

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating September 16, 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-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Children in the Storm*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is a letter from Frank Skeith, Co-ordinator of Pax Christi Texas, to Governor Greg Abbott, asking him not to resort to the death penalty any more, and a statement, dated August 21, 2018, by Pax Christi Netherlands on nuclear bombs and banks investing in them.

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

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 Majork (Woodrow Wilson International Center), Elizabeth Ferris

(Georgetown U.), Elisa Massimino (Harvard Kennedy School), and Matt Reynolds (UN). Martha Proctor 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.

In Houston

Sunday September 9, 2:00pm-5:00pm, film: "In the Name of Peace: John Hume in America." Documentary on Jon Hume, who, inspired by Martin Luther King, helped bring peace to Northern Ireland. Jones Hall, St. Thomas University, 3910 Yoakum Blvd. Information: irishstudies@stthom.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.

Friday September 28, 4:00pm, Steven DeLay (Wake Forest University), "Making Peace." Humanities Bldg. 117, Rice University, 6100 Main St.

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.

Wednesday October 3, 7:00pm-8:30pm, panel discussion, "From Discrimination to Hate Crimes: A Conversation on What Americans of Minority Religions Are Facing Today." Rabbi Steven Morgen, Congregation Beth Yeshurun; Christopher P. Scheitle, West Virginia University; Manpreet K. Singh, The Sikh Coalition. Rice University; for information contact Hayley Hemstreet, RPLP Program Manager, hjh2@rice.edu, 713-348-3974

In San Antonio

Wednesday September 12, 12:00pm-1:00pm, **no** anti-death penalty vigil; there is a stay of execution.

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 Clack. 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.

Wednesday September 19, 7:00pm-8:30pm, Roger Barnes Ph.D., "Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Path to Nonviolence." Mabee Library Auditorium, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway. For information, contact Sr. Martha Ann Kirk: kirk@uiwtx.edu

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, 12:00pm-1:00pm, anti-death penalty vigil across the street from county courthouse, 300 Dolorosa.

Thursday September 27, 12:00pm-1:00pm, anti-death penalty vigil across the street from county courthouse, 300 Dolorosa.

Friday September 28, 2:00pm, "Project Lifeline," Children in Crisis—Dehumanization and Immigration Detention, A Conversation between Physicians and Faith Leaders. Ballroom, student Engagement Center, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

Friday September 28, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Digital Inclusion Forum—Engaging the Tech Community, facilitated by Matt Ready (USAA). Panel: Jo Ann Alvaredo (SAHA), Jordana Barton (Federal Bank, Dallas), Craig Hopkins (City of San Antonio), and Steven Husain (Goodwill); sponsored by Digital Alliance of San Antonio. UTSA Downtown, La Villita Room, Durango Bldg., 501 W. Cesar E. Chavez Blvd. Park in Lot D-3 under the IH-35 bridge, corner of W. Chavez and S. Pecos.

Tuesday October 2, 9:00am-3:00pm, "From Circular Economy to Circular Society in San Antonio." Sustainability workshop, with European experts in conversation with San Antonians. Rooms 2030-2032, Student Engagement Center, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/from-circular-economy-to-circular-society-in-san-antonio-tickets-49512237435>

Thursday October 4, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Edward B. Westermann, Ph.D. (Texas A & M San Antonio), "Propaganda: The Dangers of Dehumanization." SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). \$15; register by September 27 (\$20 after): 210-732-9927, or see <http://www.upcsa.org/classes/>

Saturday October 6, 10:00am, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting. Residence of Maria Tobin, 8715 Starcrest, #27. Contact matob@aol.com

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 October 24, 7:00pm, play, "The Line in the Sand: Stories from the US/Mexico Border about Immigration," followed by panel discussion. Concert Hall, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

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

Second Reading (James 2:14-18)

"What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if some say they have faith, but have no works? Can faith save them?" So begins a famous passage in the *Letter of James*. In an equally famous homily, Saint John Chrysostom cited the presence of Jesus in the needy in the judgment scene of the *Gospel of Matthew* to make essentially the same point: "Do you want to honor Christ's body? Then do not scorn him in his nakedness, nor honor him here in the church with silken garments while neglecting him outside where he is cold and naked." And again, "Of what use is it to weigh down Christ's table with golden cups, when he himself is dying of hunger? First, fill him when he is hungry; then use the means you have left to adorn his table. Will you have a golden cup made but not give a cup of water? What is the use of providing the table with cloths woven of gold thread and not providing Christ himself with the clothes he needs?" Most relevant to our present era: "Apply this also to Christ when he comes along the roads as a pilgrim, looking for shelter. You do not take him in as your guest, but you decorate floor and walls and the capitals of the pillars."

Third Reading (Mark 8.27-35)

Jesus forbade the disciples from telling anyone that he was the Anointed One, the Messiah. But when he began to teach them that the human son had to suffer much and be rejected by the ethnic leaders, by the higher clergy, and by those who wrote out

official documents (elders, high priests, and scribes), and be executed and rise after three days, Peter tried to forbid Jesus from teaching such things.

God talk! Jesus was forbidding his followers from provoking people with Christian God talk. He did not want it to be his followers' religious talk that would provoke persecution. Biblical scholars refer to this feature of the *Gospel of Mark* the "Messianic Secret." No, they were to provoke the ethnic leaders, the power-seeking clergy, and official functionaries more directly, and the reaction, occasionally even a judicial killing, would follow. But mysteriously, after they were oppressed they would rise on the third day—as Hosea put it centuries beforehand "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord" (Hosea 6.2-3a).

What would directly provoke oppression from ethnic leaders, from power-seeking clergy, and official functionaries? There always seems to be an out group. Demagogues warn us about political correctness; they say we must have out groups! When one rationale for rejecting a class of people loses its force, another one replaces it. Bible-believing Christians, we are told, reject transgendered people. "Why? Where in the Bible is that mentioned?" Why ask? The point of demagoguery is to pull oneself up by tearing others down. But Jesus would have us associate ourselves with whomever the demagogues would stigmatize. "Seal that border! Build that wall!" The demagogues would make people illegal. "Where in the Bible does it say we should seal borders rather than welcome sojourners?" Why ask? The point is to make people illegal so that state functionaries can document their illegality.

Catholic tradition does not limit itself to the Bible. It notes that we humans have a native, God-given power to see much of the will of the Creator in the ways creation flourishes. Peter knew what Jesus was teaching was true enough; otherwise he would have left when Jesus told the crowd to take up the cross. Peter had more insight than one would think; he knew how awful the truth was, and his emotions led him to protest it. Don't we all have the temptation to avoid displeasing the ethnic leaders, power-seeking clergy, and the state functionaries who would stigmatize us, and are we not all tempted to hide behind God talk?

Poem

Children in the Storm

Side by side, we scooch our bodies down,
huddle along the wall furthest from the porch's edge,
and face the caterwauling coming-down,
bare knees hugged, drawn to chins,
in ear-filled awe, wide-eyed watching:
 sky-shot water-sheet slapping tin roofs,
 gushing down rain spouts,
 making new rivers of gravel walks.

We wonder at the angry sky-man who makes all this,
of whom we sing, I think, in brave derision:

*It's raining, it's pouring, the Old Man is snoring,
he jumped in bed, and bumped his head,
and couldn't get up in the morning.*

Is it in wrathful punctuation or promise of punishment
that he pronounces his opinion in hurled thunderclap
and with cussing concussion rattles our bodies,
quivers the linings of the void in our bellies?

Warned,
we sit in silent wonder
at a world alive.

Tom Keene



Pax Christi Texas

International Catholic Peace Movement

3901 Mattie St., Austin Texas 78723

August 23rd, 2018

Texas Governor Greg Abbott
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Dear Governor Abbott,

You are undoubtedly aware of the recent statement from Pope Francis. His Holiness announced that use of the death penalty is inadmissible in all circumstances. The Catholic Bishops published a statement in 2016 calling for the end of the death penalty. In view of these two statements, we call on you, as a pro-life Catholic, to express your opposition to the death penalty in all cases.

Texas does not need the death penalty to protect society. We now have life without parole (LWOP) as an optional punishment for capital murder.

The death penalty is racist as evidenced by the disproportionately high rate of African Americans on death row.

The death penalty does not deter others from committing murder.

We are also aware that thirteen people who were convicted of capital murder in Texas were later exonerated and released from prison. There is strong evidence that innocent people have actually been executed. Poor people are the most vulnerable.

Texas has a reputation as a state that is making significant improvements to its criminal justice system. However, with 553 executions since 1982 (leading the nation by a 5 to 1 margin), the state's reputation is severely tainted by its use of the death penalty.

You can secure your reputation as a pro-life governor by calling for the end of the death penalty in Texas. Nineteen states have abolished the death penalty to date and many more never or rarely use this form of punishment.

Sincerely,

Frank Skeith
Coordinator – Pax Christi Texas

Statement on Nuclear Weapons and Investments in Them

Pax Christi Netherlands

August 21, 2018

Nuclear weapons are indeed the worst weapon ever created. They are designed to decimate cities. The Red Cross & the UN have said that if they're used in a populated area, there's no help coming[1], there's nothing anyone can do to mitigate the damage. The only thing we can do to keep safe is make sure they're never used. And the only way we can make sure they're never used is to get rid of them. All of them.

Right now, the countries that have nuclear weapons are all in the process of upgrading them[2]. To do those upgrades, a lot of countries use private contractors. Companies like Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman or BAE Systems make key components for nuclear weapons. It's part of the military industrial complex that Dwight D. Eisenhower warned the world about in the 1950s.

Companies want to make money. So do banks and pension funds. The difference is that banks use their client's money to make investments, to build up a profit. That's your money. That's where you have power.

Banks don't want to lose clients, so they don't want to look bad. When we make noise about their investments in Armageddon, investments in doomsday, Banks start looking really bad.

In some countries, nuclear weapons are completely illegal, but not yet in every country. Some banks, like BNP Paribas, will use this as an excuse, saying that their investments in nuclear weapon producers are okay. But they're not. There is a moral and ethical line on what is acceptable and what is not. Nuclear weapons are unacceptable, and its time to get the banks on board. How can BNP Paribas say that it's time to divest from tobacco[3] and fracking[4], yet not be divesting from nuclear weapons?

On 26 September, ICAN in conjunction with partners around the world, is calling for a global day of action targeting BNP Paribas. We want you to take to the streets, to take to social media, to take action- to get BNP Paribas out of the nuclear weapons business.

There are lots of ways to get involved, check bnp-divest.org for more info.

And on September 26th, let's use our power to start putting an end to the worst weapons ever created.

[1] Statement by the Red Cross at the Oslo Conference on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons. https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/ud/vedlegg/hum/hum_malich.pdf

[2] Statement by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom at the 2017 NPT Prepcom, Vienna, Austria: http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/prepcom17/statements/3May_WILPF.pdf

[3] <http://www.investmenteurope.net/regions/france/bnp-paribas-sets-roadmap-tobacco-divestment/>

[4] <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-10-11/bnp-paribas-to-halt-shale-oil-financing-in-climate-change-pledge>

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