

## Testimony



### A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating March 31, 2019

Pax Christi San Antonio does not solicit donations. Thoughtful comments, however, may be sent to the editor at [j6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com](mailto: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

After the calendar, the *Liturgical Reading* reflections are based on readings for the Fourth Sunday of Lent. At some masses, the narrative about the man born blind, from the Johannine Gospel, may be read. That reading is selected from the "Year A" cycle, to co-ordinate the mass with the RCIA Program (for initiating adults who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil or Christians affiliating with the Roman Catholic Church through Confirmation at the Easter Vigil). The reflection that follows below after the Calendar is for the "C Year" cycle of readings, which is intended for those who have already been initiated into the Church.

Tom Keene's poem is *Says Jesus*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. My essay on truthfulness as a matter of justice follows the poem.

This coming week PBS will broadcast a series, "Women, War & Peace II." Monday March 25, 8:00pm, the first episode is "Waving Goodbye to Dinosaurs," about Catholic and Protestant women coming together to form a political party that, while small, turned out to be critical in the "Good Friday Accords." That same evening at 9:00pm, a second episode, "The Trials of Spring," presents the story of Egypt's Arab Spring. On Tuesday March 26, at 8:00pm, the third episode is "Naila and the Uprising," about a woman's decision for love, family, and freedom in the midst of the 1987 Palestinian uprising. That same evening at 9:00pm, the fourth episode is "A Journey of a Thousand Miles: Peacekeepers," about a female Bangladeshi police unit rising in the name of building peace in earthquake-ravaged Haiti.

The San Antonio PBS station, KLRN, is posting videos on local women peace makers: Sr. Martha Ann Kirk, Sr. Denise LaRock, Rebecca Flores, Nickie Valdez, and Patricia Castillo. Sr. Martha Ann, of course, is a member of Pax Christi San Antonio. So take a look at [klrn.org](http://klrn.org).



Photo by John Dauer

## Calendar

### In Austin

**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. 32<sup>nd</sup> 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.nupark.com/portal/Account/VisitorLogin>

**Wednesday March 27**, 4:30pm-6:00pm, Panel discussion, "National Emergencies." Munday Library, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. For temporary parking permit: <https://stedwards.nupark.com/portal/Account/VisitorLogin>

**Friday March 29**, 4:00pm-**Sunday March 31**, 10:00pm, Compassion Austin's New Story Festival: Community, Creativity, and the Common Good. Schedule:

<https://newstoryfestival.com/schedule>. Prices vary: see

<https://newstoryfestival.com/festivaltickets>. Huston-Tillotson University, 900 Chicon.

### 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](mailto:blaci@smu.edu)

**Thursday April 4**, 6:00pm-8:00pm, "Gun Violence: A Right to Life Issue." Panel discussion, including a trauma surgeon, a representative from the SMU Black Students Association, and a representative from Moms Demand Action. Sponsored by the Catholic Community at SMU, SMU Office of the Chaplain and Religious Life, the Catholic Diocese of Dallas, Texas GunSense, the Dallas Peace and Justice Center, and the SMU Embrey Human Rights Program. Information: [Sheila@Levatino.net](mailto:Sheila@Levatino.net). SMU McCord Auditorium, 306 Dallas Hall, 3225 University Blvd.

**Thursday April 11**, 12:00pm-1:30pm, Paul Sedra, "Egypt's Church-State Partnership and the End of Equal Citizenship for Coptic Christians. Hughes-Trigg Forum, 3140 Dyer St., Southern Methodist University. Free, but register by April 8: <https://whoozin.com/HJE-FWD-RHUV-6WJX>. Information: Bora Laci, [blaci@smu.edu](mailto:blaci@smu.edu), 214-768-4716.

**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](mailto: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).

**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](mailto:cmarentess@gmail.com).

### **In Houston**

**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](mailto:rsvpcswgs@rice.edu).

**Friday April 5**, 8:00am-9:00am, John Schmalzbauer (Missouri State University), "The resilience of religion in American higher education." Lovett Hall 402, Rice University (use entrance C). RSVP at [https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20190405/event\\_id/20205](https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20190405/event_id/20205). Information: Hayley Hemstreet, [hjh2@rice.edu](mailto:hjh2@rice.edu), 713-348-3974.

**Sunday April 7**, 9:30am, Garland Pohl, "Does the Pope Run the Church?" St. Philip Presbyterian Church, 407 San Felipe.

**Friday April 12**, 8:00am-9:00am, Craig Considine, "Muslims in America: Examining the Facts." Lovett Hall 402, Rice University (use entrance C). RSVP at [https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20190412/event\\_id?20206](https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20190412/event_id?20206). Information: Hayley Hemstreet, [hjh2@rice.edu](mailto:hjh2@rice.edu), 713-348-3974.

### **In San Antonio**

**Wednesday March 27**, Texas Coalition Against the Death Penalty, San Antonio chapter meeting, Oblate Retreat Center, 5700 Blanco Road.

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

**Thursday March 28**, 6:30pm, local San Antonio legislators discuss bills that may affect the environment. Lions Field Adult Center, 2809 Broadway (at Mulberry).

**Wednesday April 3**, 6:30pm-8:00pm, Erica Schommer, J.D., "Representing Migrants in Texas." Fiesta Room, Coates Student Center 111, Trinity University, One Trinity Place.

**Wednesday April 3**, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Pub Theology with Ron Nirenberg. The friendly Spot Ice House, 943 S. Alamo.

**Saturday April 6**, 9:30am, the annual March for Science begins at the downtown UTSA campus and ends at Main Plaza.

**Saturday April 6, 10:00am, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting**, residence of Maria Tobin, 8715 Starcrest Dr., #27. Information: [matob@aol.com](mailto:matob@aol.com).

**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/r, 7:30pm, registration/>

### **Second Reading (Second Corinthians 5:17-21)**

*Second Corinthians* can be a confusing read because a number of fragments of Paul's correspondence with the Corinthian church were assembled, out of order, and published as one letter some time after Paul's martyrdom. The reading for this Sunday was composed after a crisis in his relationship with the Corinthians; a reconciliation between Paul and the Corinthians is reflected in Paul's discourse in the letter about a reconciliation between humanity and God. Paul even speaks of discovering a new ministry through his difficulty with the Corinthian church: "But all is from God, Who reconciled us with Himself through a Messiah and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

### **Third Reading (Luke 15.1-3, 11-32)**

The Parable of the Prodigal Son (also called the Parable of the Compassionate Father) appears only in the Gospel of Luke. Luke uses it as the climax of three stories about rejoicing over the return of what was lost—following the story of the lost sheep and that of the woman's lost coin. At one level of meaning, Luke has Jesus telling the Pharisees and scribes, albeit by indirection, to rejoice at the moral conversion of the tax farmers, who had worked for the Romans, and at the conversion of sinners, or even to rejoice at the conversion of pagans to the Jesus movement. And that is an important lesson—to respect the various routes by which people come to know the compassionate God. But there is more.

Luke writes of the prodigal son, "and coming to an understanding of himself..." (a close rendering of Luke's Greek). It happens that when we do not understand ourselves that we wander off with what we have been given and waste it on a worthless life of self-indulgence. The point is not about financial want alone but a frittering away of the cultural heritage received from the past. Just think how much more prepared to cope with the world an adult of modest means is, compared to a wealthy child. How often do famous celebrities, lacking in cultivation in so many ways and too rich in their youth for their own good, fail to cope with life's challenges? It is not that age alone makes the difference; I have seen havoc and anxiety created for young people by older individuals whose way in the world had been too untroubled and ready-made for them in the course of their own youth. Such people often have no compassion for others. Troubled and priceless is the path to self-understanding!

Now hearing the reason for the bagpipe and song, the older brother did not want to go in. He had observed every rule of right behavior, and no festival had ever been arranged on that account. Relax, son, you still have the sort of wealth your little brother wasted. But "...it was necessary to celebrate and rejoice, because this your brother was dead and came to life, and was lost and is found."

## 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

## **The Whole Truth: A Matter of Justice**

Anthony J. Blasi

Telling the truth is commanded in the Decalogue, but an ethic of such rules does not do justice to the creative intent of God. As created, humans flourish in promoting truth, while not bearing false witness is a minimum standard, well below human possibility. The scientist bent on discovery, the historian ferreting out the whole story, the teacher occasioning comprehension rather than stimulus-response memorization—these and many more people promote truth. Indeed, the person whose mind is enveloped in convictions not based on fact is both deceiver and deceived, and consequently perpetuates injustice toward self and other alike.

We know the golden rule, but if we were to prefer injustice toward ourselves in the form of self-deception, even the golden rule fails to serve as a guide for our stance toward others. The rule is incomplete without a genuineness in our feeling for the other, sympathy in action. Generalizing this to our world, our social environs, we see that misinformation, partial information, and suppressed information mislead and therefore make our world an unjust one.

Untruth or deception that makes the world unjust comes in different forms. The simplest is the statement contrary to fact. The claim that vaccinating children causes autism, for example, is a statement contrary to fact, as are climate change denials. The injustice that comes from such deceptions comes by way of misinformed decisions not to have children vaccinated and not to reduce burning coal and gasoline, with the result that epidemics break out among children and weather events become more extreme, doing damage to people's homes and disrupting their lives, and sometimes causing untimely deaths.

Then there is the statement taken out of context. This happens when, for example, a fragmentary biblical statement is used to justify a conclusion to which one would not arrive if one understood the statement in context. The context may be a fuller biblical passage or the social and cultural environment in which the passage was originally written. The oft-quoted dictum from *Second Thessalonians*, for example, “Let the one not working not eat,” was not about poor people out of work. In fact, poor people in antiquity were slaves who did not have the luxury of not working. The dictum was about would-be clients hanging around the courtyards of powerful people and trying to ingratiate themselves with the latter. I have had the occasion recently of reviewing the use of biblical citations and citations of earlier magisterial statements found in the claims of Pope John Paul II and Pope Paul VI rejecting the ordination of women. Paul VI presumed that the constant teaching of the Christian Church was against it. He ordered the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to prove it, which the Congregation proceeded to do with deceptive citations of fragments taken out of their contexts. The only citation that was not deceptive in this way was from a fourth century work of what was considered a heretical Syrian faction, which had made changes in earlier Christian writings. John Paul II unwittingly repeated the Congregation’s deceptions.

A third kind of untruth or deception is suppressing facts. For two years in American national politics, we had the example of the House of Representatives ostensibly investigating questionable activities in the 2016 presidential campaigns, and deliberately not finding what is and was known to have taken place. We also have the spectacle of the Church hierarchy suppressing information about clergy abusers of minors, up until the time the Vatican had to issue instructions mandating reporting the crimes to the civil authorities. Here in San Antonio access to financial records in a political party office had been blocked so that even the recently elected county party chair could not look at them, and some of the records may have been destroyed—all to suppress the free-wheeling use of donations to the party. (I mention this last case because I have been pictured in the local newspaper and on television standing with the current party chair as she announced to a news conference that she obtained the records with the help of a locksmith and found grounds to turn them over to the local law enforcement officials and the FBI.) Were there no injustices to the donors to hide, nothing would have been hidden.

The question of truthfulness has more to it than not deceiving others and self. The noble nature of scientific inquiry and other kinds of scholarship was mentioned above in passing. More generally, inquiry and education are to be promoted. There is no reason to tolerate anti-intellectualism in the Christian tradition. Those who have faith in a creator God need not fear inquiry into creation and the history of the events that occur within that divine work. Rather, one should be confident that the mind of the Creator—working through evolution, a big bang, or whatever—is reflected in what has been created and, properly understood, will not conflict with Revelation properly understood. Truthfulness also implies that government not be empowered to infringe on the freedoms of speaking, writing, hearing, reading, and inquiring. This pertains not only to the state but the administrations of schools, universities, and churches as well.

Finally, consider the tendency of deceivers, including self-deceivers, to project their tendency onto others, so that they mistrust not only other untruthful people but

truthful people also. “Urban legends” and conspiracy theories thrive in an environment of deceivers mistrusting non-deceivers and deceivers alike.

## 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>

Interfaith Radio, (*Interfaith Voices*)  
<http://www.interfaithradio.org/>

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)

NowCastSA  
[www.nowcastsa.com/](http://www.nowcastsa.com/)