

Testimony



A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating October 17, 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 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *God's Glory*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is a joint statement by Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew, and Archbishop of Canterbury Grace Justin Welby, from September 1, *For the Protection of Creation*.

Calendar

Times are given for the Central Time Zone.

Monday October 11, 11:30am-12:45pm (12:30pm-1:45pm ET) online "Roadmap for Green Energy Future," Bill Hederman (former U.S. official, advisor to the Ukrainian government for converting from natural gas dependence). Register at: https://notredame.zoom.us/webinar/register/7716327489108/WN_ZSdAWAO1R2-LqhF7-LmaeQ?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Bill+Hederman+First+Event&utm_term=https%3a%2f%2fnotredame.zoom.us%2fwebinar%2fregister%2f7716327489108%2fWN_ZSdAWAO1R2-LqhF7-LmaeQ&utm_id=575518&sfmc_id=16334564

Tuesday October 12, 5:00pm, online "Latinos and the Re-creation of American Catholicism in the Twenty-first Century." Hosffman Ospino (Boston College). McCarthy Lecture, St. Edward's University. Register at: https://stedwards.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_FqJn4VRQSPuYf6njk0_p7w

Thursday October 14, 4:30pm-6:00pm (5:30pm-7:00pm ET) online "The Legacy of Oscar Romero: Conversion, Prophecy, and Martyrdom," O. Ernesto Valiente (Boston College). Register at:
https://htmlbprod.bc.edu/prd/f?p=458:2:::NO::P2_GPM_PROGRAM_LIST_ID:2442

Thursday October 14, 7:00pm-8:30pm, in person or online "The Difference Love Makes: Theological Reconsideration on the Reason for the Incarnation," Daniel P. Horan. Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate, San Antonio; in-person registration at: <https://ost.edu/event/2021-vance-lecture/>
Zoom registration: https://ost-edu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_LbahVzJ7SLuWqXzjzE1xPA

Monday October 18, 5:30pm-6:30pm, "Finding Agreement about Climate Change in a Divided World," see **In Dallas**, below.

Tuesday October 19, 6:00pm, online "What Is the Problem with Plastic? What Can We Do About It?" Alan Montemayor. Regular meeting of the Sierra Club Alamo Group. RSVP:
https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?id=7013q000002FItCAAS&formcampaignid=7013q000002FbKkAAK&data=e6d5213d8552141c5906a0d246ce7019376167d30f31dbd03d22a899fce829cb388bd14dc9f9e99bc1578c4122c73052&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sierraclub&utm_campaign=outings

Tuesday October 19, 6:30pm, online Courageous Conversations (Holy Cross Church, Austin, Social Justice Ministry). Link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81763786694?pwd=MWRtRldjeDZUZIRhT3FEcitiaHN3dz09>

Friday October 29, 8:00am-9:00am, "Islam in America: Debunking Myths and Valuing Diversity," see **In Houston**, below.

Tuesday October 26, 6:00pm-7:30pm, online "Unequal Impact: Climate and Environmental Racism in a Warming World," Gerald Durley (Interfaith Power and Light) and Jehann El-Bisi (documentary film maker). Register at:

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/unequal-impact-climate-and-environmental-racism-in-a-warming-world-tickets-168881648557?keep_tld=1

Tuesday October 26, 7:00pm-8:30pm, in-person or Zoom, "Public Virtues: Rediscovering Civic Engagement," Brandon Metroka and Judith Norman. \$7.00 before Oct. 19, \$10.00 after Oct. 19. University Presbyterian Church, Information: <https://sourceoflightsa.org/classes-and-events>

Saturday November 13, 11:00am-1:00pm (12:00pm-2:00pm ET), online "Catholic Moral Teaching: Centrality of Conscience," Dr. Linda Hogan (Trinity College, Dublin). Second in a series on moral theology as it pertains to sexual minorities. Register at: <https://fs18.formsite.com/jennhardin/1w3acsjqd3/index.html>

Friday December 10, 6:00pm-8:00pm (7:00pm-9:00pm ET) online "Catholic Moral Teaching: What It Is and Is Not," Dr. Jamie Manson (*National Catholic Reporter*). Third in a series on moral theology as it pertains to sexual minorities. Register at: <https://fs18.formsite.com/jennhardin/1w3acsjqd3/index.html>

In Dallas

Monday October 18, 5:30pm-6:30pm, "Finding Agreement about Climate Change in a Divided World," Katherine Hayhoe (author). McCord Auditorium, Southern Methodist University, 3225 University Blvd., Dallas; or online. Information: Karisa Cloward kcloward@smu.edu. Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/katharine-hayhoe-climate-scientist-registration-172048480637>

In Houston

Friday October 29, 8:00am-9:00am, "Islam in America: Debunking Myths and Valuing Diversity," Craig Considine (Rice University). Information: Hayley Helmstreet jhj2@rice.edu. Register at: https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20211029/event_id/219472

In San Antonio

Thursday November 18, 7:00pm-8:30pm, "U.S. Immigration and Biblical Interpretation: The Politics of Belonging," Francisco Lozada (Bright Divinity School, Fort Worth). Assumption Chapel, St. Mary's University, One Camino Santa Maria.

First Reading (Isaiah 53:10-11)

The passage is from one of the "Suffering Servant" hymns from a later section of *Isaiah*, written after the Babylonian Exile by a writer other than the first Isaiah of Jerusalem. The suffering servant was Israel, wounded but ready for a new presence of God. The travail of the nation is likened to a sacrificial offering, where something is offered up and the divine chooses to be present. The suffering servant himself is offered up in this instance. Early on Christians identified the scourged and crucified Jesus with the suffering servant.

One of the messages of the Suffering Servant hymns is that God's ways stand in contrast to the ways of conquering empires. God works through the interiority of persons and nations, not through coercion.

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

God's Glory

We pray: Glory be to God.
What is God's glory, I asked.
God said:

*My glory is your healing,
your justice, your peace,
that we partake
in doing together.*

Tom Keene and Muse
April 18, 2021

For the Protection of Creation

Holy Father Francis; His Holiness Bartholomew I, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople; and His Grace Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury
September 1, 2021

For more than a year, we have all experienced the devastating effects of a global pandemic—all of us, whether poor or wealthy, weak or strong. Some were more protected or vulnerable than others, but the rapidly-spreading infection meant that we have depended on each other in our efforts to stay safe. We realised that, in facing this worldwide calamity, no one is safe until everyone is safe, that our actions really do affect one another, and that what we do today affects what happens tomorrow.

These are not new lessons, but we have had to face them anew. May we not waste this moment. We must decide what kind of world we want to leave to future generations. God mandates: 'Choose life, so that you and your children might live' (Dt 30:19). We must choose to live differently; we must choose life.

September is celebrated by many Christians as the Season of Creation, an opportunity to pray and care for God's creation. As world leaders prepare to meet in November at Glasgow to deliberate on the future of our planet, we pray for them and consider what the choices we must all make. Accordingly, as leaders of our Churches, we call on everyone, whatever their belief or worldview, to endeavour to listen to the cry of the earth and of people who are poor, examining

their behaviour and pledging meaningful sacrifices for the sake of the earth which God has given us.

The Importance of Sustainability

In our common Christian tradition, the Scriptures and the Saints provide illuminating perspectives for comprehending both the realities of the present and the promise of something larger than what we see in the moment. The concept of stewardship—of individual and collective responsibility for our God-given endowment—presents a vital starting-point for social, economic and environmental sustainability. In the New Testament, we read of the rich and foolish man who stores great wealth of grain while forgetting about his finite end (Lk 12.13–21). We learn of the prodigal son who takes his inheritance early, only to squander it and end up hungry (Lk 15.11–32). We are cautioned against adopting short term and seemingly inexpensive options of building on sand, instead of building on rock for our common home to withstand storms (Mt 7.24–27). These stories invite us to adopt a broader outlook and recognise our place in the extended story of humanity.

But we have taken the opposite direction. We have maximised our own interest at the expense of future generations. By concentrating on our wealth, we find that long-term assets, including the bounty of nature, are depleted for short-term advantage. Technology has unfolded new possibilities for progress but also for accumulating unrestrained wealth, and many of us behave in ways which demonstrate little concern for other people or the limits of the planet. Nature is resilient, yet delicate. We are already witnessing the consequences of our refusal to protect and preserve it (Gn 2.15). Now, in this moment, we have an opportunity to repent, to turn around in resolve, to head in the opposite direction. We must pursue generosity and fairness in the ways that we live, work and use money, instead of selfish gain.

The Impact on People Living with Poverty

The current climate crisis speaks volumes about who we are and how we view and treat God's creation. We stand before a harsh justice: biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and climate change are the inevitable consequences of our actions, since we have greedily consumed more of the earth's resources than the planet can endure. But we also face a profound injustice: the people bearing the most catastrophic consequences of these abuses are the poorest on the planet and have been the least responsible for causing them. We serve a God

of justice, who delights in creation and creates every person in God's image, but also hears the cry of people who are poor. Accordingly, there is an innate call within us to respond with anguish when we see such devastating injustice.

Today, we are paying the price. The extreme weather and natural disasters of recent months reveal afresh to us with great force and at great human cost that climate change is not only a future challenge, but an immediate and urgent matter of survival. Widespread floods, fires and droughts threaten entire continents. Sea levels rise, forcing whole communities to relocate; cyclones devastate entire regions, ruining lives and livelihoods. Water has become scarce and food supplies insecure, causing conflict and displacement for millions of people. We have already seen this in places where people rely on small scale agricultural holdings. Today we see it in more industrialised countries where even sophisticated infrastructure cannot completely prevent extraordinary destruction.

Tomorrow could be worse. Today's children and teenagers will face catastrophic consequences unless we take responsibility now, as 'fellow workers with God' (Gn 2.4-7), to sustain our world. We frequently hear from young people who understand that their futures are under threat. For their sake, we must choose to eat, travel, spend, invest and live differently, thinking not only of immediate interest and gains but also of future benefits. We repent of our generation's sins. We stand alongside our younger sisters and brothers throughout the world in committed prayer and dedicated action for a future which corresponds ever more to the promises of God.

The Imperative of Cooperation

Over the course of the pandemic, we have learned how vulnerable we are. Our social systems frayed, and we found that we cannot control everything. We must acknowledge that the ways we use money and organize our societies have not benefited everyone. We find ourselves weak and anxious, submersed in a series of crises; health, environmental, food, economic and social, which are all deeply interconnected.

These crises present us with a choice. We are in a unique position either to address them with shortsightedness and profiteering or seize this as an opportunity for conversion and transformation. If we think of humanity as a family and work together towards a future based on the common good, we could find ourselves living in a very different world. Together we can share a vision for life where everyone flourishes. Together we can choose to act with love, justice

and mercy. Together we can walk towards a fairer and fulfilling society with those who are most vulnerable at the centre.

But this involves making changes. Each of us, individually, must take responsibility for the ways we use our resources. This path requires an ever-closer collaboration among all churches in their commitment to care for creation. Together, as communities, churches, cities and nations, we must change route and discover new ways of working together to break down the traditional barriers between peoples, to stop competing for resources and start collaborating.

To those with more far-reaching responsibilities—heading administrations, running companies, employing people or investing funds—we say: choose people-centred profits; make short-term sacrifices to safeguard all our futures; become leaders in the transition to just and sustainable economies. ‘To whom much is given, much is required.’ (Lk 12:48)

This is the first time that the three of us feel compelled to address together the urgency of environmental sustainability, its impact on persistent poverty, and the importance of global cooperation. Together, on behalf of our communities, we appeal to the heart and mind of every Christian, every believer and every person of good will. We pray for our leaders who will gather in Glasgow to decide the future of our planet and its people. Again, we recall Scripture: ‘choose life, so that you and your children may live’ (Dt 30:19). Choosing life means making sacrifices and exercising self-restraint.

All of us—whoever and wherever we are—can play a part in changing our collective response to the unprecedented threat of climate change and environmental degradation.

Caring for God’s creation is a spiritual commission requiring a response of commitment. This is a critical moment. Our children’s future and the future of our common home depend on it.

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>

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>

Beloved Community Project

<http://belovedcommunityproject.org/>