

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating October 14, 2018

Pax Christi San Antonio does not solicit donations. Thoughtful comments, however, may be sent to the editor at j6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com, with the understanding that permission to publish them is implied. 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 *Third Reading* feature is inspired by the Sunday gospel for the 28th Sunday in ordinary time. Tom Keene's poem is *Parable*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the poem is a September 17, 2018 text released by Pax Christi International: *Statement for the 2018 World Week for Peace in Israel and Palestine: "Youth and Children: Raising Hope and Making Change."* The statement notes in particular the United States shirking its commitment to support displaced persons in Palestine.

Calendar

In Austin

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 1, 5:00pm-6:30pm, Minh-Hien Nguyen on the Journey to Being American. Fleck Hall, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. Parking permits at <https://www.stedwards.edu/contact-us/main-campus-united-states>

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 (7:30pm Nov. 8, Knapp Auditorium; registration required). Information: gaylen.mahoney@ssw.edu or 512-474-4133, ext. 333.

In Dallas

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.

Monday October 15, 5:30pm-8:30pm, Harold Ricinos and Pamela Metzger, An Interdisciplinary Dialogue: The ABC's of Theology and Criminal Justice Reform and How They Impact the Lives of School Children of Color. Elizabeth Perkins Prothro Hall, Perkins School of Theology, 5901 Bishop Blvd.

Thursday October 18, 5:30pm-7:30pm. Robert Kagan (Brookings) on his book *The Jungle Grows Back: America and Our Imperiled World*, which discusses threats to world order. Southern Methodist University, Crum Auditorium, James M. Collins Executive Education Center, 3150 Binkley Avenue. Free, but registration required: whoozin/YEH-M3N-6QW7/RSVP. For information: Bora Laci 214-768-4716.

In Houston

Tuesday October 9, 7:00pm-9:00pm. Documentary film, *Waste Land*, follows artist Vik Muniz from Brooklyn to the world's largest garbage dump outside Rio de Janeiro. Rice Media Center (close to campus entrance 8), Rice University, 6100 Main. [**Repeated October 24**]

Wednesday October 10, 6:00pm. Film, *Anita: Speaking Truth to Power*, about Anita Hill and her testimony at the nomination of Justice Clarence Thomas; followed by panel discussion (Shelli Collins, Sonia Cornales, Bridget Gorman, Ann Robison). Rice Media Center (close to campus entrance 8), 6100 Main.

Thursday October 11, 6:00pm, Nancy Knowlton, Ph.D. (Smithsonian), "Ocean Optimism: Success Stories in Ocean Conservation." Sewell Hall 308, Rice University, 6100 Main St. Refreshments at 5:30. Information: Adrienne Corea ac53@rice.edu.

Friday October 12, 4:00pm-5:00pm, Meg Urry (Yale University), Equity and Inclusion in STEM: What, Why, How. Keck Hall 100, Rice University, 6100 Main.

Sunday October 14, 9:30am-10:30am, Padma Swamy, M.D., and Medhi Vasig, "Doctors for Change Addressing Children at Risk: Immigrant and Refugee Health." St. Philip Presbyterian Church, Room 201, 4807 San Felipe.

Wednesday October 17, 6:00pm-7:30pm, World Religions and Health: Christianity. Rev. John T. Graham, M.D. \$25.00, dinner included; register at <https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07efn034uidefb910a&oseq=&c=&ch=> . Institute for Spirituality and Health, 8100 Greenbriar #300. Information: Cyrus Wirls 713-797-0600.

Wednesday October 24, 6:00pm-7:30pm, World Religions and Health: Hinduism, Venugopal Menon, M.D. \$25.00, dinner included; register at <https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07efn034uidefb910a>

[&oseq=&c=&ch=](#) . Institute for Spirituality and Health, 8100 Greenbriar #300.
Information: Cyrus Wirls 713-797-0600.

Thursday November 1, 7:00pm, Very Rev. Barkley S. Thompson (Christ Church Cathedral), Rabbi Oren J. Hayon, and Rev. Dr. Steve Walls (South Main Baptist Church), on politics through the lens of faith. 100 Herring Hall, Rice University, 6100 Main Street.

In San Antonio

Monday October 8, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Sr. Lisa Pries, "Christian Peacemaker Team, Standing in Harm's Way to Lessen Violence," on peace concerns in Hebron. Mabee Library, Special Collections, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

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 10, 6:30pm, Texas Coalition against the Death Penalty meeting, St. Mary's University Law School Library alumni Room. One Camino Santa Maria.

Wednesday October 10, 6:30pm-8:30pm, Roundtable on the history and symbolism of Alamo Plaza (Sarah Zenaida Gould, Gary W. Houston, Ann McGlone, and Paul Ringenbach). Esperanza Peace & Justice Center, 922 San Pedro.

Wednesday October 10, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Pub Theology: Immigration Update. Rev. Natalie Webb and Rev. Dr. Helen Boursier. The Friendly Spot Ice House, 943 S. Alamo.

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).

Friday October 19, 6:30pm (doors open at 6:00), 5th Annual Night of Hope Gala, benefit for children in Gaza (Middle East Children's Alliance), sponsored by Jewish Voice for Peace San Antonio. St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 315 E. Pecan St. Purchase tickets (\$50.00) and parking pass at <https://www.ticketsource.us/nightofhope5>.

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.

Monday October 29, 3:00pm-4:15pm, Jeanette M. Pierce and Sr. Martha Ann Kirk, “Stories and Creations for Peace: Sadako and a Thousand Paper Cranes.” Student Engagement Center, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

Monday October 29, 6:30pm-8:30pm, Civility: A Community Conversation, sponsored by Compassion SA, Office of the Mayor, and SoL Center. Oblate Renewal Center, 5700 Blanco Rd. (Do not try to enter from Oblate Dr.)

Monday October 31, Peace Day at the University of the Incarnate Word, Student Engagement Center 2050-52..

9:00am-10:15am, Sr. Martha Ann Kirk, “Making a Killing Off Killing.”

10:30am-11:45am, and 7:00pm, Hope Frye, “Project Lifeline” (supplies for detained immigrant children).

12:00pm-1:15pm, Dr. Beth Senne-Duff and students, “FOOD: Health for You, for Developing Economies, and for the Planet” (lunch provided).

1:30pm-2:45pm, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, and Students Demand Action for Gun Sense in America.

3:00pm-4:15pm, Dr. Lopita Nath, “Peace Day Reflections on the Refugee Crisis”; Dr. Marc Piaolo, “Challenges of Refugee Resettlement in the United States”; Dr. Nürşen A. Zanca, “A Study into Economic Value of Urban Refugees in the U.S.: From Economic Burden to Economic Asset.

Information: <http://www.uiw.edu/eccl/Special-Events/>

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 (Hebrews 4:12-13)

The Letter to the Hebrews is a very early Christian essay, but it already uses some Christian theological discourse. It speaks of Jesus as the Word of God, and it assumes the readers are familiar with the image of a final Judgment Day. The passage read in the liturgy has a consideration of the knowledge that the Word will have of us on Judgment Day: “For the Word of God is alive, active, sharper than any two-edged sword, and penetrating to the divide of soul and spirit, of joint and marrow also, and able to discern deliberations and thoughts of the heart.”

Soul and spirit—the ancients distinguished between unreflective life and minded consciousness. In contrast to the deities of some pagan or folk religions, God could not be fooled. And the Word is present in the world of flesh and blood too, “sharp” enough to penetrate to the divide between joint and marrow. In contrast to the deity of the philosophers of old, the Christian tradition reflected in *Hebrews* did not imagine God to be far removed from this world or uninterested in it. The Christian God is neither a force subject to manipulation nor, having been incarnate, a disembodied center of spiritual attention. This god is essentially ethical.

Third Reading (Mark 10.17-27)

“But after becoming sad at the saying he left annoyed, for he was in possession of much property.”

My father used to tell this story: After working his way through college as a Ferris Wheel operator, he had found work with General Electric in Connecticut. He was living in and commuting from a walk-up apartment on the wrong side of the tracks since his father died, in otherwise prosperous Westchester County, New York, with his brother, sister, and mother. It was the mid-1930s, during the Great Depression, and anyone who had gainful employment at all was lucky.

A childhood friend worked as a chauffeur for one of the rich men of Westchester County. One weekend the friend came to him and said his boss wanted to meet him. “Me? What for?” His friend didn’t know. So he dressed up in his Sunday best and went with his friend to a mansion up on a hill. What was it all about? His friend’s boss wanted to know whether he could get a General Electric radio at a discount. “No, I can’t do that.” “All right. Good to meet you. Have a nice weekend.”

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Poem

Parable

Deeds of hope for justice
are scatterings of seeds.
Not all will survive – those that do multiply.

Of the harvest we know not when.
Its coming we know
surely as life begets life.

Tom Keene
October 29, 2014

Statement for the 2018 World Week for Peace in Israel and Palestine: “Youth and Children: Raising Hope and Making Change”

On the occasion of the 2018 World Week for Peace in Israel and Palestine (16-23 September) and in recognition of the International Day of Peace (21 September) and the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Pax Christi International strongly reaffirms its commitment to advocate for a just and sustainable

peace to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that recognizes and protests the dignity and human rights of every woman, man and child.

We believe that this year's theme, "Youth and Children: Raising Hope and Making Change", could not be more important or timely as the well-being and rights of children and young people continue to be threatened by the violence and chaos caused by 70 years of conflict, 51 years of occupation and the on-going blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Today, statistics indicate that the situation for Palestinian children is especially dire:

- Nearly half of all young Palestinian children suffer from chronic malnutrition¹ making them more vulnerable to infections, disease, long-lasting physiological impairments and diminished success in school.
- Approximately 500-700 Palestinian children are arrested, detained and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system each year.² Under military law, minors as young as 12 can be arrested. The trauma and interruption of their daily lives can cause irreparable damage.
- A recent report indicates that by age 15, nearly 25% of Palestinian boys and 7% of girls have dropped out of school.³ Education can easily become a daunting goal when confronted by obstacles such as checkpoints, roving road closures, settler harassment, night-time military house raids, and home and school demolitions.
- Youth unemployment among Palestinians is approaching 50%⁴ with less than 1% of any Palestinian youth in decision-making positions.⁵ As a young person's access to education, job training employment and decision-making opportunities diminish, so too does hope for their future.

The disintegrating situation of children and young people in the Gaza Strip demands our particular attention at this critical time. The eleven-year Israeli blockade of Gaza, its complete control of all movement of people and goods, and the current political realities have created a humanitarian crisis that worsens by the day. Children and young people are consistently denied many of their rights. They are deprived of access to clean water, reliable electricity and critical medical care. School days are truncated due to diminishing resources and employment prospects are minimal.

During protests, such as the Great March of Return, children and youth have been injured or killed at an alarming rate. Children under the age of ten have already lived through three brutal military incursions, their childhood stolen by the death and

¹ ABC news, 'Surveys: Palestinian Kids Face Malnutrition', 4 August 2018, online available at: <https://abcnews.go.com/WNT/story?id=130192&page=1>

² Defence for Children International Palestine, 'Number of Palestinian Children (12-17) in Israeli Military detention', 1 July 2018, online available at: https://www.dci-palestine.org/children_in_israeli_detention.

³ UNICEF, 'State of Palestine: Out-of-school children', July 2018, online available at <https://www.unicef.org/mena/reports/state-palestine-out-of-school-children>

⁴ Defence for Children International Palestine, 'Number of Palestinian children (12-17) in Israeli Military detention, 1 July 2018, online available at <https://www.unicef.org/mena/reports/state-palestine-out-of-school-children>

⁵ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, press release on the occasion of International Youth Day, 12 August 2018: online available at: <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=3215>

destruction they have witnessed. Their reality is taking a frightening toll with 95% of young people reporting deep psychological distress.⁶

In light of these deeply disturbing truths, Pax Christi International is gravely concerned by the recent decision of the United States to no longer fund the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The agency is the source of essential humanitarian aid and providing food, medical care, education and emergency assistance to over half of the population in the Gaza Strip.

We are equally troubled by the recent announcement by the United States that they will not release their pledged support to six hospitals in East Jerusalem, including the primary medical centre for Palestinians needing cancer and kidney care. This will have a devastating impact on the healthcare of an already vulnerable population.

Yet to view Palestinian children and youth merely as victims would be to do them a grave disservice. Instead we choose to acknowledge and support their strength, resilience and the crucial contributions they make in creating pressure for justice and peace through nonviolent actions.⁷ We reiterate principles enumerated in UN Security Council resolution 2250⁸, that they should be empowered in gaining skills and afforded opportunities to engage in peacebuilding and conflict resolution and that they be part of decision-making at all levels.

In this spirit, Pax Christi International echoes what the Co-ordination of Episcopal Conferences in support of the Church of the Holy Land recognized in their 2018 communique⁹: “The young people of the Holy Land have been consistently failed by both their own leaders and the international community...We share the hope of the young people we met in the Holy Land and recognize their essential role in promoting peace.”

Indeed, there are many extraordinary young people who refuse to accept the status-quo. Instead they creatively and insistently seek ways to peacefully demand that their dignity and human rights be upheld. Through participation in nonviolent actions they challenge the injustices that shape their daily lives. In pursuing their education, regardless of the many hurdles imposed on them, they steadfastly believe in, and prepare for, better days. These are the actions that characterize most Palestinian youth. We believe they must be loudly applauded and continually encouraged.

What the future holds for the children and young people of Palestine and Israel depends, in large part, upon how we, the international community, choose to respond to their current circumstances: how we step forward to secure their inalienable right to

⁶ Save the children, ‘Generation of children in Gaza on the brink of a mental health crisis, new research shows’, 1 June 2018, online available at: <https://www.savethechildren.net/article/generation-children-gaza-brink-mental-health-crisis-new-research-shows>.

⁷ An example is Youth Against Settlements, a nonviolent direct action group, which seeks to end the building and expanding of illegal Israeli settlements through non-violent popular struggle and civil resistance.

⁸ UN, Press release on resolution 2250, SC/12149, 9 December 2015, online available at <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm>

⁹ Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, ‘final press release of the Holy Land Coordination 2018’, 18 January 2018, online available at: <https://www.lpj.org/release-holy-land-coordination/>

grow-up in freedom, safety and dignity; and most especially, how we embolden a spirit of hope that peace is not an elusive childish dream.

Towards this end, Pax Christi International renews its call for an end to the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the blockade of Gaza which we consider to be the nexus of the many injustice and dangers threatening children and young people in Israel and Palestine. We ask that the international community assert its influence in protecting the most precious and vulnerable of resources—the children and youth—by committing to:

- Uphold and act in compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, other human rights instruments and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Increase the resources necessary to safeguard the well-being and potential of all children and youth;
- Ensure that the basic needs of clean water nutritious food, safe housing, reliable electricity and appropriate sanitation are guaranteed;
- Ensure that healthcare including mental health and specialized services are consistently accessible;
- Support policies that promote equality primary and secondary education including activities that encourage a culture of respect nonviolence and peaceful coexistence;
- Protest and defend the unique rights of Palestinian children and youth living under military rule of law with a specialized juvenile justice system;
- Enable young adults to be adequately prepared to enter the labour force by offering a variety of training and apprenticeships, including technical and vocational skills;
- Encourage opportunities for entrepreneurship and the pursuit of advanced degrees;
- Promote the meaningful participation of young people in the decision-making process.

The 2018 World Week for Peace in Israel and Palestine offers the international community another chance to reawaken a spirit of optimism and hope for concrete changes in the lives of its children and youth Together we must ensure that the bright future we all hope for our children is made possible by our resolute commitment and actions on their behalf.

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>

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