

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating March 10, 2019

Pax Christi San Antonio does not solicit donations. Thoughtful comments, however, may be sent to the editor at 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



Photo by John Dauer

After the calendar section, the Sunday reading reflections are based on the lectionary selections for the First Sunday in Lent. At some masses, the readings may be taken from Year A rather than those referenced below, which are from Year C. The Year A readings are coordinated with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Note that a commentary on the gospel reading for Year A First Sunday of Lent can be found in the archived file of Gospel commentaries and essays that is posted on the Pax Christi San Antonio website (see below, at the end of this issue).

Tom Keene's poem is *Doubt and Trust*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>.

We have reviewed a book by Pierre Hegy before in these pages: *Lay Spirituality. From Traditional to Postmodern* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2017). Pierre is an industrious researcher who travels widely to observe Christian worship and interview people about what they do when they worship and what it means to them. He has a new book coming out in the near future, in my opinion his best ever: *Worship as Community Drama* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2019). My review follows the poem.

Calendar

In Austin

Thursday March 7, 5:00pm-6:30pm, Jeff Sellen, on his book on environmental sustainability and management, *Don't Tread on Me: Property and Conflict in the American West*. Fleck Hall room 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. RSVP: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cel-speaker-series-jeff-sellen-on-ethics-environmental-sustainability-tickets-46805359089>. Parking permit: <https://www.stedwards.edu/contact-us/main-campus-united-states>

Wednesday March 13, 5:00pm, Michael E. Lee (Fordham University), Revolutionary Faith: Oscar Romero as a Model for Christianity Today. Jones Global Event Center, Ragsdale Center. St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. Parking permit: <https://www.stedwards.edu/contact-us/main-campus-united-states>

Monday March 25, 6:30pm, lecture by Rev. John Floberg, who organized the national call that drew over 500 interfaith clergy to Standing Rock in November 2016 (the Dakota Access Pipeline protest). Weeks Campus Center, Episcopal Seminary of the South West, 501 E. 32nd St.

Tuesday March 26, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Deliberative Dialogue, "What Should We Do About the Opioid Epidemic?" Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. Parking permit: <https://www.stedwards.edu/contact-us/main-campus-united-states>

In Beaumont

Friday March 29, 6:00pm-Saturday March 30, 4:30pm, Sr. Patty Chappelle, SNDdeN (Pax Christi USA), Catholic Social Teaching Workshop. St. Jude Thaddeus Catholic Church, 6825 Gladys Avenue, Beaumont, TX. Information: LaWanna 409-924-4333. Register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/two-feet-of-love-faith-in-action-tickets-56579275135>

In Dallas

Wednesday March 27, 12:00pm-1:30pm, Mark Chancey (Southern Methodist University), Policy, Politics & the Bible in Public Schools: Is There a Space for Religious Literacy? Hughes-Trigg Forum, Southern Methodist University, 3140 Dyer St. RSVP by March 24: <https://whoozin.com/NFC-JVW-MGTE>. Information: Bora Laci, blaci@smu.edu

Thursday April 18, 12:30pm-2:00pm, Elzbieta Gozdziat, "Global Migration and Human Trafficking." Room 106, Florence Hall, Dedman School of Law, Southern Methodist University, 3330 University Blvd. Register by April 15, <https://whoozim.com/43P-944-NH6M>. Information: Bora Lacy, tower@smu.edu.

In El Paso

Fridays, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Pax Christi joins Border Peace Presence in front of the Federal Courthouse (corner of Campbell and San Antonio).

Sunday March 10, 3:00pm, film showing, *RBG*. St. Joseph School Auditorium. Enter through school parking lot across from the church rectory at 1315 Travis St. Information: (915) 740-3962.

Tuesday March 12, 6:45pm, Pax Christi El Paso meeting. Centro Mujeres de la Esperanza, 1101 Birch St. Information: (915): 740-3962.

Saturday March 23, 9:00am, The Migrant way of the Cross, conducted by Bishop Seitz. Modesto Gomez Park, 4600 Edna St.; entrance across from Boys and Girls Clubs off Delta St.

Thursday March 28, 12:00pm-1:00pm, execution vigil, in front of El Paso County Courthouse.

Sunday March 31, 12:00pm-5:00pm, Cesar Chavez Day celebration. Farm Worker Center, corner of Ninth and Oregon. Information: (915) 873-8933, or cmarentess@gmail.com.

In Houston

Sunday March 17, 9:30am, Sondee Hatcher (SEARCH Homeless Services), "For a Houston without Homelessness." St. Philip Presbyterian Church 201, 4807 San Felipe.

Tuesday March 19, 12:15pm-1:30pm, Deborah Carr (Boston University), "Golden Years? Social Inequalities in Late Life." Kyle Morrow Room Fondren Library, Rice University. Information: Shirley Tapscott, shtz@rice.edu.

Thursday March 21, 12:00pm, Scott Hanson (University of Pennsylvania), lecture on the interplay of religious freedom, immigration, and pluralism. Meyer Conference Room, RMC/Ley Student Center, Rice University. Register on the Rice Events Calendar (<https://events.rice.edu/>) page for March 21. Information: tolerance@rice.edu.

Sunday March 24, 9:30am, Elena Korbut (Interfaith Ministries of Greater Houston), "Refugee Resettlement: Local Solutions to a Global Crisis." St. Philip's Church, room 201, 4807 San Felipe.

Monday March 25, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Anita Hill (Brandeis University), "From Social Movement to Social Impact: Putting an End to Sexual Harassment in the Workplace." Baker Hall, Dore Commons, Rice University. RSVP at rsvpcswgs@rice.edu.

In San Antonio

Monday March 4, 6:00pm, 14th Annual Dialogue and Friendship Dinner. Keynote speaker, Abdulhamit Bilici (former editor *Zaman*, newspaper in Turkey), "Free Press and Democracy: An Exiled Editor's View." University of the Incarnate Word Rosenberg Skyroom, 847 E. Hildebrand. \$45; RSVP at www.dialoguedinner19.eventbrite.com.

Monday March 5, 6:00pm-7:00pm, Erika Prosper Nirenberg, “Migrant Strength” (growing up as a child migrant worker in the Rio Grande Valley). Central Library, 600 Soledad St.

Tuesday March 6, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Rose I. Ramos and Richard D. Breitenstein (both of Chemonics International), “The Practice of Sustainable Human Development as Conflict Prevention.” Conference room B, University Center, St. Mary’s University, One Camino Maria.

Tuesday March 19, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Green Sacred Texts (environmental passages from diverse traditions). \$10. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Register at <https://www.upcsa.org/registration/>

Wednesday March 27, 7:30pm, Dorothy Kearns Goodwin, “Leadership in Turbulent Times.” Laurie Auditorium, Trinity University, One Trinity Place.

Tuesday April 9, 7:00pm-9:00pm, screening of “Lindy Lou, Juror Number 2,” documentary on a juror in a capital punishment case. Discussion led by Kristin Houle and Sam Millsap. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Free, register at <https://www.upcsasorg/registration/>

Second Reading (Romans 10:8-13)

Anthropomorphism can be the ultimate form of idolatry if it involves our worshiping not God but our idea of God. This is what Paul was getting at in his *Letter to the Romans* immediately prior to this Sunday’s reading: “But the justice that is from faith speaks thusly: ‘Do not say in your heart, Who will go up to heaven?’—that is, to bring Messiah down. Or, ‘Who will go down into the abyss?’ That is to bring Messiah from the dead” (Romans 10:6-7). Paradoxically, the Messiah, the presence of God, is neither “up” nor “down,” but “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart.” “That,” says Paul, “is the word of trust that we preach.”

Similarly, justification or salvation is not “up there” or “down there” but here. It would be bizarre for God to command something different from a just or saved state as a precondition for justification or salvation. Heaven is not a cosmic reward for good behavior but rather good behavior as a cosmic reward.

Third Reading (Luke 4.1-14)

The Gospel of Mark had said that after John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the Jordan, Jesus went out alone into the desert for forty days. Luke inserts at that point a narrative that may have been a story about temptation that a source, which Matthew also used, had applied to Jesus.

“If you are the son of God,” says the devil, “tell this stone to become bread.” Jesus had been fasting, and there would be nothing particularly wrong in ending the fast

with bread. Temptation may begin with innocuous things. Jesus does not condemn bread in rebuffing the devil, but he points to what is more than, and apart from, bread: "The human shall not live on bread alone." That which is more than bread, and apart from it, would lead one to provide bread for others, not oneself.

Then the devil showed Jesus "...in an instant all the kingdoms of the inhabited world." It was "in an instant," not a survey of what was actually in the kingdoms. The people in the kingdoms didn't count in the panorama that the devil presents. "I will give you," says the devil, "all this authority and all their glory, because it has been given to me..." Unlike bread, which is innocuous in itself and can even be good, authority and glory are described as possessions of the evil one. They become intrinsically evil when the people in the kingdoms do not receive consideration. Jesus rebuffs him again: "You shall worship the Lord your God, and you shall worship him alone." When it is a matter of God or Caesar, priority goes to God.

Then the devil led Jesus to the Temple. That is a remarkable situation—the devil leading someone to the Temple. The devil leads Jesus to the very House of God. On its highest place, the devil says, "If you are the son of God, cast yourself down from here; for it is written: 'He shall command his messengers concerning you, to protect you.'" In the manner of a hate-filled or self-serving clergy person, the devil quotes scripture. The climax of temptation occurs in religion itself. The temptation itself consists of using religion magically—i.e., as an instrument for doing good for oneself.

The focal issue is whom one serves.

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Poem

Doubt and Trust

Doubt, a sunless liquid can drown.
A leak in the basement, it rises,
silent, to engulf the world
at midnight.

What fact can dispel this swallowing tide,
or happening hint at a graying
of the dark in the east,
can penetrate the muting waters
with predawn song of unseen birds?

Now. Here. It is:
 the dreamt word heard,
 the hoped-for deed.
Patterned by the pulse of racing blood,
doubt's liquid turns to crystal,

set and shining in the dawn.

So, we applaud this day
raise our spirit-filled glasses,
toast ourselves and the promise made real,
and in heady triumph,
welcome each test ahead,
the midnights to come,
the dawns to trust.

Tom Keene
May 28, 1993

Pierre Hegy, *Worship as Community Drama Introduction to Liturgy Evaluation*
(Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, to be published later 2019)
reviewed by Anthony J. Blasi

Religion is more worship than acceptance of a list of beliefs, and engaged worship at that, not mere attendance. However, studying worship and its degrees of engagement is time consuming work; those social scientists who are accustomed to the statistical analysis of survey data generally count the number of beliefs respondents accept to measure “religiosity” (actually, the questionnaire items indicate literalist readings of biblical metaphor and poetry rather than any religious profundity) and the number of times they attend church services in a month. While that kind of analyses has its usefulness, Pierre Hegy, retired professor of sociology at Adelphi University on Long Island, endeavors to study religion as worship. There is little precedent in this line of inquiry; so he has had to create and perfect his approach over the course of decades and previous books.

The substantive chapters of the book each highlight a type of worship service, each service approached through eight steps that are suggested by the analysis of interchanges between people (“interactions”) as proposed by the prominent sociologist Randall Collins. The first four steps are observational in nature: 1) Basic information and description; 2) Account of the ritual; 3) Observed emotions and attitudes; and 4) Closeness to others in the worship service and to God. Closeness to God, obviously, is dependent on reports as given in interviews. The next four steps are analytical in nature: 5) What was learned, especially about leadership and growth; 6) Patterns of relationship; 7) Moral consensus; and 8) Spiritual energy.

The substantive chapters begin with the second, which looks at (literally) Catholic television masses. This account is a limit case, in which the interaction is one-way, with no genuine engagement on the part of the non-celebrant. The next chapter focuses on pontifical masses in the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, which fare much better: the music is congregational, for example, with the professionals supporting the people in the pews rather than performing for them. The music is related to the biblical readings and homily, and everything is coordinated around a message. The people drawn to

these masses form a cultural elite, however; they are not typical Catholics. Chapter 4 focuses on papal masses at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, at which cardinals attend but do not participate, the service is in Latin and not widely understood, the music is a performance in baroque style, and the homilies while heartfelt and directed to an assemblage of people receive no support from the other elements of the service, which are disconnected from one another.

The next several chapters build on the self-study of the Willow Creek Church, which found that while that congregation grew in attendance, involved people in small groups, and encouraged altruistic activity. Its effects were only short-term: "Thus joining a new church may be spiritually uplifting, but during the following five or ten years people may experience little new growth" (p. 87). Hegy applies some of the descriptors from the Willow Creek study to some typical Catholic parishes. Two of the parishes manifest little vibrancy (Chapter 5) and one dynamic (Chapter 6). Interestingly, the dynamic parish is lay-run, fully democratic, and related to the wider Catholic Church only loosely.

Chapter 7 focuses on an Evangelical church that is very successful in terms of growth and vibrancy. However, the congregational growth does not reflect personal growth. Using the well-known stages of faith model of James Fowler, Hegy distinguishes between growth in intensity within one stage of faith development and development leaving the congregant from lower to higher stages. The people intensely involved in the Evangelical church under study remained at a conventional stage of faith, never allowing themselves to be challenged beyond the form of religion given them from childhood.

Chapter 8 investigates liturgical creativity at the African American Catholic St. Sabina Church in Chicago; "even within the confines of rigid Catholic regulations, there are really few limits to worship creativity." Much of the success of the worship services there depends upon the charisma of one pastor, and succession poses a real problem. In the final substantive chapter, the ninth, Hegy introduces the reader to the interesting case of the Zairean Rite used in the Kinshasa Archdiocese in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It represents an enormous experiment in enculturation, spreading beyond the liturgy itself and entering into the formation of base communities. With all its creativity, it nevertheless had a top-down model of implementation.

Chapter 10 points to the importance of solid research on a central topic, in this case research into the effectiveness of worship approaches in religious traditions. Sound research does not depend on adequate observation alone, but setting the sites conceptually with theory (what other sociologists call middle range theory). Observation establishes the accuracy of what the scientist reports, while the theory makes evaluation and comparison possible.

This is a marvelous volume. I recommend it highly.

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://sac cvi.blogspot.com/>

San Antonio Peace Center

<http://www.sanantoniopeace.center>

Interfaith Radio, (*Interfaith Voices*)

<http://www.interfaithradio.org/>

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

NowCastSA

www.nowcastsa.com/