

## Testimony



## A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating April 21, 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 Easter Sunday. Tom Keene's poem is *Body*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is a news story from Georgia, where a Pax Christi local group and others engaged in collective action in support of a licensed self-help drug rehabilitation program that the local city government did not want; it reminds me of the treatment of the Catholic Worker House in San Antonio by local government a few years ago.



Photo by John Dauer

### Calendar

#### In Austin

**Thursday April 25**, 6:30pm-**Friday April 26**, 4:00pm, Women in Charge at Church: Reimaging Authority and Power. Presenters: Cynthia Rigby, Jacqueline Lapsley, Bridgett Green, and Beverly Gaventa. \$100.00, includes meals. Westminster Presbyterian Church, 3208 Exposition Blvd. Information and registration:

<https://www.ptsem.edu/events/women-in-charge-at-church-reimagining-authority-and-power>.

**Tuesday April 30**, 12:00pm-1:00pm, discussion: What is the Future of Speculative Journalism? (re nyti.ms/2MBsDRv). Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. Information and parking: <https://www.stedwards.edu/contact-us/main-campus-united-states>.

### **In Dallas**

**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).

**Thursday April 18**, 12:30pm-2:00pm, Elzbieta M. Gozdzia (Georgetown University), "Trafficked Children and Youth in the United States: Reimagining Survivors." Florence Hall 106, Southern Methodist University. Information: Bora Lac, [blaci@smu.edu](mailto:blaci@smu.edu), 214-768-4706. Reservation by April 15: <https://whoozin.com/43P-949-NH6M>

**Friday April 26**, 8:00am-4:00pm, Paving the Way to Inclusion: Race, Place, & Schooling for Educational Equity. George W Bush Institute, SMU Campus, 2943 SMU Blvd.

### **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).

**Wednesday April 24**, 12:00pm-1:00pm, death penalty vigil, in front of El Paso Courthouse.

### **In Houston**

**Friday April 19**, 8:00am-9:00am, Annelie Sheline (Baker Institute for Public Policy), "Branding Islam: The Strategic Use of Official Religion." Lovett Hall 402, Rice University (use entrance C). Register at <https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date20190419/event-id/20207>.

**Wednesday April 24**, 1:00pm, Cleve V. Tinsley IV (Rice U. doctoral candidate, dept. of religion), Makin Black Lives Matter: Race and Religion in Contemporary struggles for African-American Identity (thesis defense). Humanities building 226. Information: [graduate@rice.edu](mailto:graduate@rice.edu)

**Friday April 26**, 8:00pm, Asma T. Uddin (U.C.L.A.), "When Islam Isn't a Religion." River Oaks Islamic Center, 3110 Eastside St. Information: [tolerance@rice.edu](mailto:tolerance@rice.edu).

**Sunday April 28**, 9:30 Earth Care Congregations Certification. St. Philip Presbyterian Church 201, 4807 San Felipe.

**Saturday May 4**, 7:00pm, documentary “Imprisoning a Generation.” Follows four young Palestinians imprisoned under Israeli military occupation. Dir. Zelda Edmunds will answer questions after the screening. Rice Media Center auditorium room 100. Information: 713-348-4853 or 713-348-4882.

**Sunday May 5**, 9:30am, Walker Fair (Texas Solar outfitters), “Solar Power: Green is the new black.” St. Philip Presbyterian Church 201, 4807 San Felipe.

### **In San Antonio**

**Wednesday April 17**, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Nancy McLean (Duke University) “Issues in Contemporary American Democracy.” Fiesta Room, Coates Student Center 111, Trinity University, One Trinity Place.

**Wednesday April 24**, 6:00pm-8:00pm, panel, “Immigrant Justice is Racial Justice.” Laura Cortes (Mexican Consulate), Selene M. Gomez (SA Stands), Guillermo Hernandez (attorney), Mary Grace Ketner (Interfaith Welcome Committee), Einas Albadri (RAICES), Martha Lopez (YWCA), and Enrique Romero Moreno, moderator. YWCA, 503 Castroville Road. Information: 210-433-9922. Register at [www.eventbrite.com/e/stand-again-against-racism-2019-tickets-598016373037](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/stand-again-against-racism-2019-tickets-598016373037).

**Thursday April 25**, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Anecdotally Yours. Ten story tellers with a bystander story concerning sexual violence. Main Exhibition Room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Central Library, 600 Soledad.

### **Second Reading** (Colossians 3:1-4 or First Corinthians 5:6B-8)

The lectionary offers two alternatives for the Second Easter Sunday reading in Year C. The first is a brief excerpt from *Colossians*, an essay written in response to a local mixture of Christian and folk religion in what is now western Turkey. Folk religion tends to be practical, even magical. For example, it emphasizes cures and other favors sought from the divine. The author points away from such a mixture: “So if you were raised together with the Messiah, seek what is above, where the Messiah is seated at the right hand of God; think on what is above, not on what is on the earth....”

The second alternative is also a brief excerpt, but from a genuine letter of Paul. First Corinthians 5:6b-8 uses the imagery of new leaven, which is to be used in place of some old leaven. Not many people make bread rise any more; the bread is available already risen and baked. So we do not often think of using some yeast one day or week to the next until it is worn out. Paul’s image seems to imply that an old religiosity can lose its vitality and that it needs to be replaced now and then.

### **Third Reading** (Luke 24.1-12; John 20.1-9)

Those who attend the beautiful Easter Vigil mass might also witness the Baptism of new Christians, the Confirmation of Christians newly affiliating with the Roman

Catholic Church, and the first reception of the Eucharist by the new Christians and new Catholics. The gospel reading for the Vigil is Luke 24.1-12. Those who attend the Easter Sunday morning mass will hear John 20.1-9.

Luke notably created an architectural structure in his *Gospel* as well as in his *Acts of the Apostles*. The architecture of his *Gospel* includes a parallel between the Transfiguration (Luke 9.2-8) and the testimony about the Resurrection (Luke 24.1-12). In the Transfiguration, Jesus is transformed in appearance before Peter, John, and James, and two men (Elijah and Moses) were talking with Jesus. In the testimony about the Resurrection, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James find two men before them. "Why are you seeking the living among the dead?" "(T)he son of humanity had to be handed over to the hands of sinful humans, crucified, and on the third day be raised." Why was all this necessary? It was not for the benefit of Jesus but for that of us, mere humans, who often cannot begin to fathom the attraction of God to us without fathoming first the hatred humans could direct toward one another. Such is the role conversion plays in the realization of full humanity.

The *Johannine Gospel* does not structure the testimony about the Resurrection as an architectural parallel to the Transfiguration. Rather, the Johannine tradition was built upon the early memories of a child, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and involves Simon Peter and Mary Magdalene. The narrative reaches its point when it notes that they came to believe, "for they did not yet know the scripture that says he must rise from the dead." It is possible to recite the words of scripture without *knowing* them. Similarly, it helps to experience Jesus as *absent* before we can really know him as *present*. As with Luke's gospel, the Johannine Gospel points to the role of conversion. Such a conversion is not an *experience* of converting, a "born again" *experience*, but an experience of Jesus absent and a recognition of the reality of Jesus being born again, of being present again. We are part of the narrative, but that narrative is not about us and our experience; it transcends us.

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## Poem

### *Body*

Breathing air in and out,  
pumping blood out and in.  
Skin and skeleton,  
muscles and nerves.

All humming in concert,  
self-repairing, keeping on.  
Waking to do in the world.  
Sleeping to rest in being.

Spiral strands of DNA  
in genes knowing what to do,  
coming into and  
going out of existence.

Dying and resurrecting  
over and over, all our lives.  
Laughter in pain,  
tears in joy.

A Temple of sorts.

Tom Keene and Muse  
September 25, 2018

## **Pax Christi Georgia Members Participate in Vigil for Sandy Springs Nonprofit**

*Article from The Georgia Bulletin*  
By Nichole Golden, Staff Writer | Published March 7, 2019

SANDY SPRINGS—In the document, “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,” the U.S. bishops examine the church’s teaching encouraging Catholics to take an active part in public life.

Father John Kieran, archdiocesan priest and Sandy Springs resident, is joining members of Pax Christi of St. Jude the Apostle Church to live out this call to faithful citizenship. They are voicing support for the nonprofit Mary Hall Freedom House in its zoning citation struggles with the city of Sandy Springs.

Father Kieran, Pax Christi members and Rabbi Spike Anderson of Temple Emanu-El, Sandy Springs, participated in a prayer vigil Feb. 22 at Rivercliff Lutheran Church for Mary Hall Freedom House. Some 75 people, including community members and past clients of the housing and substance abuse program, attended the service.

Mary Hall Freedom House was founded by Lucy Hall, who lost her mother to alcoholism. She and some of her siblings also struggled with substance abuse. Hall dedicated herself to breaking the cycle of generational addictions. She holds a degree in human services from Shorter University, Rome, and national credentials as a substance abuse counselor. MHFH serves homeless women, some of them veterans, and their children.

Rabbi Anderson, whose wife serves on the house’s board of directors, offered remarks, as did Father Kieran. The priest is chaplain for the Atlanta Veterans Administration Medical Center.

At the vigil, he emphasized the rights of the voiceless and praised the program's successes in helping 10,000 women and children since 1996.

"I commend Lucy, and all, for upholding the right of citizens to pursue programs of self-improvement," he said. "Self-improvement by learning and skills enrichment is an inalienable right, rooted in the dignity of the human person."

The vigil had a revival-like atmosphere, including music and prayer, interspersed with remarks. Ellen and Everitt Howe of Pax Christi reflected on the Beatitudes, and Tim Spruell, also of Pax Christi, read from the Gospel of St. Luke. Also attending from St. Jude were Joe and Mary Jean Goode.

Hall spoke at a Pax Christi meeting in January and the members decided to offer support. Everitt Howe was acquainted with Hall through participation in Leadership Sandy Springs.

### **Condos at center of dispute**

Hall told The Georgia Bulletin the first set of zoning citations was issued in 2017. The program had been located in the city of Sandy Springs for 22 years and never previously been cited.

The program, through its for-profit Freedom Village, LLC, purchased 33 units at the 90-unit condominium property at Reserve of Dunwoody on Roberts Road that year. They previously rented units at other complexes.

Initially some neighbors were wary of the program and complained to the city. After an inspection in July 2017 by city code enforcement, MHFH was cited for having an office space in one of the units, a zoning violation with which Hall said they were unfamiliar. The program moved the office space to its Roswell Road location and paid a fine.

"From day one, whatever we've needed to do, we've been willing," said Hall.

The program began to develop a positive relationship with the condo board, which Hall said it has maintained.

In October 2017 enforcement officers issued 11 new citations, claiming MHFH was a personal care home providing services in residential units in violation of zoning, but the case was dismissed by a judge in Sandy Springs Municipal Court.

A third wave of citations came in August 2018. The case is still pending. A court date is set for March 12, the 29th anniversary of Hall's recovery from addictions.

Sandy Springs City Attorney Dan Lee, in a response sent by email to The Georgia Bulletin, said that Lucy Hall is being cited for operating a drug rehabilitation program and business in a residentially zoned property. He asserted that MHFH has a license from two state agencies "to operate drug rehab operations in the condos," which he said bolsters the contention of the city about how the condos are being used. A license can't exempt MHFH from complying with local zoning, he wrote.

"While MHFH has attempted to gain a business license for the units, the zoning requirements prohibit business operations in a residential setting," Lee wrote.

Also, he wrote, those living in the MHFH condos don't have "residential rights of tenancy" and can be "discharged" from living there by MHFH for violating program rules, such as curfews and restrictions on guests.

"The persons staying in the MHFH units do not have residential living rights, and this is in direct conflict with the city's residentially zoned areas," the city attorney wrote.

### **Nonprofit turns to federal court**

The MHFH board decided to file a federal lawsuit against the city, its mayor and several city employees, alleging discrimination against those with disabilities and minorities.

The suit details how two city employees reportedly questioned if a Mary Hall Freedom House board member would like having the clients living in her own community.

Hall asserted they are not feeding, counseling or providing drug rehabilitation to the women at the residential units. "They live there," she said.

Program services are provided from the Roswell Road office. Hall points out that the program partners with U.S. Housing and Urban Development, the Georgia Department of Community Health, and the Veterans Administration, and is licensed and accredited. Because MHFH receives government funding, it is routinely inspected and audited by the partner agencies.

"I believe in God for victory," Hall said about the future.

The support of the Catholic community has been important for the program, she said.

"They have been phenomenal," she said. "I turned around in court and saw the Pax Christi crew and I cried."

Pax Christi USA works against economic injustices harmful to those who are poor, minorities, children and women. The group promotes universal human rights through solidarity with oppressed and marginalized people struggling for dignity.

Ellen Howe of Pax Christi said they have referred women to the program, as have other parishes in the archdiocese, with several success stories.

Howe was moved by Hall's remarks at the prayer vigil and the reaction of program alumna.

"She blinked back a few tears. One of the girls came up and hugged her," she said.

One by one, program graduates came up to embrace the program's founder and stayed by her side.

"There was this big knot of a hug," said Howe. "It showed me what a difference she has made."

Out of the numerous citations, "none of them have stuck," said Howe.

While MHFH is not tied to the Catholic Church, Pax Christi members felt compelled by the Gospel to act in support.

"It's something we're supposed to be doing," said Howe.

Father Kieran also wrote a letter to the editor of the Sandy Springs Reporter newspaper, backing MHFH.

In closing his remarks at the vigil, he talked about the importance of women and children having a stable environment to help make their families whole again after homelessness or addiction.

"The MHFH record of success is long and well known," said Father Kieran. "Its contribution to a better society is huge. May it continue the good work of healing and restoration in a true American spirit and with the blessing of God."



## 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.sanantoniopeace.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/)