

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating December 5, 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 the readings for the Second Sunday of Advent. Tom Keene's poem is *Says Jesus*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is the text of a letter to Archbishop Gomez of Los Angeles from the National Black Sisters' Conference, in response to the archbishop's rejection of Black Lives Matter and other social justice movements.

Calendar

Times are given for the Central Time Zone.

Tuesday November 30, 10:30am (5:30pm Rome time) online in English, Italian, and Spanish, "Cities for Life, Cities against the Death Penalty," organized by the San Egidio community. There are numerous prominent international presenters, the best known to Americans is Sister Helen Prejean. Register at: <https://www.santegidio.org/pageID/42017/langID/en/Nov-30-Webinar-No-Justice-Without-Life--For-a-world-without-the-death-penalty-Online-registration.html>

Monday December 6, 10:30am-12:00pm (11:30am-1:00pm ET) online "Advancing the Debate about the Humanitarian Impact of Economic Sanctions," presented by the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame; Maura Policelli (Kroc Institute), Esfandyer Batmaghelidj (Bourse & Bazaar Foundation), Staci George (Carter Center), George A. Lopez (Kroc Institute), U.S. Representative Jim McGovern (Democrat, Massachusetts), Trita Parsi (Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft), Francisco Rodriguez (Council on Foreign

Relations), and Rana Shabb (Carter Center), moderated by Alistair Millar (Fourth Freedom Forum). Register at: https://keough.nd.edu/event/advancing-the-debate-about-the-humanitarian-impact-of-economic-sanctions/?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Events+Digest+11.15.2021&utm_term=https%3a%2f%2fkeough.nd.edu%2fevent%2fadvancing-the-debate-about-the-humanitarian-impact-of-economic-sanctions%2f&utm_id=600744&sfmc_id=16334564

Monday December 6, 5:30pm-7:00pm (6:30pm-8:00pm ET) "A conversation about Racism, Struggles and Learnings," Sister Eileen Campbell, Sister Rose Martin, Sister Rose Marie Tresp, and Marian Uba, moderated by Sister Mary Trainer. Presentation of the Mercy Sisters. Register at: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN__EyRzpGyQFicxiPeOtWQXQ

Monday December 6-Thursday December 9 online "Climate & Community: A Faithful Action for Climate Justice," series presented by Church & Society, United Methodist Church.

Dec. 6, 1:00pm (2:00pm ET) Climate Justice as a Global Movement. Register at: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_IrgrW01QQBOepvHcm48ThQ?emci=f356cb9e-7e46-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&emdi=b40b7f9d-c347-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&ceid=2693543

Dec. 7, 1:00pm (2:00pm ET) Theological Reflection on Climate Justice. Register at: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_gx2UDnGCTPy-2RL46n7POg?emci=f356cb9e-7e46-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&emdi=b40b7f9d-c347-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&ceid=2693543

Dec. 8, 9:00am (10:00am ET) Climate Change and Front-Line Communities. Register at: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_gx2UDnGCTPy-2RL46n7POg?emci=f356cb9e-7e46-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&emdi=b40b7f9d-c347-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&ceid=2693543

Dec. 8, 1:00pm (2:00pm ET) Indigenous Climate and Water Justice. Register at: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_5PAZCJ-2R7-dbFu6AxNFuA?emci=f356cb9e-7e46-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&emdi=b40b7f9d-c347-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&ceid=2693543

Dec. 9, 9:00am (10:00am ET) En-Roads Climate Workshop – Simulating Global Solutions. "This is an interactive workshop. Please come prepared to engage with the facilitator and fellow participants. This workshop will not be recorded." Register at: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_d1d1NhOoTLul-

PPbXy342w?emci=f356cb9e-7e46-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&emdi=b40b7f9d-c347-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&ceid=2693543

Tuesday December 7, 2:00pm, online interactive webinar "Care for Creation," Sr. Jocelyn Fenix, M.M., on the response of the Maryknoll Sisters of Panama to the environmental encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Sí*. Register at: https://mission.maryknoll.us/srjocelynfenix?utm_medium=email&_hsmi=183192499&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8yDOSVre3x3MeXMtOwzi4wvZ-LFOTrZPGa0piUPQ4xnGPEwiMzoVV9T_ArldgOajC47i7wc_Fs2Q48kfs3kk58DjrEiw&utm_content=183192499&utm_source=hs_email

Wednesday December 8, 5:00pm-6:00pm (6:00pm-7:00pm ET) online "Religion and Race: Christian Perspectives on Critical Race Theory," Rev. Tiffany Williams Brewer (Women's Empowerment) and Neil Shevni (Christian apologetics blogger), moderated by Charles Powell (University of Notre Dame). Register at: https://notredame.zoom.us/webinar/register/2416376229062/WN_xnWxcsSxTPWvJ4aJLIJfA

Thursday December 9, 2:00pm-3:00pm, online "Jesus and Muhammad: On Peace, Forgiveness, and the Golden Rule," Craig Considine (Rice University). \$10.00 registering before November 26, \$15 after; register at: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration/>

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>

Saturday December 18, 4:30pm-5:30pm, online "Hinduism and Justice," Rita D. Sherma (Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California), sponsored by the Intrafaith Council of the Thanksgiving Foundation, Perkins School of Theology of Southern Methodist University, and the Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum. Register at: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mTw1pFWkQa-iFu5c8YX4bg

Thursday January 13, 2:00pm, online interactive webinar "Shifts in Mission: Awareness of Systemic Racism," on changes in mission that come from an

awareness of white privilege; Sister Marvelous (Marvie) Lomerio Misolas, M.M., representative of the Maryknoll Sisters to the United Nations. Register at: https://mission.maryknoll.us/resistingracism?utm_medium=email&_hsmi=183192499&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8lZXLdcHllbDiZzTlghKt6X3mXLdh_83uKeD3myALQKq0B0VXmCcNkxRhsfB7PTgq5xZj24QwmZM8Fm6LWeeuDTdidpA&utm_content=183192499&utm_source=hs_email

Tuesday January 25, 9:00am-10:15am, online "Reading the Bible against the Bible: Reimagining the Marginalized" Anthony Pinn (Rice University). Register at: <https://hopin.com/events/midwinter-lectures-2022/registration>
Also in person in Austin; see below.

Tuesday January 25, 10:45am-12:00pm, online "Lessons on Courage: What the Church Can Learn from Young People," Evelyn Parker (Perkins school of Theology, Dallas). Register at: <https://hopin.com/events/midwinter-lectures-2022/registration>
Also in person in Austin; see below.

In Austin

Tuesday January 25, 9:00am-10:15am, "Reading the Bible against the Bible: Reimagining the Marginalized" Anthony Pinn (Rice University). Part of the Midwinter program at Austin Presbyterian Seminary. Register at: <https://hopin.com/events/midwinter-lectures-2022/registration>
Proof of Covid vaccination required. Austin Presbyterian Seminary, 100 E. 27th St.

Tuesday January 25, 10:45am-12:00pm, "Lessons on Courage: What the Church Can Learn from Young People," Evelyn Parker (Perkins school of Theology, Dallas). Part of the Midwinter program at Austin Presbyterian Seminary. Register at: <https://hopin.com/events/midwinter-lectures-2022/registration>
Proof of Covid vaccination required. Austin Presbyterian Seminary, 100 E. 27th St.

Notices

A Spirituality for Social Justice Ministry in a Faith Community | Tom Ulrich

<https://youtu.be/ZSGMTTdIuS8> - 60 minutes

When we claim to be true followers of Jesus Christ, we are making a life-long commitment to social justice ministry. This work is immensely rewarding, enormously meaningful, and joy-filled, even while it is also frustrating, heart-wrenching, and exhausting. Much insightful information has been written about the connection between spirituality and social justice; however, little attention has been paid to a spirituality of social justice relevant specifically to those leading the efforts in a faith community. The social justice ministry emotional rollercoaster experienced by practitioners, especially leaders of social justice ministry in a faith community, is the subject of this session. A description with a set of guiding principles will be explored, as a means to nurture and joy

San Antonio's Five Most Energy Burdened Neighborhoods, by Greg Harman. The concept of 'energy burden,' or paying more than six percent of one's income on home energy, is getting increased attention for its role in maintaining generational poverty. <https://deceleration.news/2021/11/18/san-antonio-energy-burden/>

First Reading (Baruch 5: 1-9)

The biblical *Book of Baruch* is actually a collection of shorter works. The reading for this Sunday is from a section commentators term the "Second Prophetic Discourse," originally written as a poem in Hebrew but extant only in Greek. By raising the theme of a return to Jerusalem, one may be led to think in terms of the return of the Hebrew elite from Babylon in 538, but the description refers to a return from east and west, not from Babylon. It eventually becomes clear that the author has a final return at the end of time in mind, a return not to Jerusalem but to "the city of the Lord." The whole section has a mood of hope and joy.

Second Reading (Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11)

This is a part of Paul's Letter to the Philippian church that expresses joy over a donation the church made to his ministry. He goes on to pray "that your love overflows more and more with full knowledge and all discernment, so that you assay what is superior, so that you would be uncorrupted and without offense on the day of the Messiah..."

Paul does not pray for a mechanical compliance with rules and regulations but love being expressed by knowledge and discernment. This is consistent with a

“natural law” approach to moral decision-making, which accords individuals the freedom and obligation to look into matters and judge accordingly. At least that is what natural law was in the writings of the medieval saint and genius Thomas Aquinas. Later writers have ironically attempted to bypass the individual person and impose “official” decisions of natural law. The original meaning has been re-emphasized in recent time with the principle of the primacy of conscience.

A few years ago a local San Antonio radio program had a well-intentioned interviewer asking two guests from Call to Action about Catholic activism for social justice. He pursued what he thought was a dilemma between Catholicism and agitation. The guests handled that question easily, citing the Catholic tradition of social teachings. Then there was a caller, saying he had left Catholicism because it was about rules and regulations on moral issues. The interviewer presented the caller’s statement as an opposition between traditional Catholic morality and making a resort to one’s own conscience. The two guests were sidetracked onto other issues. I called in to the program—something I generally do not do—to greet one of the Call to Action guests, whom I know, to make a pitch for Pax Christi San Antonio as an advocacy group, and to stress that the primacy of conscience *is* in fact the traditional Catholic, and Christian, approach.

Third Reading (Luke 3.1-6)

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Caesar Tiberius...”: Was Luke simply being a historian? He went on to mention Pontius Pilate, the tetrarch Herod (Antipas), the tetrarch Philip, the tetrarch Lysanias, and the high priests Annas and Caiphas. The references should not be dismissed so readily. Rather, Luke is setting the scene for the mission of the prophetic figure, John the Baptist. He uses the words of Isaiah 40: “Prepare the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight.” Prophets speak truth to power, questioning the ways of the holders of power. Caesar Tiberius was governing in a way that obstructed truth. Pilate and the tetrarchs, serving Tiberius as a god, were making the straightforward presence of the divine into something requiring circuitous inquiry. The very Jerusalem priesthood too was an obstacle.

The wording from Isaiah is undoubtedly metaphorical; it is not about engineering roads. In fact, the Caesars, their underlings, and their allies were accomplished at highway construction. But the more effectively they implemented the authoritarian ways of the world, the more they troubled the

coming of the Lord. Caesar claimed not only to be a civil authority, but also a deity. The priesthood was not only about prayer, but governance as well. Luke and the Baptist were not advocating the separation of religion and government, but they were making way for the ways of the Lord in both kinds of authority and responsibility. They would unsettle what had beforehand been settled and settle upon what beforehand had not been so much as imagined.

In one sense, Luke was in fact being a historian—not merely chronicling but giving voice to what was of historical significance.

Incidentally, are there not rulers today who are better at road building than clearing the way for truth?

Poem

Says Jesus

See my face.

Touch my skin.

Smell my sweat.

Hear my songs.

Cut through the fogs of separation
into clarity of our oneness,
so, when you grasp the human in me,
you may discover the divine in yourselves.

Tom Keene

January 25, 2018

Letter of the National Black Sisters' Conference to Archbishop Gomez

November 16, 2021

Archbishop Jose H. Gomez
Archdiocese of Los Angeles
President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Your Excellency,

We greet you in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Mother.

Founded in 1968, the National Black Sisters' Conference (NBSC) is an organization of Black Catholic Women Religious and Associates belonging to congregations and communities from across the United States, the Caribbean and Africa. We are committed to confronting the sin of racism, which continues to permeate our society and Church as we work tirelessly for the liberation of our people.

In 1989, Sister Thea Bowman, FSPA addressed the Conference of Catholic Bishops challenging her "brothers in Christ" to continue to evangelize the African-American community while promoting inclusivity and full participation of African Americans in the Church, and to work tirelessly to eradicate the sin of racism that continues to divide the Body of Christ.

Thirty-two years later, African Americans continue to confront racist systems of oppression as we fight for justice, to have our lives, our Black Lives Matter in the same way that white lives are valued in this country.

Last year, the world watched in shock and disbelief as George Floyd took his last breath under the knee of a police officer, who swore to "serve and protect". It led to a raw awakening around this nation and world that America did not see or treat her African American citizens as human beings endowed with inalienable rights.

As president of the Bishops' Conference, Black Catholics had hoped that you and your brother bishops would have acted in solidarity with those who have suffered at the hands of white supremacy since first being kidnapped from their homeland and enslaved with the blessing of the Catholic Church.

In 1968, the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus declared that the Catholic Church is a “racist institution”, and while significant progress has been made, the Church continues to fail its African American members by its frequent silence and now its condemnation of Black Lives Matter.

If respect for life is the primary issue of our time, then we would certainly have hoped that you and the Bishops’ Conference would surely understand that it is paramount that we lift up and support Black life as a precious gift from God that should be protected not only in the womb but throughout life until death.

We would have expected that you and your brother bishops would have stood in solidarity with your African-American brothers and sisters; representing the compassionate face of Christ.

For the most part, you have remained mysteriously and regretfully silent; often failing to call out hate groups for their racist ideologies and violence.

We are especially troubled by your comment: “...the Church has been ‘antiracist’ from the beginning”. With all due respect, Archbishop, do you not know the history of the Church’s involvement with the slave trade, with the segregation of churches; with black people often being relegated to the back of churches and forced to receive Holy Communion after white parishioners; and the rejection of black men and women who desired to enter seminaries and religious communities? Over four hundred years of slavery, trauma, pain, disenfranchisement, and brutal violence have been a part of the fabric of this nation and the American Catholic Church.

Black Lives Matter grew out of the frustration of seeing black lives struck down over and over again with no accountability. It is a racial justice movement...a gospel movement. Scripture tells us that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. Jesus tells us in Matthew 19:19 to “love your neighbor as yourselves”.

When African-American lives are systematically devalued in this country and in the Catholic Church, we must speak out. BLM is not a pseudo-religion; nor is it a “dangerous substitute for true religion”. It is a movement very much in the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching. It does not nor has it ever “served as a replacement for “traditional Christian beliefs”.

We respectfully encourage you to rethink your ill-advised remarks and rescind them.

If we intend to proclaim the authentic gospel of Jesus, we must acknowledge our sinfulness as a Church as it pertains to the sin of racism and give more than lip service to combatting racism in our Church and nation.

It is time for a resolute effort on the part of all people of goodwill and most especially on the part of our Church leaders.

In her final words to the bishops, Sister Thea said that “the Church must walk together with her African-American brothers and sisters in a new way. Inspired by Jesus Christ, let us begin anew today”.

The leadership of the National Black Sisters’ Conference would welcome the opportunity to meet with you, Archbishop, to pray together and to have a much-needed and honest conversation about race relations in order that we might begin anew together...begin anew today.

United in the love of Christ,

Sister Josita Colbert, SNDdeN
President, The National Black Sisters’ Conference

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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>

Beloved Community Project

<http://belovedcommunityproject.org/>