

Testimony



A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating September 23, 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-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Holy Innocents*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. My analysis of the problem of holy wars follows.

Calendar

In Austin

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

Thursday September 27, 3:30pm-5:00pm, "Understanding Exploitation of the Internet and Social Media in Promoting Violent Extremism and Terrorism." Maura Conway, Ph.D. (Dublin City University). Carter Auditorium, John Brooks Williams Natural Science Center, 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.

Thursday November 8—Saturday November 10, Blandy Lectures: Journalist Ray Suarez on the U.S. majority minority future, and faculty lectures on "Gender and Sexual Orientation in the 21st Century." Episcopal seminary of the Southwest, 501 E. 32nd St.: \$125 for the full program, free for the Ray Suarez lecture only. Information: gaylen.mahoney@ssw.edu or 512-474-4133, ext. 333.

In Dallas

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

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

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.

Tuesday September 18, 5:30pm-6:30pm, Civic Engagement in san Antonio: A Conversation with Molly Cox of SA2020. Conference Room A, University Center, St. Mary's University, One Camino Santa Maria.

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/>

Sunday October 14, 3:00pm-6:00pm, Celebration and thanksgiving of the Canonization of Oscar Romero of El Salvador. Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller and Rev. Juan

Carlos. Christ the King Catholic Church, 2610 Perez (outdoors, bring lawn chairs and if needed umbrella).

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.

Thursday October 25, 7:30pm-9:00pm, Gretchen Daily, "A New Business Model for People and Nature" (Trinity University Distinguished Scientists Lecture). Laurie Auditorium, Trinity University, 1 Trinity Place.

Wednesday November 7, 7:00pm, John F. Haught, 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 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

Holy Innocents (Recalling September 11, 2001)

You call us cowards?
Compared to whom,
B-52 crews saturating villages?

When you stopped food and medicine,
we watched as half a million Iraqi kids died.
We don’t hate you for that.
We admire power.

So, when we turn passenger planes
into stealth bombers
we deserve your respect.
But now, at least, we have your attention.

Let’s make a friendly bet:
who can kill the most innocents per killer?

Consider the odds.
With just hundreds we kill thousands.
It takes millions of you to kill our hundreds.
Millions? Yes, add it up.
Your paid killers,
(oh, excuse us, your military)
Plus, your tax paying citizens,
complicit killers in the hundreds of millions.
Complicit? Of course.
You are a democracy, aren't you?

When the contest ends,
when we both run out of innocents,
we can shake hands and
acknowledge one another,
brothers in killings,
devotees of Mars,
worshiping at our common altar.

Tom Keene
September 16, 2001

Holy War

Anthony J. Blasi

To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Gergashites and the Jebusites (Genesis 15:18b-21).

And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you (Exodus 23:31-33).

These texts and ones similar to them are used by some Orthodox Jewish Israelites and by some American fundamentalist Christians to justify violence against Christian and Muslim Palestinians and against neighboring nations. They would have violence used within Israel and war against Israel's neighbors for the purpose of acquiring the lands that are described in the biblical passages. Others would endorse the use of violence against abortion providers, ironically in the name of the right to life. What is foremost in such thinking is not life itself but the command that happens to be against killing; conformance to a biblical command is to have priority over all else. Still others would make war against people, races, or nations whom they believe to be particularly evil, in order to hasten the era of war prior to the coming of the Messiah that is predicted in ancient apocalyptic literature—some of it in the book, *Revelation*.

It is tempting to dismiss holy warriors as mad, as psychiatric cases. All the scientific evidence suggests, on the contrary, that they are well-adjusted people whose brains function well. The problem is that the public cultures to which they are adjusted are unfounded empirically and not generally rational. Just as there are balanced, untroubled young men and women, who score as “normal” on paper-and-pencil psychological tests, who sit awaiting orders to launch missiles armed with nuclear weapons when given the order to do so through proper procedures, there are suicide bombers ready to enter worship centers of rival sects or night spots where “infidels” entertain themselves. So also has history witnessed jihadists, crusaders, and inquisitors, none of whom were deemed extremist in their place and day.

It is easy to disapprove of all these. With a little humility, however, we must realize that we have arrived at our disapproval through the same kind of cultural processes by which the extremists, holy warriors, and inquisitors arrived at their convictions. It is not so easy to actually reverse these processes. That requires articulating patiently and persuasively fact-based and rational, even reasonable, alternatives. Persecuting extremists repopulates the world with extremist persecutors. The defeat of holy warriors by other holy warriors hardly portends an improvement in the state of civilization. Burning an inquisitor at the stake simply replaces one Inquisition with another.

What can be done about this? One might begin with an appreciation of the development of doctrine, both in the broader culture and in religious traditions. Such a development can be found in the Bible itself. Here possessing the national land becomes conditional, and later on it turns out that the conditions have not been met:

Hear the word of the Lord, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, amend your ways and your doings, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: “This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.”

For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.

(Jeremiah 7:2b-7)

Some passages from the Bible read as mere justifications of ancient nationalist ambitions, but others such as the Jeremiah passage above set forth justifications for national defeat and embarrassment. A fundamentalist approach is satisfied to seize upon one passage where words can be found to add some religious enthusiasm to one's own ambitions or, more problematically, add some religious enthusiasm to the ambitions to the tribe to which one belongs. It takes work, however, to place a passage in the larger context of the story of Hebrew tradition and its development over centuries. The Bible as a book conveniently indexed for themes that one may capriciously choose and look up, is a fiction. Revelation in scripture as a gradual and contested process of developments in understanding and appreciation is an acquired taste. Following the development of doctrine requires a parallel development in one's capacity for understanding and appreciation. This occurs, for example, with the author of the New

Testament's *Letter to the Hebrews*, which argues for a new covenant, a different one from the old nationalist one.

Another place where the development of doctrine can be observed is church history. The "deposit" of central Christian doctrines as we know them is not to be found in fixed formulae in the Bible; rather they emerged through the course of intra-Christian disputes and discussions, until articulated in the Nicene Creed, as we call it today. Many other developments would be drawn out of the early tradition. The Council of Trent would inventory the accepted books of the Bible and the official practices or sacraments of Christianity and the theologies explaining them. The Second Vatican Council would draw out the implications for a far different world from those of antiquity and early modern period for the life of the Church and vice-versa, based on prior efforts of Popes Leo XIII, John XXIII, and others. Most recently Pope Francis has updated Church teaching on the morality of capital punishment.

We can now address the problem of holy war differently from the way it was approached in era of the crusades, and given the threat of weapons of mass destruction it is more urgent than ever to do so. The rejection of war came to be presumed so that going to war had to be justified. The problem was that salvation was linked to proper belief and that the priority of salvation made holy war thinkable. Thus a crusade to conquer territory would not be justified but one to impose one's own religion would be justified. This was applied to internal crusades against heretics as well as to external crusades against non-Christians. As nation states emerged in Europe, some of them experienced wars of religion, which pitted Protestants and Catholics against one another. With time, the churches learned tolerance from the wider society, enabling a development of the doctrines of ecumenism among Christians and interfaith openness among religious traditions. Simultaneously, the devising of weapons of mass destruction made violations of the just war principle of proportionality too likely. After the experience of World War I, secular authorities tried to ban poison gas and dum dum bullets, but poison gas is being used today in the Syrian War and dum dum bullets are available in gun shops. The resort to "saturation" or "carpet" bombing in World War II, when airplanes came to be used to deliver explosives, ignored the distinction between military and civilian targets. The use of two atom bombs against Imperial Japan by the United States did the same thing. It was in this context that Pope Pius XII argued against any resort to war except for defensive purposes. During the Cold War, the United States contemplated the use of hydrogen bombs in a possible holy war of sorts against the Communist Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was not a democracy, and its citizenry would have little role in a decision of their government to go to war. Consequently, had war broken out, as it almost did during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the plan was to completely destroy metropolitan areas in the Soviet Union with their populations of innocents because of the hostile intent of their undemocratically selected leaders. Moreover, this blurred the boundary between defense and retaliation.

It was actually during the Cuban Missile Crisis that Pope John XXIII wrote his encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*. The encyclical undercuts any justification of a holy war by recognizing religious freedom as a fundamental right: "Every human being has the right to honor God according to the dictates of an upright conscience, and the right to profess his religion privately and publicly" (#14). It goes on to call for disarmament (#109ff). The focus changes with this encyclical, from identifying how war, the rejection of which is to

be presumed, might be justified, to how to prevent war by establishing just relations among nations.

The development of Catholic Christian doctrine has clearly led to a rejection of starting wars. It is less negative about using the military to establish order; for example, some argue that the United States and other major powers should have intervened in the Rwandan genocide. It is also less negative about genuine defense—which would not be obliterating the people and homeland of an attacker. It is also less negative about coming to the defense of a nation attacked by a stronger power. However, what is needed in the present hour is the promotion of peace, not the conjuring up of situations where military endeavors might be justified. Peace needs the support of religion; war seems to gain support on its own.

An individual rejection of all war would clearly include a rejection of holy wars. This can take the form of a personal refusal to have any part of war—e.g., resisting the payment of taxes that in part support the military. Or it can take the form of a personal refusal to have any part of designing, producing, or deploying weapons that can only be used disproportionately—e.g., poison gas, dum dum bullets, hydrogen bombs. And of course it can take the form of refusing to serve in a combat capacity, even if drafted. A different approach is to acquiesce to a government at war while declining to be involved in a combat capacity oneself; under this approach one would register as a conscientious objector but agree to serve in as a non-combatant. A third approach is to accept some wars but not others; one might accept military action against terrorists in Afghanistan but not the invasion of Iraq—the latter lacking any non-fraudulent cause for war. In any event, any holy war would be personally rejected using all of these approaches, a holy war being one pursued to impose one's own convictions or to attack those who do not adhere to one's own convictions.

Beyond the individual rejection of a war, there is the use or rejection of war on the part of a national government. In the conscientious objector approach mentioned above, one may reject any involvement in war personally but acquiesce to one's government going to war. In such a case one's personal witness plays an important part in preventing an ethic of war sweeping a population. As for governments, the resort of holy wars on their part should certainly be rejected. With *Pacem in Terris*, doctrine has certainly developed in an explicit way on this point. In such a case, mere conscientious objection would be insufficient.

This leads to a Church program of sorts.

1. There is a need to undercut any fundamentalist use of the Bible. It will not suffice to take texts out of the context of the history of the development of doctrine on one topic (e.g., on homosexuality) while placing texts in their historical context on another topic (e.g., charging interest on loans). Fundamentalism needs to be rejected consistently so that anti-fundamentalism would be credible when it comes to the matter of holy wars. Every moral teaching needs to be contextualized and reasoned.
2. Second, interfaith events need to be provided in order to undercut some of the causes of holy wars—ignorance, intolerance, religious animus. One might make an analogy between this kind of program and racial desegregation. The provision of ecumenical events among Christians and interfaith events among religions could undercut religious tribalism.

3. The church needs to be forthright in the critique of governments starting wars. It is not enough, incidentally, for this to be done by the pope or Vatican officials in faraway Rome; bishops and pastors inside a nation initiating wars need to do so as well.
4. Church-related educational institutions need to include the horrors and immoralities of war in their curricula.

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

