

# Testimony



A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating October 24, 2021

Communications with the editor should be sent to [j6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com](mailto: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 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Facts and Their Truths*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the poem is the *Message of his Holiness Pope Francis For the 107th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2021, "Towards an ever wider we"*.

## Calendar

Times are given for the Central Time Zone.

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

**Tuesday October 19**, 9:00am (16:00 CEST), panel discussion on the documentary film *Francesco*, Evgeny Afineevsky (film director) Azza Karam (Religions for Peace) Archbishop A. Ledesma (Cagayan de Oro Diocese, Philippines), Tahil Sharma (United Religions Initiative), and H.E. Michael Sabbah (Patriarch Emeritus, Jerusalem), moderated by Marie Dennis (Pax Christi International). Information and registration: <https://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/afps-event-calendar/religious-leadership-21st-century-101921>

**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&formcampaig>

nid=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=MWRtRldjeDZUZlRhT3FEcitiaHN3dz09>

**Wednesday October 20**, 1:00pm-2:00pm (2:00pm-3:00pm ET) Partners for Creation Care: Catholic Climate Covenant and the Laudato Sí Movement, with volunteers and staff of both organizations. Register at: [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_miqySxESTA6ceAyaWKTwLw?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=0f8ee952-919f-45f1-a2f2-ab9f1499b674](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_miqySxESTA6ceAyaWKTwLw?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=0f8ee952-919f-45f1-a2f2-ab9f1499b674)

**Wednesday October 20**, 7:00pm-8:30pm (8:00pm-9:30pm ET) online Caravan of Mothers of disappeared Migrants (English/Spanish, with translation), virtual event marking a 12-day caravan in the U.S.A. Register at: <https://bit.ly/VirtualCaravana>.

**Friday October 22**, 3:00p-4:30pm (4:00pm-5:30pm ET) online, The Call of Creation. Webinar responding to "A Joint Message for the Protection of Creation" of Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby. Webinar of a panel of scholars, sponsored by Georgetown University. RSVP at: [https://georgetown.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_y40JO4ZYRMAowxtmerm6YQ](https://georgetown.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_y40JO4ZYRMAowxtmerm6YQ)

**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](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>

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

**Sunday November 7**, 3:30pm, online or in-person, 2021 National Peacemakers Honorees; the George Floyd family will be honored. See **In Houston**.

**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](mailto:kcloward@smu.edu). Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/katharine-hayhoe-climate-scientist-registration-172048480637>

**Thursday October 21**, 10:00am-12:00pm, information picket on the Treaty for the Prevention of Nuclear Weapons, on sidewalk in front of the Raytheon location, 6000 block Lemon Avenue, near Love Field. Park at Home depot. (Future demonstrations November 4 and November 18). Information: Joyce Hall, [hallmj@sbcglobal.net](mailto:hallmj@sbcglobal.net)

### **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](mailto:jhj2@rice.edu). Register at: [https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20211029/event\\_id/219472](https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20211029/event_id/219472)

**Sunday November 7**, 3:30pm, 2021 National Peacemakers Honorees, sponsored by the Houston Peace and Justice Center and by My Brother's Keeper. The George Floyd family will be honored. Third Ward Multi-service Center, 3611 Ennis St., Houston, or online via Zoom. Information and registration, or to take out an ad in the program: HPJC.org.

### **In San Antonio**

**Sunday October 24**, 6:00pm, Jewish Voice for Peace demonstration against anti-Palestine and anti-Muslim hate speech, at Cornerstone Church, 18755 Stone Oak Parkway. Park on Tuscany Stone; gather at Stone Oak Parkway and N Loop 1604.

**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 (Jeremiah 31:7-9)**

This short passage celebrates the return of Israel from exile. It appears to be an anonymous poem that had been incorporated into the book, some time after that of Jeremiah the prophet. When it refers to Israel, it appears to have the whole Hebrew nation in mind rather than the northern kingdom of Israel.

#### **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

### *Facts and their Truths*

Facts are what is:

    this pen,  
    these fingers,  
    this breath.

Truths are what we do with facts.

We relate to them to  
discover their meanings,  
make the meanings happen.

Truths:

    experiences so filled  
    with beauty and power  
    that we surrender to them.

Tom Keene and Muse  
August 8, 2020

**Message of his Holiness Pope Francis For the  
107th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2021  
“Towards an ever wider we”**

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

In the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, I expressed a concern and a hope that remain uppermost in my thoughts: “Once this health crisis passes, our worst response would be to plunge even more deeply into feverish consumerism and new forms of egotistic self-preservation. God willing, after all this, we will think no longer in terms of ‘them’ and ‘those’, but only ‘us’” (No. 35).

For this reason, I have wished to devote the Message for this year’s World Day of Migrants and Refugees to the theme, *Towards An Ever Wider “We”*, in order to indicate a clear horizon for our common journey in this world.

**The history of this we**

That horizon is already present in God’s creative plan: “God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply’” (Gen 1:27-28). God created us male and female, different yet complementary, in order to form a “we” destined to become ever more numerous in the succession of generations. God created us in his image, in the image of his own triune being, a communion in diversity.

When, in disobedience we turned away from God, he in his mercy wished to offer us a path of reconciliation, not as individuals but as a people, a “we”, meant to embrace the entire human family, without exception: “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them” (Rev 21:3).

Salvation history thus has a “we” in its beginning and a “we” at its end, and at its centre the mystery of Christ, who died and rose so “that they may all be one” (Jn 17:21). The present time, however, shows that this “we” willed by God is broken and fragmented, wounded and disfigured. This becomes all the more evident in moments of great crisis, as is the case with the current pandemic. Our “we”, both in the wider world and within the Church, is crumbling and cracking due to

myopic and aggressive forms of nationalism (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 11) and radical individualism (cf. *ibid.*, 105). And the highest price is being paid by those who most easily become viewed as others: foreigners, migrants, the marginalized, those living on the existential peripheries.

The truth however is that we are all in the same boat and called to work together so that there will be no more walls that separate us, no longer others, but only a single “we”, encompassing all of humanity. Thus I would like to use this World Day to address a twofold appeal, first to the Catholic faithful and then all the men and women of our world, to advance together towards an ever wider “we”.

### **A Church that is more and more “catholic”**

For the members of the Catholic Church, this appeal entails a commitment to becoming ever more faithful to our being “catholic”, as Saint Paul reminded the community in Ephesus: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph 4:4-5).

Indeed the Church’s catholicity, her universality, must be embraced and expressed in every age, according to the will and grace of the Lord who promised to be with us always, until the end of the age (cf. Mt 28:20). The Holy Spirit enables us to embrace everyone, to build communion in diversity, to unify differences without imposing a depersonalized uniformity. In encountering the diversity of foreigners, migrants and refugees, and in the intercultural dialogue that can emerge from this encounter, we have an opportunity to grow as Church and to enrich one another. All the baptized, wherever they find themselves, are by right members of both their local ecclesial community and the one Church, dwellers in one home and part of one family.

The Catholic faithful are called to work together, each in the midst of his or her own community, to make the Church become ever more inclusive as she carries out the mission entrusted to the Apostles by Jesus Christ: “As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment” (Mt 10:7-8).

In our day, the Church is called to go out into the streets of every existential



periphery in order to heal wounds and to seek out the straying, without prejudice or fear, without proselytising, but ready to widen her tent to embrace everyone. Among those dwelling in those existential peripheries, we find many migrants and refugees, displaced persons and victims of trafficking, to whom the Lord wants his love to be manifested and his salvation preached. “The current influx of migrants can be seen as a new ‘frontier’ for mission, a privileged opportunity to proclaim Jesus Christ and the Gospel message at home, and to bear concrete witness to the Christian faith in a spirit of charity and profound esteem for other religious communities. The encounter with migrants and refugees of other denominations and religions represents a fertile ground for the growth of open and enriching ecumenical and interreligious dialogue” (Address to the National Directors of Pastoral Care for Migrants, 22 September 2017).

### **An ever more inclusive world**

I also make this appeal to journey together towards an ever wider “we” to all men and women, for the sake of renewing the human family, building together a future of justice and peace, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Our societies will have a “colourful” future, enriched by diversity and by cultural exchanges. Consequently, we must even now learn to live together in harmony and peace. I am always touched by the scene in the Acts of the Apostles when, on the day of the Church’s “baptism” at Pentecost, immediately after the descent of the Holy Spirit, the people of Jerusalem hear the proclamation of salvation: “We... Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs – in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power” (2:9-11).

This is the ideal of the new Jerusalem (cf. Is 60; Rev 21:3), where all peoples are united in peace and harmony, celebrating the goodness of God and the wonders of creation. To achieve this ideal, however, we must make every effort to break down the walls that separate us and, in acknowledging our profound interconnection, build bridges that foster a culture of encounter. Today’s migration movements offer an opportunity for us to overcome our fears and let ourselves be enriched by the diversity of each person’s gifts. Then, if we so desire,

we can transform borders into privileged places of encounter, where the miracle of an ever wider “we” can come about.

I invite all men and women in our world to make good use of the gifts that the Lord has entrusted to us to preserve and make his creation even more beautiful. “A nobleman went to a distant country to get royal power for himself and then return. He summoned ten of his slaves, and gave them ten pounds, and said to them, ‘Do business with these until I come back’” (Lk 19:12-13). The Lord will also demand of us an account of our work! In order to ensure the proper care of our common home, we must become a “we” that is ever wider and more co-responsible, in the profound conviction that whatever good is done in our world is done for present and future generations. Ours must be a personal and collective commitment that cares for all our brothers and sisters who continue to suffer, even as we work towards a more sustainable, balanced and inclusive development. A commitment that makes no distinction between natives and foreigners, between residents and guests, since it is a matter of a treasure we hold in common, from whose care and benefits no one should be excluded.

### **The dream begins**

The prophet Joel predicted that the messianic future would be a time of dreams and visions inspired by the Spirit: “I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2:28). We are called to dream together, fearlessly, as a single human family, as companions on the same journey, as sons and daughters of the same earth that is our common home, sisters and brothers all (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 8).

### **Prayer**

Holy, beloved Father, your Son Jesus taught us that there is great rejoicing in heaven whenever someone lost is found, whenever someone excluded, rejected or discarded is gathered into our “we”, which thus becomes ever wider.

We ask you to grant the followers of Jesus, and all people of good will, the grace to do your will on earth. Bless each act of welcome and outreach that draws those in exile into the “we” of community and of the Church, so that our earth may truly

become what you yourself created it to be: the common home of all our brothers and sisters.

Amen.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 3 May 2021,  
Feast of Saints Philip and James, Apostles  
Franciscus

### **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>

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)

Catholic Books Review  
<http://catholicbooksreview.org>

Beloved Community Project  
<http://belovedcommunityproject.org/>