Ryan is probably “the most talented architect and effective spokesman” for Catholic social teaching in the 1900s (27). However, Firer Hinze argues that he was also a realist who pulled his punches and was willing to be only “sufficiently radical” to accomplish the feasible, balancing “ameliorative reform and radical transformation” (51). Her second chapter surveys his shortcomings.

As the book’s title indicates, Firer Hinze proposes both to *radicalize* Ryan’s program and also to refocus it on the notion of *sufficient* livelihood, the former advancing inclusivity, the latter rejecting consumerist excess. Therefore, she tackles issues of inequity and problematic power structures in chapters three through five, focused on gender, race, and social class, respectively, making a case that we need a radical socio-economic reorganization to become truly inclusive. The sixth chapter then turns to the sufficiency side of her agenda by examining the complex and corrosive reality of consumerism. The final chapter synthesizes the various threads of the book, presents her vision of social flourishing, and focuses on “how to make things better” (264). While grounded in the dignity of the human person and the value of faith communities in general, *Radical Sufficiency* offers little theology, likely intentionally following Msgr. Ryan’s natural law focus (30-31) so as to reach a wide audience.

Firer Hinze’s treatment of Msgr. Ryan is strong, her chapter on consumerism excellent, and her criticism of the anthropology of the current “economic orthodoxy” (neoliberal market orthodoxy) incisive. The principles of her agenda when she finally presents it wholly in the last chapter are compelling and even beautiful. This vision includes reorienting priorities towards what matters most (relationship, leisure, self-development, community participation – not money or things); valuing free markets but directing them towards their true end of “maximizing provision for actual people and their households” (268); meaningful work and *family* living wages; real and extensive solidarity, which requires sacrifice; better valuing the care economy (child care, household work, etc.); the importance of the local and subsidiarity; sustainability; democratic principles of rights and participation; and personal agency, responsibility, self-reliance, honesty, and pulling one’s own weight.

Typical of works on social justice, including Catholic social teaching, proposing concrete and specific solutions for the problems is only lightly

engaged. Firer Hinze quotes at least three times Ryan's exhortation that "we shall make mistakes in the process, but until the attempt is made, and a certain (and very large) number of mistakes are made, there will be no progress." Indeed, and she offers several examples and concrete suggestions at the end; however, the reader is left wanting more.

While *Radical Sufficiency* offers much that is good, the three "radicalizing" chapters in the middle, focusing on structures of power, will leave many readers dissatisfied. They provide some nuance, yet too much adopt an inadequate lens and simplistic reading of our situation. Regarding the former, Firer Hinze looks at relations of gender, race, and class in terms of power, money, and a flat sense of equality, typical of the postmodern and Marxist worldviews that have influenced her. She criticizes Catholic social teaching for not paying enough attention to power dynamics without seeming to realize that this is intentional; CST offers a fundamentally different lens and solution, that of love, built on the model of the family. Inequality, let alone inequity, is not unjust if all are provided for sufficiently, including space for self-determination; power is not constitutive of human flourishing. The author captures a love-oriented vision in her discussion of solidarity in the last chapter, but unfortunately it does not inform much of the rest of the book. And while she acknowledges that both personal choices and structural issues are almost always at work (175) and that responsibility and agency are essential to flourishing, the book unfortunately focuses almost exclusively on the structural. Like many social teaching texts, a healthy dose of virtue ethics is needed.

This outlook then leads her to uncritically appropriate single-variable analyses that purport to show systemic prejudice, such as the long-debunked myth that there are major gender and race pay gaps. She gives only a nod to the difference that healthy intact families make, even though their lack is a fundamental driver of poverty and many other social problems. Any sound social justice program must address the predicament of absent fathers and mothers and the various reasons for their absence (such as the consumerism she rightly critiques and its commodification of marriage and sex), as well as substance abuse, addiction, waning religiosity, and crime. Despite these lacuna, Firer Hinze helpfully attends to an often missed area, the care economy; the mostly unpaid care-giving mostly done at home supports and enables our whole social and economic system and needs to be more highly valued and less gendered.

The book is very well-researched and includes an impressive, useful bibliography, but unfortunately is too jargon-heavy for undergrad courses or a

popular audience. While Firer Hinze articulates well many aspects of Catholic social thought and is more balanced than many who have undertaken similar works, the shortcomings in content are significant. However, the last two chapters are fairly strong and could almost stand on their own, especially the admirable chapter on consumerism.

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>

Beloved Community Project
<http://belovedcommunityproject.org/>