

# Testimony

## A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating October 30, 2018

Pax Christi San Antonio does not solicit donations. Thoughtful comments, however, may be sent to the editor at [j6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com](mailto: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 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday in ordinary time. Tom Keene's poem is *Beware the Poets*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. A number of national Catholic organizations, including Pax Christi USA, have developed a voters' guide for the coming elections. We offer it after the poem for your consideration.

### 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**, 5:00pm-6:00pm, Dr. Kristin Heyer (Theology, Boston College), "Subversive Hospitality: A Catholic Ethic of Immigration." Jones Global Event Center, Ragsdale Center Bldg., St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. Free parking permit: [http://bit.ly/McCarthy\\_Heyer](http://bit.ly/McCarthy_Heyer). Information: 512-448-8665.

**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 21<sup>st</sup> Century." Episcopal seminary of the Southwest, 501 E. 32<sup>nd</sup> 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](mailto: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 Houston**

**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**

**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

**Wednesday 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 Piazzolo, "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," followed by panel discussion. Buena Vista Room Theatre, UTSA Downtown, 501 Cesar E. Chavez Blvd. Information and RSVP

<http://copp.utsa.edu/events/deans-distinguished-lecture-series-dr-jennifer-carlson/>. To RSVP, click on "We encourage participants."

**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.

**Thursday November 15**, 6:00pm-8:00pm, reception and 7:00pm screening, "Willie Velasquez: Your Vote Is Your Voice" (1<sup>st</sup> shown KLRN 10-3-2016). Santikos Mayan Palace, 1918 SW Military Dr.

**Friday November 16**, 8:00am-**Saturday November 17**, 12:00pm, Revisiting the '68 US Commission on Civil Rights: SA Conference. This is a major commemoration and update from the landmark hearings on the status and rights of Mexican Americans in the United States. Participants include Mayor Ron Nirenberg, Henry Cisneros, Julián Castro, Joaquin Castro, and numerous experts and activists. Registration and continental breakfast 8:00am-8:50am, Chapel Auditorium, Our Lady of the Lake University. A tentative draft of the full program can be accessed at [www.50yearslater.org/conference-program/](http://www.50yearslater.org/conference-program/). Our Lady of the Lake University, 411 S.W. 24<sup>th</sup> street.

**Tuesday November 27**, 7:30pm-9:00pm, Mark Shields, "Politics and Policy: How Will History Judge Today's Headlines?" Stieren Theatre, Trinity University, One Trinity Place.

### **Second Reading (Hebrews 5:1-6)**

The author of *Hebrews* makes a comparison between the hereditary priests of the Jerusalem Temple and the risen Messiah. The hereditary priests were just as human as everyone else and had to ritually set themselves apart to be effective intermediaries between the divine and the human. The Messiah did not have to free himself of sin and the world of sin, but rather entered into the human condition. Psalm 2, verse 7, alludes to this: "You are My Son/Today I have begotten You." The author also cites Psalm 110 verse 4: "You are a priest forever/According to the order of Melchizedek."

Today, with sufficient exposure to the Christian practice of applying such excerpts from the Hebrew Scriptures to Jesus, the Messiah, we can miss the point. Imagine if an essayist today were to say to us that the type of priest to which we are accustomed—an unmarried male formed through seminary training and lifestyle and ordained by a bishop—is no longer a part of the relationship between the human and the divine. Melchizedek was not from the hereditary priesthood of the Old Law but was a legendary figure from outside it; in a parallel way a new priesthood would be from an order different from that to which we have become accustomed. The point is that the initiative in the relationship between the divine and the human is from the divine; it is not a human construction. Indeed, what we have today came from the medieval struggle between church and tribal rulers; the “requirements” for priesthood in the Latin Rite were designed to keep the church free from the tribal inheritance system that so dominated the West in the medieval era. That design did not always work, since politicians took over the papacy anyway. As late as 1903 the Austro-Hungarian Emperor interfered with the selection of a pope. Nevertheless, what we are accustomed to is a human construction. What the author of *Hebrews* had in mind called for transcending human constructions.

### **Third Reading (Mark 10.46-52)**

Did Jesus really cure the blindness of the beggar Bartimaeus? Apart from reading a gospel, and for some people even while reading a gospel, the common sense approach is to be skeptical about such claims. In contrast to that, in science it is just as much an error to reject a hypothesis that is actually true as to accept one that is actually false. Scientific procedure calls for keeping an open mind, while everyday experience recommends skepticism. How does this everyday preferential option for skepticism come about?

It was early May 1970 and I was trying to teach Louisiana history to eighth graders in the Ninth Ward in New Orleans. The kids were beside themselves. They saw on television the night before that National Guardsmen in Ohio, who had occupied the campus of Kent State University after an anti-war demonstration, had shot young people at the school. “How could American soldiers shoot kids like us?” As attractive a topic as the outlandish scandals that comprised Louisiana history was, they couldn’t put their young minds to it that day. I had to let them talk it through. They felt betrayed. They felt that an important trust had been broken. I think skepticism is born from such experiences.

Now the narrative in the Gospel of Mark is not about ophthalmology but trust. “Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me.” The crowd couldn’t keep Bartimaeus quiet. He was beside himself and couldn’t deal with the prospect of business-as-usual going on for another moment. “Son of David, have mercy on me.” “Call him,” said Jesus.

Bartimaeus had already risked angering the crowd. Now he throws off his warm wool beggar’s cloak. Blind, he could not be sure he would ever grasp it again. But he throws it off and ventures out into the dark roadway. Believing is seeing. What could we see if we trust that Jesus would make us able to see? And what false trusts must we throw off like Bartimaeus’s warm wool beggar’s cloak?

## Poem

### *Beware the poets*

Prophetic spies,  
they see light before dawn,  
dark before dusk,

Treacherous informers,  
they tell tales of phoenix rising,  
of wisdom claimed at beauty beheld.

Rude arouasers,  
they blast scales from our eyes,  
coax us from our infirmiry beds,  
erase denials of who we are,  
affirm the truths we fear.

Hence, let us banish them from our republic  
lest the blind see,  
the deaf hear,  
the cripples dance,  
the possessed be freed,  
and the services of our dominion  
be required no longer.

Tom Keene

### **A Call to Holiness: 2018 Guide for Voters**

*“A good Catholic meddles in politics.” Pope Francis*

### **Introduction**

Since our last national election, the people of the United States have seen growing political divides, widening economic disparity, and increasing instances of bigotry, hate, and violence often done in the name of patriotism. At the same time, we’ve seen communities across the country come together in support of the values of our faith and our nation.

As Catholics, we are called to carefully consider the many critical issues facing our nation. Pope Francis reminds us, “We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty.”

This election, Catholic voters have a choice to make. Catholic Social Teaching directs us to participate in public life and exercise our civic duty. Let us engage ourselves and others this election season and choose the path of the common good, to seek a better life for everyone.

### **How to use this guide:**

We hope this guide will help us all apply longstanding Catholic teaching to the most pressing issues of our time. The 2018 Election comes in the context of deep reflection on where we are going as a country. It is critical that we examine candidates’ positions on the multiple and interrelated policies that defend the dignity of all God’s people. We must also address these issues with a commitment to civility and dialogue in pursuit of the common good.

For each issue outlined below, we provide a synopsis and questions to guide your candidate research and discernment. If a public statement from a candidate is not available to answer the questions, consider writing a direct letter or raising them in a public forum.

### **Racial Justice**

Racism is very much alive in our nation, in our communities, and even in our churches. Racism and white supremacy are embedded in many social structures – tax codes, school districts, the criminal justice system, housing, wages, war, immigration, and the allocation of federal resources. We are called as Catholics to reject structural racism as a grave injustice and affront to human dignity. We need new policies that dismantle white supremacist structures that produce and reproduce race-based inequalities.

Will the candidate work to reverse the disenfranchisement of people of color by supporting the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, increase funding for the 2020 Census, and enact policies that reform the criminal justice system and end the cradle to prison pipeline?

Does the candidate reject the militarization of our police force, and will they be an outspoken critic of police brutality against people of color?

Has the candidate publicly challenged instances of racial discrimination, and will they legislate to uphold the dignity of all people?

### **The Economy**

Pope Francis calls us to reject an economy of exclusion, both domestically and internationally. The current U.S. income and wealth gap perpetuates inequality and poverty that disproportionately affects women and people of color. Poverty is the direct result of unjust wage laws, unequal pay for women, lack of federal paid family leave, systematic attacks on labor unions and rights, the role of money in politics, and more. Additionally, legislators have chosen tax policies that favor corporations and the

wealthiest in our nation while they attempt to defund and dismantle the successful federal programs that create the social safety net.

- Did the candidate oppose the tax legislation passed by Congress which advantaged the wealthy and corporations? Do they reject the outsized influence of money in politics? Do they have a plan to undo the damage of the tax law that widens wealth inequality?

- Will the candidate protect the social safety net? Do they oppose additional burdensome work requirements that act as barriers to access for low-income individuals and families? Will they support government assistance to ensure that basic needs such as food, housing, education, peace, and health are met?

- Does the candidate support international trade policy that creates jobs and improved education for people around the world, especially with respect to undoing the damage of NAFTA?

### **Immigration and Refugees**

Our faith teaches us to welcome the stranger and love our neighbor. As Catholics who believe in the sanctity of all life, we must not be complicit in the suffering of migrants living in fear and of children separated from their families. We must build bridges, not walls, and must evaluate candidates' support for reforming an unjust immigration system and refugee policy. This includes solutions for immigrants already residing in the U.S. and must address the root causes of migration that forces people to flee violence in their home countries.

- What has each candidate said about the injustice in our immigration system? Do they support a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants? Do they support an increase of the number of refugees for resettlement in our country?

- Has the candidate made any statements opposing family separation at our border and/or family detention? Do they reject funding for additional border wall? Do they believe the U.S. should end funding for private for-profit prison detention? Does the candidate instead focus on providing alternatives to detention?

- Does the candidate recognize the importance of protecting asylum seekers fleeing domestic or gang violence? Do they agree that no asylum seekers should be deported at least without a hearing? Do they place emphasis on evaluating the root causes of forced migration?

### **Healthcare**

Healthcare is a human right, and our faith requires us to act as our sisters' and brothers' keepers. All people should have access to quality, affordable, and equitable care, including those with complex medical needs or preexisting conditions. The Affordable Care Act was an important first effort to meet the right to healthcare for all. Our current law must be protected and strengthened to build on the successes of the ACA, even while we work to address its limitations.

- Does the candidate reject efforts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act? Do they oppose the creation of "brass-level" junk insurance plans that provide lesser coverage under the guise of the ACA?

- Will the candidate protect coverage for people with pre-existing conditions, funding for health insurance navigators, Medicaid expansion, and assistance to reduce

abortions? Are they committed to upholding and protecting pieces of current law while working for every person to have access to health care?

### **Gun Violence Prevention**

As followers of the nonviolent Jesus, we deplore the increasing rate of gun-related deaths in our country. Mass shootings inspire momentary outcries, which fail to result in meaningful legislative action. Daily homicides, suicides, accidental deaths, and injuries by guns often go unnoticed except by grieving families and communities.

- Do the candidates follow the lead of young people in the March for Our Lives by rejecting contributions from the National Rifle Association?
- Do candidates support legislation to at least ban assault weapons and high capacity ammunition? Will they expand and strengthen background checks? Do they support increased oversight and regulation of concealed and open-carry laws? Do they oppose 3-D printer (plastic) guns?
- Do candidates support investing in unarmed programs to prevent violence?

### **Global Peacemaking**

We recognize the dignity of all people as children of God, even if we abhor acts of injustice and violence. As Catholics who follow the way of Jesus, we are called to focus on nonviolence and just peace. We support effective practices such as restorative justice, trauma-healing, and nonviolent resistance, etc. As wars continue to fuel violence in our world, we reject that global leadership is based on military might, and the profiteering from the arms trade and the military industrial complex. During war, the earth and people living in poverty suffer the most from death, displacement, and disease.

- Does the candidate support increasing funding for diplomacy, peacebuilding, and development, while also cutting Pentagon spending and nuclear weapons?
- Does the candidate support ending the wars in Afghanistan, Yemen, South Sudan, Syria, and the DRC? Does the candidate support diplomacy with Iran and Palestinian rights?

### **The Environment**

Our faith calls us to be stewards of God's creation and to ensure that creation thrives for future generations. Pope Francis invites us to an ecological conversion within our own hearts and among our political leaders. We currently face the existential threat of climate change, species loss, and toxic chemical exposures that affect ecosystems and communities on a local and global scale. We are challenged by a rollback of environmental policies at the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Interior, and the State Department.

- Does the candidate support the Paris climate agreement and a shift to green energy?
- Does the candidate support increased funding for environmental cleanups in municipalities like Flint, MI, where people lack access to clean drinking water? Do they support funding to ensure clean drinking water and sanitation in developing countries?

□ Does the candidate oppose efforts to expand mining and drilling for oil or gas? Do they oppose drilling off the Atlantic Coast, on or near sacred land of indigenous communities, or protected areas like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

### **Respect for the First Amendment: Freedom of Religion and Conscience**

As Catholics we share a common faith teaching. But as voters in the United States, we come together with people from a variety of faith and secular traditions to ensure that our elected leaders uphold our Constitutional rights and hold firm against discriminatory policies motivated by religious animosity.

□ Does the candidate oppose the travel ban that prevents people from Muslim-majority countries from entering the U.S.?

□ Does the candidate demonstrate a big-picture understanding of the gravity of Supreme Court vacancies, weighing nominees not just on a single-issue, but on the impact they would have on the long-term direction of the court?

□ Does the candidate have a thoughtful position that upholds both religious liberty and our responsibility to others?

This guide was created for your prayerful reflection by the following national, Catholic organizations:

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Faith in Public Life, Catholic Program Franciscan Action Network

Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

#### **Pax Christi USA**

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Institute Justice Team

Stuart Center for Mission, Educational Leadership, and Technology

### **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](http://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](http://www.txccedp.org)

*Dialogue Institute of San Antonio*

[www.thedialoginstitute.org/san-antonio/](http://www.thedialoginstitute.org/san-antonio/)

Climate Change

[www.creation-care.com](http://www.creation-care.com)