

Testimony



A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating August 29, 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 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Doing Nothing*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is the executive summary of a survey of Catholic services to immigrants in the United States. The full report can be accessed at <https://cmsny.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/The-CRISIS-Survey-The-Catholic-Churchs-Work-with-Immigrants-in-the-United-States-in-a-Period-of-Crisis-7-8-21-FINAL.pdf>

I received the following gem, written by Sr. Rose Kruppa of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in San Antonio. She comments on the second reading of the 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, and has kindly given permission to reproduce her text here.

Is Anyone Subordinate?



"Choose your words carefully" was one of the foundational maxims I heard in my high school years. "Words matter" was another one. I am thinking of those maxims as I reflect on the readings for this weekend. We may or may not hear the following words this weekend: "Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord." I know that there are also words about mutual subordination and mutual love and dignity expressed in the rest of the reading. But

as I see the images of women and girls in Afghanistan, as I listen to the local news and the continuous “domestic abuse” and killing of women and girls in our own city, I, like many other women, am so aware of how those words “subordinate to their husbands” or subordinate to men are used. I would like to think that we have changed—that we have made other choices! How can we restore God’s intent to honor the dignity of every person God has created? How do we love and honor every human being? Is this one of the “hard sayings” that lead us to leave the path—The Way of being followers of Jesus? We too have choices in the words we use to describe our relationships to other humans (not just women and girls). Listen this week to words that express the subordination of any person or groups of persons. Then let us see if we can act as Jesus did to include everyone, without exception, in mutual love.

Calendar

[Times are given for the Central Time Zone.]

Tuesday August 24, 10:00am-11:00am (11:00am-12:00pm ET), online webinar "Poverty and COVID-19: Challenges and Solutions," G20 Interfaith Forum: Kirsten Laursen Muth (Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities), Eric LeComte (Jubilee USA Network), and Adam Phillips (USAID), moderated by Katherine Marshall (Georgetown University). RSVP at: https://georgetown.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_onIZVHEWTqOiiI2Jw1FeVw

Tuesday August 24, 6:30pm, Courageous Conversation on Racism, Holy Cross Parish, Austin. Rev. Bryan’s Massingale’s acceptance speech of the Pax Christi USA 2021 Teacher of Peace Award, followed by conversation. Access at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82394101930?pwd=bE9VZHRMRERzS1dQYi8yZUNtQ0VtQT09>

Wednesday August 25, 11:00am-12:00pm (12:00pm-1:00pm ET) webinar "Faith, Nationalism, and the Future of Liberal Democracy." David Elcott, C. Colt Anderson, Tobias Cremer, and Volker Haarmann discuss their book by that title, joined by Judd Birdsall (Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy) and Jocelyne Cesari (Georgetown University). RSVP at: https://georgetown.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_zcFcvBEaQhqrmad72OqQAw

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>

Thursday August 26, 4:00pm (5:00pm ET), webinar "Voices from the K-12 schools on the Impact of Critical Race Theory." The webinar, presented by the Anti-Defamation League's Central and Southern Divisions, will clarify what critical race theory really means, hear from people affected by the movement and learn how to resist resolutions and bills seeking to misconstrue history. Register at: https://adl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_IHa72PyjSlidkD1c6BSRIQ

Saturday August 28, 11:30am webinar "Politics and the Death Penalty," with the Republican majority whip of the Wyoming legislature and the district attorneys of Austin, Texas; Los Angeles, California; Tucson, Arizona; St. Louis, Missouri; and Athens, Georgia. Register at: https://amnestyusa-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_4wfEcQBtXO3eFAG2Smqbg

Tuesday August 31, 2:00pm (3:00pm ET) webinar, "Season of Creation Training: How to Engage Our Church Leaders for Climate Action," Catholic Climate Covenant and Ignatian Solidarity Network staff. Register at: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_C9J1XZp7SUeDn-p_1M-6-w?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=229352fc-3b15-4be5-81b2-f091a65b4cbc

Thursday September 2, 3:00pm (4:00pm ET), webinar "AU's Public Opinion Research on Church-State Separation," Rachel Laxer (Americans United for Separation of Church and State). Register at: https://secure.everyaction.com/VU3Qwx_BD0ermF30RzvDjQ2?contactdata=Z7XCQb4yj2hdGJEh3nHLINKXAjgcvc3cGeUs8L%2fUKVJd8BshOOaINdWGDYzyXIQEW9qdmMJ5FVquEs%2fse0r6A568YRpVWVGQghh3Zm3YbMKKNeWJ4Eteg%2fntfrVda1o%2ffa2gXSM4Hgm7lcaTlujhDALwO817SHmShfZmPBAjDgYNrb1QCc90pR2SpZcqgeRpMIJXTTsNPZMbzcDbPPMXsJEGtCso5e64x9EVDZn5eVMOoPy6eS9rut0eUx3vb5mvYmdAEd0zfQzzSPe415Wb%2fPQ%3d%3d&emci=762987b7-b4f4-eb11-b563-501ac57b8fa7&emdi=659e90be-62f5-eb11-b563-501ac57b8fa7&ceid=3722020

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 (Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8)

The Book of Deuteronomy is a homiletical expansion of a version of Hebrew law, perhaps in the tradition of the Northern Kingdom as later expanded upon by a Judean hand. The passage used in this Sunday's first reading is from a prologue to the resultant version of the Law. The very existence of such a book reveals the limits of law as such, even as it stresses adherence and acceptance of law.

Second Reading (James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27)

The reading is from the *Letter of James*. Who this James was is unclear. Since Christian writings were often published under pseudonyms because Christianity was illegal, we do not know even whether James was the author's real name. There was an early Christian community in Jerusalem called the Brothers of the Lord, which was eventually scattered; the author may well have once been a member of it. Or the author may have been writing under the name of that community's leader, James. Internal evidence in the letter—really an essay—suggests it was not written in Jerusalem.

The letter consists of exhortations, each accompanied by an explanation. The selection in the Lectionary for today has several of these exhortations, taken from Chapter 1. While the reading begins at verse 17, it is necessary to begin at verse 16 to get the complete thought: "Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers and sisters. Every good act of giving and every perfect gift is from above..." The verb "deceive" is *planao*, from which our word *planet* comes. In speaking of God's guidance, the author contrasts being misled by setting course with a planet, and

being guided correctly by using the stars and sun as guides: “coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, from Whom there is no change of course or shadow of relocation.”

The selection includes a few more verses, and then skips to this: “Religion pure and undefiled before God and Father is this: looking after orphans and widows in their difficulty, keeping oneself unblemished from the world.”

Third Reading(Mark 7.1-8, 14-15, 21-23)

The reading is the familiar narrative of Pharisees and scribes criticizing Jesus’ disciples for eating loaves with defiled hands. The Church editors delete Jesus’ criticism of his critics, that they had traditions that undermined their own disciples’ divinely-mandated duty toward parents. The liturgical editors include Jesus making a pronouncement: “There is nothing outside a person that going into one can make one impure. However, that going out of a person is what defiles a person.” Then they delete Jesus’s disciples not understanding the pronouncement, but go straight to the explanation: “...for out from the heart of people come evil discourses, acts of fornication and of theft, of murder, of adultery, of greed, of knavery, deceit, licentiousness, curses, defamation, contempt, senselessness. All these evil things come from within and defile the person.” The Church editors simplified the story-line, but the Sunday parishioner is deprived of the point about human traditions and Christians’ propensity to miss the point.

Gene was an insightful though laconic old scholar, gruff in his mannerisms but attentive to ethical matters and careful to pay attention respectfully to everyone. He doubted the sufficiency of toleration and charity and argued for the priority of justice. I knew him as someone often present at the professional association meetings I attended. By chance I came across a slim volume in a used book store, Gene’s autobiography. The promo line said he was a Holocaust survivor; I hadn’t known that about him.

Gene’s home town was in present-day Ukraine, but national borders kept shifting. The vicissitudes of geopolitics put the city in no less than three nations during his childhood. Jews were actually in the majority in the city, but because his father believed in modern education and sent Gene to a school conducted in spoken Hebrew, hence “contaminating” the sacred language with modern uses, most of the neighbors were suspicious of Gene and his immediate family.

At one point a contingent of Hungarian soldiers arrived to establish a new national governance. The mayor assembled a brass band and a host of dignitaries to welcome their new rulers. The mayor gave his welcoming speech in Czech, one of the languages of their past rulers. The puzzled general didn't understand. The mayor repeated his speech in German, the hegemonic language of central Europe. The general still did not understand. The mayor then repeated his remarks in French, the language of diplomacy. The general grumbled something. Someone interpreted: "He said that these ignorant people don't even understand Hungarian." The band played, and the dignitaries shook the general's hand.

When, eventually, the Nazis came, most of the people were arrested and taken away. The better part of Gene's family and childhood friends disappeared; only imprecise rumors suggested what became of them. Gene and his father were sent to a work site as slave labor. Then they were force-marched toward another concentration camp. They succeeded, separately, in escaping en route, and at the end of the war were allowed to return to their home town, albeit through the good offices of different displaced persons agencies. They reunited, but Gene's father wanted to stay and spent much of the rest of his life living under Communism. Gene was allowed to go to America on the pretext of having distant relatives in St. Louis, but the relatives actually wanted little to do with him. He supported himself as a Torah educator for a small-town synagogue that did not have a real rabbi. He also discovered university opportunities and earned a doctorate. Thus began a second life for him.

Why was the mayor who spoke three European languages as well as Yiddish considered ignorant? Why were Gene and his classmates in the Hebrew-speaking school disapproved of by other Jews? Why were the family and neighbors taken off to unknown fates by the Nazis? Why were Gene and his father reduced to slave labor and force-marched around Germany? Is all this "ancient history"? Why are mothers and children detained at international borders? Why does a Florida gun store owner, backed by a Confederate Battle Flag, declare his store a "Muslim free zone"? Why does a "white" policeman in a cruiser tailgate an African American woman, and when she moves over to make way for him pull her over "for not signaling a lane change," and then provoke her so that he could arrest her? We later learned the whole experience added to other problems led her to hang herself. Questions need not be limited to what appears in the press. One can ask questions about behavior observed in everyday life.

"Why do your disciples not follow the traditions of the elders, but eat bread with defiled hands?"

And he answered, "Setting aside the commandments of God, you seize upon human traditions." All too human, and not unique to Pharisees and scribes.

Poem

Doing Nothing

A space where attention
looses its focus, the mind gets naked.

A silence, permitting thoughts
to dispel, to return another time.

Letting absence of all
become a presence to all.

Tom Keene
October 8, 2018

The CRISIS Survey: The Catholic Church's Work with Immigrants in the United States in a Period of Crisis

Donald Kerwin and Daniela Alulema

Center for Migration Studies

July 8, 2021

[Executive Summary]

Over the last five years, the Center for Migration Studies of New York (CMS) has conducted four surveys of Catholic immigrant-serving institutions, programs, and ministries in the United States. These surveys identify the multi-faceted needs of immigrants and refugees, and examine the successes and challenges of Catholic institutions in responding to them. CMS administered its most recent survey, the Catholic Refugee and Immigrant Service Integration Survey (the "CRISIS Survey") from December 14, 2020 through February 5, 2021. This survey

explored the work of Catholic institutions during the Trump administration and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CRISIS Survey documents the reach, diversity, and productivity of Catholic institutions that work with immigrants and refugees during a pandemic that has particularly devastated their communities and an administration whose policies and rhetoric made their work far more difficult. At a time of rampant “Catholic decline” narratives, the survey also documents the reach, vitality, and relevance of Catholic immigrant-serving institutions. It identifies the obstacles encountered by immigrants in accessing Catholic programs and ministries – both organizational (funding, staffing, and siting) and exogenous (federal policies, the pandemic, and community opposition). It underscores the threat posed by US immigration policies to immigrants and to the work of Catholic institutions.

Survey respondents reported that they offered new services during this period, such as:

- Financial assistance for families, particularly those at risk of losing housing or utilities.
- COVID-19 testing, education, contact tracing, and quarantine services.
- Mental health services.
- Grief support and assistance with funeral expenses.
- Delivery of food and sanitation supplies for infected and other homebound persons.
- Voter registration and Census promotion activities.

Virtually all respondents provided services remotely during the pandemic. Many reported on difficulties faced by immigrants in accessing their services, due to poor internet connections, limited computer access, and lack of communications technology and training. Respondents identified several factors that negatively affected immigrants’ access to their services pre-pandemic. As in previous CMS surveys, these factors included lack of immigration status, negative community attitudes toward immigrants, fear of apprehension (particularly after traffic stops) and deportation, public transportation deficiencies, stigma over receipt of mental health services, and identification requirements to access public benefits. Respondents also reported on obstacles in working with immigrants during the pandemic. These included the pandemic itself, limited funding, demand that outpaced resources, government restrictions on relief and benefit eligibility, and (particularly for students) living arrangements, work, and family caretaking responsibilities.

Respondents overwhelmingly believed that immigration enforcement, tied to fear of deportation, very negatively or somewhat negatively affected participation in their services and programs. In Catholic terms, they reported that nativist immigration policies, rhetoric, and media sources interfere with their practice of discipleship. One respondent stated, “Fear of ICE and round-ups, locally in our state and nationally, along with negative immigration rhetoric from the out-going president have made our clients very fearful to access services they rightly qualify for.” A healthcare provider reported that immigrants were “avoiding or delaying seeking treatment for COVID-19 for fear of apprehension and/or deportation.” Many said that enforcement partnerships between Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and states and localities made immigrants fearful of reporting crimes or accessing government facilities. One said potential sponsors feared coming forward to reunify with children. Respondents also cited as problems delays in family reunification, barriers to asylum-seekers entering the United States, decreased refugee admissions, and the Trump administration’s rule on the public charge ground of inadmissibility.

The report recommends that Catholic institutions take stock of the creative new programs, skills and capacities that they have developed during the pandemic and build on them. It also recommends that scholars and researchers prioritize independent, person-centered research that critically analyzes the work of Catholic immigrant-serving institutions. Such research would ask whether these institutions are putting “the person at the center, in his or her many aspects” and honoring the “fundamental equality” of every person (Francis 2019). It would draw on the perspectives of immigrants served by Catholic institutions to examine the degree to which these institutions advance the rights, participation, and wellbeing of immigrants and their families in US society. It would also analyze how Catholic institutions work with each other – within Arch/dioceses, regionally, nationally, and across these realms – in response to the cross-cutting needs of immigrants.

The report recommends that Catholic institutions develop programmatic plans to ensure that immigrants can return to or can continue to access their programs and ministries as the pandemic subsides. These plans will need to combine communication strategies, financial support, and services such as transportation and childcare. In addition, Catholic institutions should make it a high priority to ensure that immigrants can access the infrastructure, platforms, and training that will allow them to access virtual services. They should also develop strategies to engage Catholics who do not understand, who ignore, or

who work at cross-purposes to Catholic teaching and policy positions in this area. Finally, they should redouble their work with the administration and Congress to reform US immigration laws, and with states and localities to promote welcoming and inclusive communities.

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>