

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating January 21, 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. Send comments on the newsletter to J6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com.

Editorial

After the calendar, the *Third Reading* commentary is based on the gospel reading for the Third Sunday in ordinary time. Tom Keene's poem is *Thy Kingdom Come*. See <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php> for more of Tom's poems. The address follows, of Bishop Kevin Dowling, C.S.S.R., of Rustenburg, South Africa, Co-President of Pax Christi International, on the occasion of the award of the 2017 Pax Christi International Peace Prize to the Movimiento Indígena del Pueblo Creyente Zoque en Defensa de la Vida y la Tierra of Chiapas, Mexico.

Calendar

Sunday January 14, 2:00pm, Wreath-Laying Ceremony in honor of the life and struggles of Martin Luther King, Jr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Plaza, intersection of E. Houston and N. New Braunfels.

Sunday January 14, 4:00pm, Citywide Interfaith Worship Service. San Fernando Cathedral, 115 Main Plaza.

Monday January 15, 8:00am, Early Morning Worship Program. MLK Academy, 3101 Martin Luther King Drive.

Monday January 15, 10:00am, 50th Anniversary MLK March, begins at 3101 MLK Drive and ends at Pittman-Sullivan Park, 1101 Iowa (3 mile route). Information at sanantonio.gov/mlk.

Monday January 15, 11:30am-3:30pm, MLK Commemoration Program. Pittman-Sullivan Park, 1101 Iowa.

Tuesday January 16, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Mayor Ron Nirenberg and State Senator José Menéndez, Cultural Conversations: From Community Trauma and Division to Hope and Action. Whitley Theological Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate Dr.

Wednesday January 17, 5:30pm, Community Forum: Did Integration Ruin America? Hosted by the Alpha Phi Fraternity and the University of the Incarnate Word Ettling Center for Civic Leadership. 5:30 networking over food; 6:00 presentation and introduction; 6:25, 6:45, 7:05 Breakout sessions: Neighborhoods (Rev. Dr. Trevor Alexander), Judicial System (Dr. Doshie Piper), Workplace (Ogutodu Akinwale). Ettling Center, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

Thursday January 18, 6:00pm-8:00pm, film about the death penalty: "The Last 40 Miles," followed by dialogue with film maker Alex Hannaford and with Kristin Houlé, Executive Director, Texas Coalition Against the Death Penalty. Chapel Auditorium, Our Lady of the Lake University, 411 SW 24th St. More information from cwcs@ollusa.edu.

Thursday January 18, 7:30pm-9:30pm, Dr. Luke Peterson, "Knowledge and Power in Middle Eastern Studies," extent to which knowledge is deliberately fashioned for pre-determined purposes. Northrup Hall 040, Trinity University, One Trinity Place. Park at Alamo Stadium, off Stadium Drive.

Saturday January 20, 1:00pm-5:00pm, community dialogue justice fair, and potluck (finger food). The Tool Yard, 10303 Tool Yard Dr. RSVP at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/anniversary-gathering-from-the-womens-march-to-families-helping-families-tickets-41895556738>.

Saturday January 20, 5:30pm-10:30pm, Night of Hope Fundraiser for the Children of Gaza. St. George Maronite Catholic Church, 6070 Babcock Road. \$50.00; beneficiary is Middle East Children's Alliance (<https://mecaforpeace.org/>). Purchase tickets from <http://nightofhope2018.doatend.com/>.

Thursday January 25, 2:00pm-3:30pm, **in Austin**, Kimberly D. Russaw, Ph.D., "What Shall We Tell our Sons and Daughters," addressing violence against women as narrated in the Bible. Agard-Lovinggood Auditorium, 900 Chicon St., Huston-Tillotson University. Parking available on Chalmers Avenue. Information: Rev. Donald E. Brewington, debrewington@htu.edu.

Sunday January 28, 3:00pm-5:00pm, Annual Blessing of the Peacemakers and Announcing 2018 San Antonio Peace Laureates. Whitley Theological Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate.

Tuesday January 30, 4:00pm. Laurie Brink, O.P., Ph.D., "Love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44): Interpreting gospel ethics in an age of polarization." Reinbolt Hall, Assumption Chapel, St. Mary's University, One Camino Santa Maria. Park in Lot D near the NW 36th St. entrance, or in Lot H near the Culebra Rd. entrance.

Tuesday February 6, 12:00pm-1:00pm, **in Austin**, discussion: "How to Build an Autocracy," concerning the current American presidency. Fleck Hall, Room 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress, Austin. Recommended reading:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/03/how-to-build-an-autocracy/513872/>. RSVP for a lunch:
https://cal.stedwards.edu/department/center_for_leadership_and_ethics.

Wednesday February 7, 7:30pm-9:30pm, Shaka Senghor, on criminal justice reform. Jackson Auditorium, Weston Center, Texas Lutheran University, 1000 W. Court St., Seguin.

Tuesday February 13, 4:30pm-6:00pm, **in Austin**, Bob Hilliard and Steve Showen, on the case they argued before the U.S. Supreme Court that set the precedent that Mexican nationals killed by U.S. agents in Mexico can obtain judicial review in U.S. courts. Jones Global Events Center, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress, Austin.

Tuesday February 17, 7:30pm, Diane Guerrero, on her memoir, *In the Country We Love: My Family Divided*. Award-winning actress recounts her experiences after her parents were deported. Jackson Auditorium, Weston Center, Texas Lutheran University, 1000 W. Court St., Seguin.

Wednesday March 21, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Salman Hameed, Ph.D., "The Crescent in the Scientific Age: Muslim Perceptions of Science and Religion." University Center, Conference Room A, St. Mary's University, One Camino Santa Maria.

Saturday March 24, 8:45am, Pax Christi Texas State Conference: Paul K. Chappell of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, "Warrior Strategies for Waging Peace in a Time of Nuclear Weapons." Dominican Center for Spirituality, 6501 Almeda, Houston, Texas 77021. Doors open 8:00am. Program: 8:45am-3:45pm, closing liturgy 4:00pm. Suggested donation \$40 individual, \$50 couple/family. Mail registration check to Pax Christi Texas, 3901 Mattie St., Austin, TX 78723, by March 1. Some single rooms with shared bath available at the Center, \$40 per night; breakfast included. Contact Sr. Adrian Dover 713-440-3708.

Tuesday April 10, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Lauren Turek, "Religion, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement." SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook).

Saturday April 14, 9:00am-12:00pm, Rev. Dr. Mitzi J. Smith, "Womanism, Biblical Interpretation, and Social (In)Justice." Whitley Center, Oblate School of theology, 285 Oblate Drive, \$40. For information: Thelma at 210-341-1366, ext. 230.

Third Reading (Mark 1:14-20)

"The kingdom of God has drawn near; convert and trust in the good news." Here we go again! John the Baptizer had preached out in the wilderness, and the Herodian tetrarch, Antipas, put an end to that by having the Baptizer arrested. Now Jesus comes onto the scene stirring things up again. Mark calls Antipas a "king" in order to highlight what the problem was with Jesus' teaching: "The kingdom of God has drawn near."

Moreover, the new prophet began to recruit operatives—Simon and Andrew, and Zebedee's sons James and John.

Today we think of monarchs as historical heads of nation states. They stood at the head of governments, and those governments were responsible for the common interests of the people and had fiscal regimes that were separate from the personal wealth of the monarchs. This was not the case before the early modern period; ancient and medieval kings were simply strongmen who captured a population, or they were half-willing underlings of stronger men who were also called "kings" in antiquity but labeled "emperors" by modern historians. The people were not citizens in the sense of modern citizenship but subjected people; they paid tribute rather than today's kind of tax.

Domination by self-serving strongmen who usurp power and garner wealth for their own purposes rather than for the common good is inherently unjust. That they crack down on those who agitate for other interests is a natural and essential aspect of their rule. Agitation for other interests, even spiritual interests, is a natural response that is inherent in the condition of subjugation. The Jesus movement was such a response. Is today's Christianity? Do churches agitate against self-serving seizures of power and national wealth?

Poem

Thy Kingdom Come

We are the world that has.

This is how we dream:

Along everlasting assembly lines
we put ourselves together
suited to designs of fashion
to fit intentions of entrepreneurs
who follow leads of markets
that care not to know what we do
so long as doing gets done.
We dream of machines that mold us to fit
to become interchangeable parts
till obsolescence or wear
send us to recycling bins.

We are the rest of the world.

This is how we dream:

Fitfully, amid babies' cries.
We harvest colonial garbage cans,
ponder melting into mountains with machetes and guns.
Poets, we celebrate our desperate hopes.

Painters, we color our future and wake to a cold gray now.

We are the tribe of dreamers.

This is how we live:

Becoming a people to make a people of all who dream.

We wear on our faces the blueprints, store lumber,
brick and mortar in the basements of our minds.

Seeds, dormant in winter's dirt, we wait for spring.

Yeast set aside, we wait for the wheat and the fire.

Tom Keene

October 21, 1986

2017 Pax Christi International Peace Award

Last October 29, Pax Christi International awarded ZODEVITE, the Movimiento Indígena del Pueblo Creyente Zoque en Defensa de la Vida y la Tierra (The Indigenous Movement of the Zoque Believing People in Defense of Life and the Earth), based in Chiapas, Mexico, the 2017 Pax Christi International Peace Award. The award was presented at a ceremony at the Istituto Maria SS. Bambina (Via Paolo VI, 21) in Rome. ZODEVITE is part of a wider movement, MOVEDITE, composed of indigenous groups, that in recent years has waged a nonviolent campaign to stop fracking, oil exploitation, and mining business in southern Mexico. Below is the text of the award presentation speech by Bishop Kevin Dowling, Co-President, Pax Christi International.

As we gather today to recognize and honour the recipients of the 2017 Pax Christi International Peace Prize, I wish to begin by calling to mind Don Samuel Ruiz, former bishop of the Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas, Mexico. Bishop Ruiz lent his voice and support to hundreds of thousands of indigenous Maya people who were among Mexico's poorest and marginalized communities. In an article written for *The Independent*, the reporter shares how Bishop Ruiz told him that when he became a bishop, the mandate given him was to wean the indigenous Mayans away from their ancient ways and towards Catholicism—as well as braking the rise of Protestantism. But instead, he said, “It was they who ended up changing me.”

I am reminded of this as I learned more about the recipients of this year's peace prize, indigenous movement ZODEVITE—the Indigenous Movement of the Zoque Believing People in Defence of Life and the Earth—from Chiapas, Mexico. The movement is formed by members of the Zoque community who have been no-violently resisting extractives activities and large-scale development projects in their territories in very inspiring nonviolent ways, waging a nonviolent campaign to stop and resist fracking, oil exploitation and mining business in southern Mexico.

They have been creative in applying a variety of tools such as demonstrations, awareness raising campaigns with communities, meetings with policy makers and press

work, demanding their rights to be respected by government and companies, while doing it in such a difficult context for human rights defenders. Several of the members of ZODEVITE have arrest warrants against them or have even been put in jail. Nevertheless, thanks to their courageous work, in several cases, they have been able to resist extractives activities from taking place in their territories. Their work is inspiring not only for other indigenous communities but for all of us, as it shows how active nonviolence can bring about change, respect for the planetary boundaries and people in economic development, even under very challenging situations.

Members of ZODEVITE, which stands for the Movimiento Indígena del Pueblo Creyente Zoque en Defensa de la Vida y la Tierra, or the Indigenous Movement of the Zoque Believing People in Defence of Life and the Earth, follow the principles for caring for Mother Earth identified in Pope Francis's encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*, and they are inspired by the aforementioned Bishop Don Samuel Ruiz.

Pope Francis highlights the intimate connection between care for the environment and issues of justice, care for the poor, the orphan and the stranger in paragraph 71 of *Laudato Si'*: "The gift of the earth and its fruits belong to everyone. Those who tilled and kept the land were obliged to share its fruits, especially with the poor, the widows, orphans and the foreigners in their midst" (and he quotes Leviticus 19): "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field to its very border, neither shall you gather the gleanings after the harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard, you shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner" (Leviticus 19.9-19); Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, n. 71). In this, we hear the echoes of the great mystic Hildegard of Bingen: "Everything in the heavens, and on the earth and under the earth is penetrated with relatedness, with connectedness." Indeed. We must reverence everyone and everything in God's creation because it breathes the mystery of relationship which is God.

The peace activists and the indigenous movement of Zodevite can be an inspiration to many around the world because in so many places the poor and the weak, and the vulnerable earth is oppressed by the policies and practices of the powerful ones who own and operate the extractives industries and what goes with them. In South Africa, I began my ministry as bishop in January 1991 in a diocese where the biggest platinum mines in the world are in operation—platinum is used in the vehicle industry. Besides huge damage to mother earth, with massive mountains of rubble from the mines—will the land ever be restored by the mining companies after they finish mining?—besides this one very painful consequence.... The mines have resulted in a huge migration of desperately poor people, especially single women and mothers, from rural parts of South Africa, and other countries of Africa—hoping to find a job around these mines. They end up in terrible shack settlements of zinc and wood next to the mines—in terrible poverty. The miners themselves are recruited from other parts of South Africa and from our neighbouring countries like Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland. The miners leave their wives and families behind in their countries and villages to work for many months at the mines. So, single women and mothers...and single men be miners. The result: one of the highest infection rates of HIV/Aids in South Africa in my diocese. Before the arrival of the life-saving drugs, which have helped save a few lives, I sat in the shacks with terribly poor women, so sick, dying, and [one of them] said to me: "Father, I have no hope, there is no hope for me..." and she looked

across at her dying baby. I could only hold these precious dying women, and assure them that my team of care workers and nurses would care for them and their baby with great love...and that they would never be alone. God and the care workers would care for them...and we did...and they could die in peace and dignity. So, just one terrible result of the extractive industry in the diocese where I work, leaving thousands of orphans, widows, and dying men and women. This is a matter of justice without which there cannot be peace in those very violent communities, and I work with the mining companies to promote their responsibility for those affected by their mining operations. ZODEVITE is an inspiration to me to continue my journey with these little ones of God's earth.

In this regard, for the past six years, Pax Christi International has been shepherding a project in Latin America and the Caribbean focused on offering training to indigenous communities whose rights are threatened by extractive industries initiated by transnational corporations. At the heart of this training is the promotion of active nonviolence and proactive citizenship in response to the conflicts associated with exploitation of land, culture and natural resources. It is within the context of this effort that we came across the work that ZODEVITE was accomplishing in Chiapas, Mexico.

Two of Pax Christi International's member organizations, FRAYBA, the Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, and SIPAZ, Servicio Internacional para la Paz, have accompanied ZODEVITE in organized nonviolent resistance actions to halt hydrocarbons and resist mining projects in the Tecpatán municipality.

This is the 29th anniversary of the Pax Christi International Peace Prize, first given out in 1988 to Margarida Maria Alves, President of the Farmworkers Union in Brazil, who in 1983 gave her life in the struggle for the rights of poor rural workers. This is the first time that the Pax Christi Peace Prize has been awarded to people or groups in Mexico, and this is a cause for pride and joy as we congratulate ZODEVITE and all its members.

Over the years, we have honoured many groups and individuals for their significant contributions to peace. In choosing ZODEVITE as the recipients on this important anniversary, we recognize and affirm the extraordinary manner in which ZODEVITE lives out both their commitment to nonviolent resistance and their efforts to care for creation. These two themes, nonviolence and care for creation, are of the utmost importance to our members throughout our international network. The linking of these two priorities in the work of ZODEVITE inspired us to choose them as the 2017 Pax Christi International Peace Prize Laureates.

In the press release that accompanied the announcement of ZODEVITE's recognition, I think our Secretary General, Greet Vanaerschot, stated it best: "It is deeply important that we expand our understanding about the many applications and expressions of nonviolence. The efforts of ZODEVITE to resist the exploitation of the land and to promote the dignity of the people of Chiapas serve as an excellent model of active nonviolence."

We at Pax Christi International truly hope that this prize will give ZODEVITE renewed courage and support in their important work. We also want through our advocacy and support to bring the attention of the international community to this issue, so that the governments of the world can bring pressure to bear on the government in Mexico to actively respond to the issues which ZODEVITE has raised, and listen to the

analysis and challenges which ZODEVITE brings into the dialogue for the future. In this regard, the members of ZODEVITE were pleased and encouraged by their meeting in Brussels with officials from the European Union.

It is hoped that governments and the media will keep the focus on the issues and questions which ZODEVITE has brought centre stage, and for which they are receiving the Peace prize this evening. What is so unique about ZODEVITE is that the cultural traditions of the activists in ZODEVITE inspire what they actually do in practice, and it is hoped that more and more companies will listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor so that climate change and everything else which threatens Mother earth and people will be dealt with in a sustained way to give hope to future generations and our planet.

We are grateful tonight also to the Cardinal Bernardus Alfrink Peace Fund which funds the Pax Christi International Peace Prize. With their support, we recognize and honour contemporary individuals and organisations who make a stand for peace, justice and nonviolence in different parts of the world.

Let me close with a short quote from another prophet of the Latin American Catholic Church, Dom Helder Camara of the Diocese of Recife, Brazil. It's simple, but to the point. "Without justice and love, peace will always be an illusion." And that is why, it has happened that peace agreements, and political compromises to achieve an end to violence do not always bring justice to the victims and the poor.

It is because of the justice and love at the heart of ZODEVITE's witness that we hold out hope for the promise of peace. The support and solidarity of Pax Christi, our international movement for peace, will be with you as you continue your vital work for a just and sustainable peace.

Please join me in honouring ZODEVITE as the recipients of the 2017 Pax Christi International Peace Prize.

Rome, 29 October 2017

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 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