

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating October 21, 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 Second and Third Readings commentaries are inspired by the Sunday readings for the 29th Sunday in ordinary time. Tom Keene's poem is *A Tale of Two Stories*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the poem is an essay by Beth Garascia, *The Sexual Abuse and Coverup Crisis—Beyond Blaming It on Gay Priests*, first published in the September 2018 *Justice Jottings*, an online monthly issued by the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative. I wish to thank the Collaborative and Beth Garascia for permission to reproduce the essay here.

As this issue of *Testimony* goes out, followers of Jesus around the world are rejoicing in Oscar Romero being listed among the saints of the Church. Oscar A. Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, El Salvador, was assassinated on March 24, 1980, while celebrating Mass in a small chapel in a cancer hospital where he lived. He had always been close to his people, preached a prophetic gospel, denouncing the injustice in his country and supporting the development of popular and mass organizations. He became the voice of the Salvadoran people when all other channels of expression were repressed. The prayer that follows was composed by future Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw, Michigan, first drafted for a homily by Card. John Dearden in 1979 for a celebration of departed priests. As a reflection on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Bishop Romero, Bishop Untener included it in a reflection titled "The mystery of the Romero Prayer."

A Future Not Our Own
In memory of Oscar Romero (1917–1980)

It helps now and then to step back and take a long view.
The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a fraction
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of
saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession
brings perfection, no pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the Church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives include everything.

This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water the seeds already planted knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing this.
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

Calendar

In Austin

Wednesday October 24, 5:30pm-7:00pm, Dr. Jennifer Graber, "The Catholic Encounter in 'Indian Country.'" Jones Global Events Center, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress Avenue.

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.

Friday November 16, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Discussion, "the Ethics of peace—Remembering WWI." Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress.

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 Ricos 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

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.

Tuesday October 24, 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.

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

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. TriPoint Event Center 3233 N. St. Mary's

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 Piazo, "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/>

Thursday November 1, 6:00pm-7:30pm, Dr. Jennifer Carlson, "The Everyday Politics of Guns in an Age of Decline." Buena Vista Room Theatre, UTSA Downtown, 501 Cesar E. Chavez Blvd.

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 4:14-16)

The reading is an unusually short one: "Having Jesus the son of God, then, a great high priest having gone through the heavens, let us hold fast to the confession; for we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one tested in all things, like us except for sin. Then with confidence let us approach the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help."

The central affirmation of the Christian confession, as identified by the author of *Hebrews*, is that we may be confident that God, in the human Messiah, sympathizes with us. We have no need for anxiety, then, nor any reason to prove ourselves or proclaim ourselves righteous.

Third Reading (Mark 10.35-45)

"Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask." The lectionary gives an option to leave this part of Mark's chapter out and to focus only on, "You know that those supposed to govern the nations lord it over them...." However, Mark places these together in the discourse about serving all. Perhaps there is an underlying unity in what Mark has joined together.

Prayer can be infantile and self-centered: "...do for us whatever we ask." Jesus recognizes an order of creation that cannot be readjusted without opposing the divine will that was expressed in creation in the first place: "...to sit at my right or the other honored side is not for me to grant, but for those for whom it was prepared." Prayers will not have objective results simply because they have been said. Rather, the wisdom of the ages suggests that prayer should change the one who prays, not what is prayed for. And the biographical experience of prayer is often marked by less speaking over time and by more listening. Prayer would not be an exertion of the self that would force the hand of an unwilling or inattentive deity.

The passage is also about governance. The narrative of James and John, sons of Zebedee, wanting to sit on the right and the left in glory is a comment on the ambitions of Titus and Domitian in Rome, the ambitious sons of the elderly Emperor Vespasian. The two imperial sons really wanted the emperor to get quickly out of their way! "You know that those supposed to govern the nations lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it is not such among you; rather whoever would wish to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever would wish to be first among you must be a slave of all...." Christian governance would change the one governing, not bend those governed over to the wants of the governor. Governing, then, becomes serving, meeting the needs of all, providing for the common good.

It may well be that bad prayers, self-centered prayers, have an affinity with bad, self-centered governance and further such governance, while true prayer has an affinity with serving the common good and furthering that common good.

Poem

At breakfast this A.M., a woman's T-shirt with a Superman-logo on it occasioned a discussion between Larry and me of our childhood memories of superheroes. That led me to recall this recent rendering about the Lone Ranger and Tonto.

Blessings,

Tom

A Tale of Two Stories

As the boy listened over the magic of radio waves, the story, episode by episode, fit itself together and settled itself in memory.

The sole survivor of a Texas Ranger squad, ambushed by bandits, found and nursed back to life by an original American, he became "the masked rider of the plains," defending the good, bringing to justice the bad.

His six-gun fired silver bullets fashioned by a hermit monk. He disarmed the black-hatted bad guys by shooting the guns from their grips. "Oh, my hand!" they'd always cry.

Each adventure ending with a hearty "Hi yo, Silver," riding further west into the setting sun.

The old veteran, scarred and mended from life's long lessons, pondered:

Tonto. What was his story? The famed Texas Rangers, created to drive his people from their thousand-year land. And his people's story? Their buffalo slaughtered, villages burned, men and horses killed, survivors driven to reservation styled concentration camps.

He hefted the two stories, testing their weight:
The child's beguiling lie.
The seasoned man's
hurting-healing truths.

Tom Keene
September 9, 2018

The Sexual Abuse and Coverup Crisis—Beyond Blaming it on Gay Priests

By Beth Garascia

September 2018

Archbishop Carlo Vigano, former apostolic nuncio to the US, has blamed the sexual abuse of minors described most recently by the Pennsylvania grand jury report released on August 14 on gay priests. Several US bishops such as Madison's Robert Morlino have agreed. Such claims should be emphatically rejected.

As the National Catholic Reporter stated in its September 7-20 issue, "The fact – and studies have established the fact – is that the assault of children within the church structure is no more the product of gay culture than the assault of children within families, where most of it occurs, is a product of heterosexual culture." One of these studies is the 2011 John Jay College of Criminal Justice study, commissioned by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Members of the clergy who blame the recently documented sexual abuse on gay priests appear to be trying to deflect any responsibility the hierarchy has for the scandal. Some Church leaders kept the names of accused abusers secret in order to avoid scandal. They placed the reputation of the Church institution above the welfare of its children and hid behind the power, privilege, and entitlement of clericalism.

I am heartbroken by the grievous harm done to victims, many of whom were children. Lamentation and sorrow for what happened and a search for the entire truth are called for. The first question many lay Catholics ask is "Should I stay or should I go?" Although I'm quite angry with the men who are responsible for the abuse, those who shielded them, and the structure which allowed this to happen, I also know many holy priests and have been consistently inspired over the years by Catholics with whom I've been in community.

In addition, I have read and been influenced by the stories of many saints as have most Christians I know. I've personally answered this question about whether or not to remain in the Church many times in the decades of my adult Catholic life. We are, after all, a Church of saints as well as sinners, and, as such, we all need forgiveness.

I return to several essential truths – I am the Church; I am a Catholic lay Marianist in the depth of my being, so leaving would essentially mean not worshipping with my community on Sundays. I would still have the same fundamental values of loving God and neighbor, working for social justice, and connecting with people of faith, many of whom are lay Marianists, but would give up the Eucharist, which is so important to my spiritual life. It's clear to me that I stay.

I agree with Church officials such as Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago who have called for a change in Church structure as well as new procedures for reporting abuse. In his letter to members of the Archdiocese of Chicago, he mentioned the closed system of the Church and the clericalist mindset as factors which lead to abuse. Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, President of the USCCB, has also called for greater transparency. Cardinal Cupich's call for change and Cardinal DiNardo's call for transparency should be heeded. Since power is never willingly relinquished by those who have it, lay people must take leadership in demanding these changes.

In my opinion, there are three areas of Church life which need to be reconsidered:

First, there should be an examination of the belief taught by the Magisterium that priests “possess the authority to act in the power and place of Christ Himself.” (CCC 1548). This belief bestows symbolic power on priests which leads to an undermining of their accountability. The belief of the Church that priests are on an ontologically higher plane of being and “possess the authority to act in the place of Christ Himself.” is foundational to its hierarchical system and is the underpinning of clericalism.

In his August 20 letter to the faithful, Pope Francis states that clericalism “not only nullifies the character of Christians, but also tends to diminish and undervalue the baptismal grace that the Holy Spirit has placed in the heart of our people.” Putting priests on a pedestal allows them to believe they are above the law and prevents lay people from taking full responsibility for moral decision making. It prevents many Catholics from living in a community of equals, something that we in the Marianist Family find essential and can offer as a charism to the rest of the Church.

Second, research also needs to be done on the Church’s doctrines on gender, sexuality, and the body, which are outdated and cause harm to not only to LGBTQ persons but to the entire Church community. Ilia Delio summarizes these teachings beautifully. She states that the Church teaches that “women are intellectually inferior to men and the source of sin; that sex and sexuality are inferior qualities of human personhood and need to be closely monitored, as these can easily lead to sin; that the corruptible body needs to be disciplined and subjugated to the spirit.” The Magisterium’s teaching in this area is out of date, out of sync with nature and oriented toward the past, not the future. Deep listening to psychologists and sociologists will be fruitful for those who are responsible for these doctrines.

Third, mandatory celibacy needs to be reexamined. The Church first proclaimed this doctrine at the Second Lateran Council held in 1139, so married priests were part of our tradition at the beginning of the history of our community of faith. What’s more, exceptions allowing them are still made. If, as we are also taught, celibacy is a charism, it shouldn’t necessarily be connected to the priesthood, which is also a gift. Finally, if we turn to the witness of other Christian denominations, we see holy married ministers, women, and LGBT persons doing an outstanding job of leading their congregations.

The sexual abuse of children by clerics whom they were taught to trust must never happen again. If this is to become a reality, the Church as we know it must undergo radical change and we in the Marianist Family can offer our experiences in MLC’s and the Marianist emphasis on the discipleship of equals as small seeds which may grow into some important changes.

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