

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating August 26, 2018

Pax Christi San Antonio does not solicit donations; however, anyone wishing to join should make a donation to Pax Christi U.S.A. and notify Maria Tobin, matob@aol.com, to receive email messages sent to members. 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.

Please do not respond to this newsletter's address; but send comments on the newsletter to J6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com.

Editorial

After the Calendar, the commentaries on the Second and Third Readings are based on the liturgy for the twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *We See at Last*; for more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following that is a series of bishops' statements defending the rights and dignity of refugees at the U.S. southern border.

Incidentally, lectures and presentations that are listed in the Calendar address significant issues relevant to peace and justice, but they do not necessarily represent our viewpoint.

Calendar

In Austin

Tuesday September 11, 12:00pm-1:00pm, discussion: "Racism—The Sickness of the American Soul." Sorin Oak, immediately east of the Main Building, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. Sponsored by the SEU Center for Ethics and Leadership. Bring picnic.

Thursday September 20, 5:00pm-6:30pm, Margaret Groarke, Ph.D., on voter suppression. Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress.

Wednesday October 10, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Peniel E. Joseph, Ph.D. (Barbara Jordan Chair in Ethics and Political Values, University of Texas, Austin). Heyer Lecture. McMillan 210, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 100 E. 27th St.

Thursday October 25, 5:00pm-6:30pm, Michael Lucas, "Low-income Legal Assistance." Fleck Hall, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress.

In Dallas

Wednesday August 29, 12:00pm-1:30pm, Maj. Gen. Robert Latiff (Ret.), "Future War: Preparing for the New Global Battlefield"—ethical implications of new technology for the

Dept. of Defense. Hmm. Free; information & reservations from Bora Laci, tower@smu.edu.

Wednesday September 5, 5:30pm-7:30pm, Lawrence Wright on his book, *God Save Texas: A Journey into the Soul of the Lone Star State*, an ethical-political commentary. McCord Auditorium, Southern Methodist University, 3225 University Blvd. Free, but reservation required: 214-768-3210 or CPHInfo@smu.edu

Thursday September 13, 10:00am-5:00pm, Global Refugee Policy Symposium: Susan Martin (Georgetown U.), Hardy Vieux (Human Rights First), Liz Cedillo-Pereira (City of Dallas), John Thon Major (Woodrow Wilson International Center), Elizabeth Ferris (Georgetown U.), Elisa Massimino (Harvard Kennedy School), and Matt Reynolds (UN). Martha Proactor Mack Grand Ballroom Southern Methodist University, 6425 Boaz Lane.

Thursday October 4, 5:30pm-7:30pm, Douglas Holtz-Eakin, Tax Cuts and Jobs Act: Growth Policy or Giveaway? Miller Events Center, Southern Methodist University. Free, but reservations required: tower@smu.edu or Bora Laci 214-768-4716.

Monday October 15, 12:00pm-1:30pm, Susan Hayward (U.S. Institute for Peace), "Women, Religion and peacebuilding: Illuminating the Unseen." Venue TBA at Southern Methodist University. Free, but reservations required: tower@smu.edu or Bora Laci 214-768-4716.

Thursday October 18, 5:30pm-7:30pm, Robert Kagan (Brookings Institute), America's Role as Enforcer of peace and Order. Venue TBA at Southern Methodist University. Free, but reservations required: tower@smu.edu or Bora Laci 214-768-4716.

In Houston

Monday August 30, 7:00pm-8:30pm. Panel discussion: "Faith During and After Harvey: One Year Later." Alexander Johnson (Wheeler Ave. Baptist); Paula Pipes (Pipes Research); Jason Plotkin (Congregation Emanu El); Omar Samji (Aga Khan Council); moderated by Elaine Howard Ecklund (sociology, Rice University). Info for registration: Hayley Hemstreet, hjh2@rice.edu.

Tuesday September 18, 12:15pm-1:30pm, Simranjit Khalsa, "Practicing Minority Religion: A Study of Sikhs in England and the U.S." Kyle Morrow Room, Fondren Library, Rice University.

Sunday September 30, 2:30pm-6:00pm, film screening, "A Force More Powerful," on non-violent resistance, with panel discussion (Celebrating Gandhi's Legacy of Nonviolence). \$10.00. Asia Society Texas, 1370 Southmore Blvd.

In San Antonio

Saturday September 1, 10:00am, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting. Residence of Maria Tobin, 8715 Starcrest, #27. Contact matob@aol.com

Wednesday September 12, anti-death penalty vigil across the street from county courthouse, 300 Dolorosa.

Wednesday September 12, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Anthony Graves, author of *Infinite Hope: How Wrongful Conviction, Solitary Confinement, and 12 Years on Death Row Failed to Kill My Soul*. Concert Hall, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

Wednesday September 12, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Pub theology with Carry Clark. The Friendly Spot, 943 S. Alamo St.

Wednesday September 12, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Joseph L. Cook, Climate Change and Ecological Spirituality. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Free, but register by September 5: 210-732-9927, or see <http://www.upcsa.org/classes/>

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.

Friday September 21, 6:00pm-**Saturday September 22**, 6:00pm. "Cesar Chavez: Faith Seeking Justice." Oblate Spirituality and Social Justice Institute. \$60.00. Whitley Theological Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate Dr. Information and registration: Noemy, (210) 341-1366, ext. 212.

Wednesday September 26, anti-death penalty vigil across the street from county courthouse, 300 Dolorosa.

Thursday September 27, anti-death penalty vigil across the street from county courthouse, 300 Dolorosa.

Tuesday October 9, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Lisa Epstein (Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America), Gun Myths Busted. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). \$15, register before October 2, \$20 after: 210-732-9927, or see <http://www.upcsa.org/classes/>

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

Second Reading (Ephesians 5:21-32)

As translated, this is a reading that many people find dated, or at least inconvenient in our time. This is in part because the translation is faulty, even tendentious. What will be heard at mass reads as follows: "Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord." That rendering, with the subjunctive "should", is not the worst version; a widely used translation uses the imperative: "Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as to the Lord" (RSV). What the Greek actually says does not have that imperative, but quite a quite different one, earlier in the passage: "...but be filled with the spirit, giving voice to psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs among one another and singing praise to the Lord in your hearts, always giving thanks for everything to God and Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, submitting to one another, with fear of the Messiah: Wives to your husbands as to the Lord...."

The force of the imperative, "be filled with the spirit," carries to what people do in the spirit—singing in thanksgiving prayer when with one another and in the heart when not with one another. The later participle, "submitting," pertains to "when," when "submitting to one another...." What follows that is a typical first century household code. The household in the Hellenistic and Roman framework of the first century was a mini-monarchy consisting of a monarchical father, with wife, children, and slaves as subordinates. The household head would be in turn subordinate to a local political influential and answerable to the latter for the behavior of his subordinates. This context is presupposed, with household subordinates submitting to the household head also presupposed, as a descriptive account of daily life, not as a prescriptive Christian ordinance.

What the author of Ephesians adds to the typical household code of the time are the parallels with the Messiah's devotion to the church of disciples, and a new imperative: "Husbands, love the wives....," which is in the imperative rather than embodied in a participle. The fact that the author had to insist upon it with an imperative is evidence that such was not the normal cultural prescription of the time.

Why are the translations tendentiously faulty? It is not some difficulty of the original; a participle is manifestly not a subjunctive or an imperative. Submission is manifestly not an aspect of signing thanksgiving among others or in the heart. One can assume that the description of household submission no longer reflected daily reality by the time of the printing press and was therefore read as a prescription.

Third Reading (John 6.60-69)

This section, which follows an inserted discourse, appears to resume the narrative in the Johannine Gospel from verses 6.48-50: "I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert and died. This bread is what is coming down from heaven, so that anyone who would eat of it would not also die."

Anyone? Life without death? "This statement is hard; who can listen to it?" Jesus was speaking of spiritual life, but even many of his disciples were listening for physical

life. Faith, which would move one to listen for words of spiritual life, comes from God, and not everyone listens for those kinds of word. So many disciples left Jesus and no longer traveled with him.

“Do you wish to go too?” Simon Peter says he would not leave: “You have words of eternal life.”

It is not a matter of a wiser investment. Peter’s insight is not that those who left hoped for bread for its physical benefits while he was astute enough to hope for spiritual benefit. He does not mention the benefit at all; he wants to stay with Jesus because his *words* were spiritually alive. It was not that they were words *about* spiritual rewards in heaven but that the words themselves were “words of eternal life.” In one sense, those who listen for words of spiritual life will certainly die, but Peter grasped the reality that the words were not means to some reward but were themselves intrinsically valuable.

Faith is as much about doubt as about assurance. First it would have us doubt the sufficiency of earthly rewards. Then it would have us doubt the value of reward as such. What faith leads us to is the discourse of eternal life. To be genuinely eternal, such life cannot be absent in the present and only promised for the future.

The image is that of bread, which has value when consumed and when shared. When stored up for a distant future, it only becomes stale. The image is about life, activity. We can be vivacious, we can be the occasion for others to be vivacious. It is easy to persuade ourselves not to deny ourselves too much, but it is a hard saying when it comes to persuading ourselves not to deny others too much.

© 2015 Anthony J. Blasi

Poem

We See at Last
(Peter muses: Luke:9:28-43)

On ascending,
we sit in a circle.
We see ourselves brilliant,
a gazing into sun without going blind.

Elijah, Moses, Jesus, John, James, me.
Hard to tell us apart,
blurring bleeding into one corona,
where notions of each other
make sense no more.

On descending,
we find the man,
screaming blather,
flailing futility,
begging to burst his prison.

Our common gut
seized by a loathing,
a panic to flee, to cast out.
Then, as in a sudden dawn,
he's struck with calm.

We see at last,
from heady highs
to feet-in-the-dirt hurt,
the Healing Wholeness.

Tom Keene

Defending the Rights of Refugees

What follows is a series of three official statements by members of the Catholic hierarchy. The first is by Cardinal DiNardo of Galveston and Houston, issued from a bishops' conference in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida:

A Statement from Daniel Cardinal DiNardo

June 13, 2018

Fort Lauderdale, FL—At its core, asylum is an instrument to preserve the right to life. The Attorney General's recent decision elicits deep concern because it potentially strips asylum from many women who lack adequate protection. These vulnerable women will now face return to the extreme dangers of domestic violence in their home country. This decision negates decades of precedents that have provided protection to women fleeing domestic violence. Unless overturned, the decision will erode the capacity of asylum to save lives, particularly in cases that involve asylum seekers who are persecuted by private actors. We urge courts and policy makers to respect and enhance, not erode, the potential of our asylum system to preserve and protect the right to life.

Additionally, I join Bishop Joe Vásquez, Chairman of USCCB's Committee on Migration, in condemning the continued use of family separation at the U.S./Mexico border as an implementation of the Administration's zero tolerance policy. Our government has the discretion in our laws to ensure that young children are not separated from their parents and exposed to irreparable harm and trauma. Families are the foundational element of our society and they must be able to stay together. While protecting our borders is important, we can and must do better as a government, and as a society, to find other ways to ensure that safety. Separating babies from their mothers is not the answer and is immoral.

This was followed up two days later by the New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops:

New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops Express Urgency in Reversal of Policy Separating Families

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – Friday, June 15, 2018

As bishops of a border state, we respond with dismay to President Donald Trump's overturning of asylum protections for victims of domestic violence and carrying out the practice of separating families to stem migration.

The Bishops of New Mexico strongly support Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, President of United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, whose statement calls for an immediate end to the policy which removes domestic violence as a reason for asylum. We join the cardinal in condemning the separation of children from their parents. The devastation this inflicts upon the children has life-long consequences for their well-being and is a serious violation to the rights of children.

We are greatly appalled at those who would promote such terrible border policies. Seeking asylum is not a crime, and those who are seeking it should not be compared to those committing strong-arm robbery, a felony.

We pray the United States Department of Justice will reverse these practices, as they constitute human rights violations and an offense against the most important unit in society, the family.

Criticism of the bishops' stand was soon forthcoming. The Bishop of La Cruces, Most Reverend Oscar Cantu, who has been appointed to become the next bishop of San Jose, California, responded to a newspaper op-ed as follows:

Bishop Responds to Column Critical of Catholic Church

As Louis Biad's July 19, 2018, op-ed mentioned the Catholic Church, and specifically criticizing its leadership, I hereby respond as the bishop of Las Cruces (until September 28).

There is no confusion in the Church's teaching and position on immigration. For decades the bishops of the United States, as well as the Vatican, have been quite clear. Migration is a human and moral issue, and thus we speak to it in the public square as a Church in order to inform the public debate, as our competence is faith and morals.

Some might wish that the bishops had a different message on immigration, but the task of the bishops is not to accommodate individuals' or groups' politics or preferences. Rather the task of the bishops is to teach and interpret Jesus' message in the Gospel, with all of its human and moral implications. The natural and divine law carry a heavier moral weight than human law. Human law should be based on the

natural law and thus reflect the divine law. While we respect human law, we measure it on its conformity with the natural and divine law. Thus, the Church opposes abortion and euthanasia, as these go against the divine law as found in the Scripture and Tradition. We pray and work peacefully for human laws in conformity with human dignity, whether the law regard abortion, hunger prevention or immigration.

Certain principles come into play in the immigration debate, yet not all of those principles are equal in moral weight. Thus, while the Church acknowledges a sovereign country's right to control its borders, that right is to be weighed against other moral realities – such as threats to a person's life, the unity of the family, human dignity, etc.

Some moral fundamentals regarding immigration are the right to life, the dignity of the human person, and the centrality of the family as the basic cell of society. The Church's stance on immigration is founded in the Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church. The Magisterium (bishops in union with the pope) of the Catholic Church is the authentic interpreter of the Deposit of Faith contained in the Scripture and Tradition.

The Church is not a political party. The Church follows the teachings of Jesus Christ and applies them to present day situations. Sometimes this takes us to what some consider, at present, the political right (as with our positions on freedom of religion, abortion, marriage, and euthanasia), and sometimes will take us to what is presently the political left (immigration, care for the poor and marginalized, care for creation, global solidarity, etc.). We equally offend people on the left and on the right, not that we intend to offend, but because we are centered on the Gospel, not politics. We judge political positions through the lens of our faith, not our faith through the lens of politics.

The bishops are accused from the right of not emphasizing their issues sufficiently and from the left of not emphasizing their issues sufficiently. During the Obama administration we sued the government over issues of religious freedom, contraception and abortifacient policy as part of the Affordable Care Act. With each administration we work with them on what we can, and we critique when appropriate in light of the Gospel.

Jesus was not popular with many people, especially the religious establishment. But he preached the truth and did what was right. The Church will do so, as well.

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://sacvvi.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