

Testimony



A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating February 7, 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 readings for the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Power Story*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>.

Following the poem is the text of a statement by Pax Christi USA on the occasion of the treaty outlawing nuclear weapons taking effect. No nation has found the resort to nuclear bombs militarily useful since World War II. The resort to such weapons cannot be justified, so long as innocent noncombatants would be deliberately targeted in a tactic to destroy whole metropolitan areas in a scenario of "mutually assured destruction" (MAD). This would be the case more so for a democratic society at war with an undemocratic, since in the latter the populace would not be involved in the decision of the "enemy" to engage in war. In no ethical system in history has it been argued that a nation should punish the innocent, in this case citizens not involved in the decision to go to war, because of the actions of other parties deemed to be guilty.

It should be noted that recently, after the anti-nuclear weapon treaty has come into effect, the United States and Russia have expressed interest in renewing a treaty to at least limit nuclear weapons.

Calendar

[Times are given for the Central Time Zone]

Mondays February 1 and February 8, 7:00pm-8:00pm, online "Getting into Good Trouble": Hearing Voices in the Hebrew Bible on Civil Disobedience," Francisco Garcia-Treto (emeritus, Trinity University) and Dawn Martin. \$10 before January 25, \$15 after. Register at: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration/>

Monday February 1, 11:30am (12:30pm ET), online dialogue “President Biden, U.S. Bishops, and Pope Francis: How to Promote Catholic Principles in a Divided Church and Nation,” Helen Alvaré (George Mason University), John Carr (Georgetown University), Bishop Robert McElroy (San Diego), and Anne Thompson (NBC News), moderated by Kim Daniels (Vatican Dicastery for Communication). RSVP at:
<https://catholicsocialthought.georgetown.edu/events/president-biden-u-s-bishops-and-pope-francis-how-to-promote-catholic-principles-in-a-divided-church-and-nation#rsvp>

Tuesday February 2, 1:30-2:45pm, online presentation, “Central High in Little Rock,” Roger Barnes (University of the Incarnate Word), on racial integration in 1957. Access at: <https://uiw.zoom.us/j/94347297846#success>

Tuesday February 2, 6:30pm-8:00pm, webinar “I Am Babylon: A Postcolonial Womanist Interpretation of the Woman Babylon in the Book of Revelation,” Rev. Shanell T. Smith, Ph.D. Presented by St. Mary’s University. Register at:
https://stmarytx.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_kygQv2SPSxGVm__FdF43bg?_x_zm_rtaid=s11qopO_SZue5_T-VYhIbQ.1610377213564.ca386e78429267ce744b826430682071&_x_zm_rtaid=31

Wednesday February 3, 11:30am (12:30pm ET), online “Catholicism, Joe Biden, and U.S. Politics: A Conversation with Massimo Faggioli,” John Carr (Georgetown University) and Massimo Faggioli (author of the forthcoming book *Joe Biden and Catholics in the United States*). RSVP at:
https://georgetown.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_iB3i-hOGS8K05tlv-y2P8A

Thursday February 4, 12:00pm, online film followed by panel discussion, “Power Trip: Food,” on reducing food insecurity, with Cliff Zintgraf (SAMSAT & SA Smart), Eric Cooper (San Antonio Food Bank), Sheril Kirschenbaum (Michigan State University), and Michael Webber (University of Texas, Austin), moderated by Andi Littlejohn (EPIcenter). Register at: bit.ly/PowerTripFOOD

Thursday February 4, 12:30pm-1:30pm, webinar “A Conversation about the Black Lives Matter Movement in Light of the Insurrection at the US Capitol,” Cleve Tinsley (Virginia Union University) and Brandon Mack and Kandice Webber (both

of Black Lives Matter Houston). Sponsored by the Rice Center for Engaged Research and Collaborative Learning. Register at:
https://riceuniversity.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_oxnSg7_vRjq6hevCaw6lkw

Friday February 5, 8:00am-9:00am, online presentation “Holier than Thou: Religion, Race, and the Children of African Immigrants,” Dialika Sall (postdoctoral fellow in sociology, Rice University). Register at:
https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20210205/event_id/147226

Saturday February 6, 2:00pm, Pax Christi San Antonio Meeting: online discussion “Black History: An African American Perspective on the Value of History. What are the Issues of Importance?” Karla Broadus (UTSA) and Benjamin White (USA student newspaper). Contact Tony Blasi (J6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com) for the Zoom link).

Thursday February 11, 10:00am-11:00am (11:00am-12:00pm ET), online “Care for Creation as a Common Denominator: Interfaith approaches to Environmental Peacebuilding,” Huda Alkaff (Wisconsin Green Muslims), Elena Cedillo (Lutheran World Federation), Rabbi Yonatan Neril (Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development), and Gopal Patel (Bhumi Global), moderated by Mahar Mirza (Ansari Institute for Global Engagement with Religion). Register at:
https://notredame.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Wr_qczZfRQ6erIEp6mliSg

Thursday February 18, 10:00am (11:00a ET, 5:00pm Geneva), online “Decolonizing the Land. Christian Grassroots Approaches to Environmental Peacebuilding,” Fr. Emmanuel Katongole (Bethany Land Institute), Daod Nassar (Tend of Nations), and Katie Chustak (Red Cloud Indian Institute), moderated by Elsa Barron (University of Notre Dame). Register at:
https://notredame.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Wr_qczZfRQ6erIEp6mliSg

Thursday February 25, 7:00pm-8:00pm, online “Meet the Author of *Baby in the Bag*, Featuring Hafza Girdap, Ph.D.C.,” on human rights violations in Turkey. Sponsored by the Raindrop Foundation San Antonio. Register at:
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/meet-the-author-of-baby-in-the-bag-featuring-hafza-girdap-tickets-138717889943?utm_term=attend&invite=MjAyMjc4NDUvZjZhb255Ymxhc2I

AeWFob28uY29tLzA%3D%0A&utm_campaign=inviteformalv2&utm_source=eb_email&utm_medium=email&ref=enivtefor001

February 24, 7:00pm-8:30pm, online panel "A Conversation on Race, Equality, and Equity," with Jonathan Butler, Esq. (City of San Antonio), Christopher Whitt (Creighton University), and Tiffany Galvin Green (John Carroll University). For information about registering, contact Susan Elias selias@stmarytx.edu.

Saturday February 27, 9:00am-2:00pm, online state conference, Texas Coalition for the Abolition of the Death Penalty. \$50.00; information and registration at tcadp.org.

Second Reading (1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23)

Once again, we have a passage in which St. Paul is answering points raised in a letter he had received from the Corinthian church. Evidently, when in Corinth he did not behave like other gurus and teachers; he did not charge money for his lessons. Wasn't he good enough to charge for his wisdom? His critics in Corinth implied that he wasn't. Paul was facing a prejudice that volunteers and amateurs in our own day encounter too.

So Paul responds with a pointed question: "Do we not have the prerogative to eat and drink? Do we not also have the prerogative to live with one of the sisters as a wife, as the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Kephas?" (1 Cor 9:4-5) He, and Barnabas, who was with him, did not follow the ethnic dietary restrictions followed by others in his own organization ("the other apostles"), by the organization known as "the brothers," and by Kephas (now usually called St. Peter). And Paul did not marry, as the other Christian leaders did. The point of his question is that he did not have to receive recompense the way the others did; rather, he worked at his trade (making leather tents), supporting himself, rather than living as a guest in some rich person's household as a guest. This, he argued later in the passage, eliminated barriers to reaching some people; for if he became dependent on one local notable, he would have trouble reaching people who depended on one or more other rival notables. However, because of the value of the Christian message, he could have charged money or lived in the household of a notable if he wanted to. But if he delivered the Christian message entirely willingly, "I have my pay..." (1 Cor 9:17).

There is a very important point in this: contentment in acting on the natural calling God implants in our will. Life has many small sacrifices, but the Christian ethic has a characteristic contentment underlying moment-by-moment irritants. Wisdom in action is its own reward.

There are a few other matters of interest in the passage. There were denominations in the Christian tradition from the very beginning; for example, we see Paul's organization, known as the Apostles, another organization known as the Brothers of the Lord, and a third organization led by Kephas/Simon Peter. Moreover, it was not unusual for Christian leaders to receive pay or hospitality so that they could work at their mission as full-time professionals. In addition to that, some were voluntarily celibate, such as Paul, while others married.

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 preach, 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

Power Story

A certain centurion loved
his slave-servant-friend.
He could not help it.

They shared a newly found
power, freedom, meaning
expressing themselves

in touch, glance,
being and breathing
together as one.

It was beyond anything
with the troops he cared for
whose marshalled power

could force things
to happen just by
making heard his word.

But now, his friend's loved body
turned sick and rushed
to the finality of death.

He considers: My hundred-man-power
to command and kill comes to empty air,
a dead-wrong tool to make life new.

He turned to a passing healer for help.
The ready healer said: Take me to him.
The centurion said: No need.

I honor power when I see it.
Just say the word

and my friend will be healed.

And he was.

Tom Keene and Muse
October 28, 2020

**Pax Christi USA Statement:
On the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
Becoming International Law**

“For her part, the Catholic Church is irrevocably committed to promoting peace between peoples and nations. This is a duty to which the Church feels bound before God and every man and woman in our world. We must never grow weary of working to support the principal international legal instruments of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including the Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons.” ~Pope Francis in Nagasaki, Japan, Nov. 24, 2019



**THEY'RE THE WORST WEAPONS EVER MADE.
THEY'VE THREATENED THE WHOLE WORLD FOR
75 YEARS.
ON 22 JANUARY 2021 A NEW UN TREATY FINALLY
MAKES THEM ILLEGAL.**

AN HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENT!

#NUCLEARBAN



On Friday, January 22, 2021, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) will enter into force, which means that its provisions make it illegal for nations which have ratified the treaty to participate in the development, production, possession or use of nuclear weapons. To date, fifty-one countries have ratified the treaty and many more have signed it. More than 75 years after nuclear weapons were developed and used, the international community has imposed a ban on these weapons of mass destruction.

Following the adoption of the TPNW at the UN on July 7, 2017, the United States issued a joint press statement with the United Kingdom and France, stating unequivocally, “We do not intend to sign, ratify or ever become party to it.” The U.S. opposition to the treaty has included pressure on many of its allies, like Japan, to also reject the TPNW.

For U.S. Catholics, the opposition by the U.S. government places it at odds with Catholic social teaching on the immorality of the possession of nuclear weapons. At Hiroshima in November 2019, Pope Francis stated, **“The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is immoral, just as the possessing of nuclear weapons is immoral.”**

Pax Christi USA believes that the January 22nd ‘entry into force’ of the TPNW will help increase international pressure on the United States and other nuclear-armed states to join the treaty, especially through legal constraints on the financing and trade of these weapons and their components. In our efforts to move our own nation to sign and ratify the treaty, we welcome how this moment focuses world public opinion on banning these weapons of mass destruction. We recognize too that at this time, when over 400,000 people in the United States have died because of the pandemic and millions more have been left economically, physically, and emotionally vulnerable, the resources spent on the production and maintenance of nuclear weapons could be better invested. As Pope Francis stated in Nagasaki in November 2019,

“The arms race wastes precious resources that could be better used to benefit the integral development of peoples and to protect the natural environment. In a world where millions of children and families live in inhumane conditions, the money that is squandered and the fortunes made through the manufacture, upgrading, maintenance and sale of ever more destructive weapons, are an affront crying out to heaven.”

This past weekend, as we celebrated the life and witness of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we remember too his April 1967 address at Riverside Church in New York which connected militarism and weapons of mass destruction on the one hand with economic and racial justice on the other. Pax Christi USA believes that the TPNW is a step toward his vision of conquering those giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism, bringing about that “beloved community”.

And today, Pax Christi USA leaders joined with other international Catholic leaders throughout the Pax Christi International network in signing onto a joint statement urging governments the world over to recognize our common bonds and sign and ratify the TPNW:

“Surely, in this era of increasing global interdependence and vulnerability, our faith invites us to seek the common and universal good. ‘We are all saved together or no one is saved,’ the pope’s new encyclical Fratelli Tutti says. ‘Is it possible for us to be open to our neighbors within a family of nations?’ it asks.

*International cooperation is essential for addressing the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, the gap between rich and poor, and **the universal threat of nuclear weapons.***"

Today as the TPNW enters into force, Pax Christi USA celebrates this milestone and looks forward to the day when all the nations of the world, including the nuclear-armed nations, will ratify this treaty and abolish nuclear weapons.

We call on the U.S. bishops, priests and deacons, women and men religious, and lay people throughout the U.S. Catholic Church to visibly observe in our dioceses, parishes, universities and schools the 'entry into force' of the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons with public calls for action, the offering of prayers, and legislative advocacy. The month following the entry into force on January 22nd can be used as a time of education and reflection, addressing the treaty and Catholic social teaching on nuclear abolition through sermons and discussion groups, webinars, lesson plans, prayers of the faithful, and more. Pax Christi USA is ready to help with resources as requested.

On this historic day, we join with Pope Francis in our conviction that a world without nuclear weapons is both possible and necessary and we extend our gratitude to the 51 nations which demonstrated true leadership in ratifying this treaty. We take encouragement from their example and pledge to continue this vital work in the hope that one day our nation too may sign and ratify the TPNW.

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.sanantoniopace.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>