

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating February 4, 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 Fifth Sunday in ordinary time. Tom Keene's poem is *Consecration*. See <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php> for more of Tom's poems. My review of a recent book follows: Pierre Hegy, *Lay Spirituality. From Traditional to Postmodern* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2017).

Calendar

Sunday January 28, 3:00pm-5:00pm, San Antonio peaceCenter, Annual Blessing of the Peacemakers. Naming of the 2018 San Antonio Peace Laureates: T.C. Calvert and Mario Marcel Salas. Whitley Theological Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate.

Tuesday January 30, 12:00pm-1:00pm, anti-death penalty vigil (scheduled execution of Mr. William Rayford). Across the street from Bexar County Justice Center. Similarly, 6:00pm, vigil organized by the Sisters of Divine Providence at the crucifix on 24th Street at the Our Lady of the Lake campus.

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.

Wednesday January 31, 7:00pm, Laurie Brink, O.P., Ph.D., "Interpreting Gospel Ethics in an Age of Polarization" (St. Mary's University lecture series). Holy Rosary Catholic Church, 159 Camino Santa Maria, adjacent to the St. Mary's University campus.

Sunday, February 4, 12:15pm-1:30pm, Susan Everidge, manager of [Countryside Memorial Park Natural Burial Cemetery](#) (currently the only green burial site in the

greater San Antonio area) will describe natural or green burials. First Unitarian Universalist Church Fellowship Hall, 7150 West Interstate 10.

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.

Thursday February 8, 9:00am-3:00pm, Civic Engagement Summit: “Exploring the civic Identity of San Antonio.” UTSA Main Campus, HEB UC Ballroom. The San Antonio peaceCenter will facilitate one of the breakout sessions.

Thursday February 8, 5:30pm-8:00pm, rescheduled from January 16, Mayor Ron Nirenberg and State Senator Jose Menendez, Cultural Conversation: From Community Trauma and Division to Hope and Action. Whitley Theological Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate Drive.

Thursday February 8, 6:30pm-8:30pm, **in Austin**, Red Bench Interfaith Dialogue, “Human Dignity.” A guided dialogue process that welcomes voices from diverse religious, secular, and spiritual perspectives. Maloney Room, Main Building, St. Edward’s University, 3001 S Congress, Austin.

Tuesday February 13, 4:30pm-6:30pm, “Working Together, Building Digitally Inclusive Communities.” Jordana Barton, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas; Clarissa Ramon, Google; Emily Royall, *Rivad Report*; William “Cruz” Shaw, City Council District 2. Wheatley Community School, 415 Gabriel.

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.

Thursday February 22, 6:00pm, **in Houston**, Elisa Massimino, president of Human Rights First, presents the Houston Trinity Distinguished Alumni Chapter lecture. United Way Community Resource Center, 50 Waugh Drive, Houston. Space limited; register

online <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/trinity-university-houston-distinguished-alumni-lecture-by-human-rights-first-ceo-elisa-massimino-82-tickets-42124392191?aff=es2>.

Monday February 26, 12:00pm-1:00pm, **in Austin**, “Failed Christianity,” on refusing shelter to refugees. Hosted by the Center for Ethics & Leadership. Fleck Hall, Room 305, St. Edward’s University, 3001 S. Congress, Austin.

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 Chisti 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 1:29-39)

Jesus and his disciples had left the synagogue of Capernaum, where Jesus had preached “with authority” and “cast out an unclean spirit” from a man who had interrupted him. They enter the home of Peter and Andrew, and Jesus cures Peter’s mother-in-law of a fever. The town gathers outside the home, bringing all kinds of “demon possessed” people and he cures them. Jesus makes his escape from Capernaum before sunrise, and when the disciples find him in the wilderness he says he wants to go elsewhere to preach. He did in fact preach throughout Galilee, but he had to keep on casting out demons too.

Jesus wants to peach, and we know from all four gospels that his message is largely ethical. However, the market for ethical preaching was limited; the people had the idea that evil spirits caused their various problems and they wanted Jesus to expel such spirits. Not too many people today believe in evil spirits, but they continue to see the Jesus tradition as an opportunity to make themselves feel good. They have their agenda, and they would have Jesus attend to it.

Poem

Consecration

Able to afford its shrinking summer shade,
the old man sat on the window ledge
of the corner store,
watching traffic,
greeting, through his thirst,
customers coming and going.

One,
in anonymous celebration
of fortune's occasion
tore from a six-pack
a cold can of care
for him to share.

Before popping its top
the old man held the beer up
in both hands cupped,
raised his eyes as if to say:
 through this,
 with this,
 and in this
 I drink to You:
 the ever-present question,
 the never-ending answer.

Behind the veil of earth's noon-light,
galaxies hummed to the strum of stars.

Tom Keene
June 25, 1988

Book Review

Piere Hegy, *Lay Spirituality. From Traditional to Postmodern* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2017). Reviewed by Anthony J. Blasi

I have known Pierre Hegy for some forty years. Professor of sociology at Adelphi University on Long Island, he has sought to describe and explain the dynamics of modern Christianity in general and contemporary Catholicism in particular for a long

time. In this new book, he takes up a topic that social scientists have generally avoided—spirituality.

There is nothing inherently mystical or spooky about spirituality. It is simply a more or less coherent set of attitudes, and social scientists have routinely studied attitudes since the early twentieth century, when the German scholar Max Weber drafted the essays that came together in the famous book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*; an ethic or spirit is an attitude, a predisposition to act or, described from outside a psyche, an early phase of an act. Survey researchers have avoided spiritualities by focusing on such items as beliefs and frequency of church attendance instead.

Lay spirituality has been neglected not only by social scientists but by the official Catholic Church as well. Official church documents would enlist the laity into the work of the ordained priests, within ancillary ministries—lector, Eucharistic minister, religious educator, music director, and the like. Hegy would direct our attention to quests, dreams, or vocations that guide a lay person's course of life.

There is a traditional spirituality of devotions, which presupposes village or village-like communities and takes the form of parades and fiestas. Hegy describes these as they still exist in the Archdiocese of Guatemala, organized by some 2,135 confraternities of lay people. "To attend a procession takes several hours of emotional involvement in tradition. There are no public prayers but a pervasive religious silence." Conflict between clergy and laity over such devotions is common. Clergy have sought to direct participation to the official liturgy. Cultural changes have undermined both the traditional lay spirituality and the clergy-centered one by dissolving the village and the fear of hell on the one hand and the attractiveness of the clerical life on the other.

The Second Vatican Council envisioned both a centrality of a clergy-led liturgy and a broad lay ethical engagement with social justice. These two emphases were not particularly consonant with one another to begin with, and the backlash after the Council, especially that of Pope John Paul II, did not help. Hegy's study of a progressive parish, where considerable initiative lay with the laity as well as involvement in social justice issues, found no little alienation from the institutional church. Many people found spiritual nourishment from personal rituals and practices, only sometimes accompanied by Sunday services. The parish did provide a sense of community that was lacking elsewhere.

In the United States, there was a debate about the role of the laity in the last century. The 1975 Call to Action meeting, which almost 100 bishops attended with 1,340 lay representatives, revealed an enormous cultural gap between the laity and the bishops. The delegates recommended communion for divorced Catholics and the ordination of women and married men. The bishops and the pope later issued teachings on peace and social justice, but these never focused on what individual Catholics were supposed to do, apart from praying. In general, the official post-Vatican spirituality was an attempt to return to the era of the Council of Trent, with its clergy-centered organizational pattern.

Slightly more than half way through the book, Hegy takes up "postmodern Christianity," which he favors. It is marked by an overcoming of the duality of sacred and profane times and places, by pluralism rather than hierarchical organization, and horizontal communication rather than top-down directives. He describes four cases—an

Evangelical congregation, a postmodern Catholic parish, the charismatic renewal in Guatemala, and a Catholic African American parish that focuses on social action. The Evangelical congregation is dynamic and postmodern, and is marked by a dichotomy between “saved” and “unsaved” people. It is “missionary” in the sense of sending people out to convert people to the practice of saying lots of prayers. The postmodern Catholic parish, in Guatemala, is similarly dynamic and promotes lay initiative and leadership, but the content of discourse seems centralized in the hands of the pastor—understandably, given the uneducated and often illiterate nature of the parishioners. The focus is similarly on prayer, developed in a long preliminary formative stage not unlike that of a monastery. The charismatic renewal, also in Guatemala, is also postmodern, but again seems obsessed with saying prayers. Nowhere does Hegy dismiss the focus on praying a great deal, but the reader is left to wonder whether that is what Christianity was meant to be about. Hegy’s portrayal of the spirituality of social justice in a Chicago African American parish comes across as the most appealing. The pastor takes the ministry of Martin Luther King as a model. According to Hegy, the parish “promotes peace and justice through neighborhood parties, food distribution at Catholic Charities, job finding at its Employment Resource Center, educational supervision at its ARK Youth Center, and sound education at its parochial school. The parish also organizes peace marches through gang-riven neighborhoods in the city. Needless to say, unfortunately, much of the Chicago Catholic establishment is wary of that parish and its pastor.

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