

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating June 23, 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

After the calendar, the Liturgical Reading reflections are based on readings for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. Tom Keene's poem is *Body of Christ*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>.

Pax Christi Austria is organizing its annual International Jägerstätter Commemoration, which will take place in St. Radegund and Tarsdorf, Upper Austria, August 8-9. Franz Jägerstätter was a young Austrian farmer and family man who could not reconcile war with Christianity; he even reduced his agricultural produce so that the Nazis, who had taken over Austria, would have less to tax for their war. He was eventually drafted into the military during World War II and beheaded for refusing to engage in combat. The 2019 Jägerstätter conference will highlight another Austrian martyr whom the Nazis beheaded, Sister Maria Restituta Kafka, SFCC. Information on Sr. Restituta follows the poem.

Some years ago when I was living in Nashville, an elderly Pax Christi activist who knew he did not have many more years to live asked me to drive him to Fort Benning, Georgia, so that he could join the annual **School of Americas Watch** demonstration one last time. The School of Americas has changed its name, but it still trains people who become brutal military dictators in various Latin American nations. The peaceful and very ritualistic demonstration in opposition to the school was confined to a narrow public roadway that led up to the gates of the military grounds. Armed soldiers in high watch towers on either side of the route looked down upon us as we walked. Military helicopters circled about over our heads, making it difficult to hear the few speeches given at the end of the route. After commemorating by name numerous people killed "extra-judicially" we traced our steps on the roadway, again between the menacing watch towers and under the helicopters. Since then, the annual demonstration has moved elsewhere, but this coming November 15-17 it returns to Fort Benning to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Central American University Massacre. Check in at <https://www.soaw.org/home/> in the future as plans develop.

Calendar

In Austin

Monday June 17-Thursday June 20, 9:30am-1:30pm, Morality course, sponsored by Catholic Diocese of Austin. Fleck Hall 206, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. \$60. Register: <https://secure.acceptiva.com/?cst=98ad94>

In Dallas

Wednesday June 19, 6:00pm, Texas Coalition Against the Death Penalty members gather at Celebration Restaurant, 4503 W. Lovers Lane.

In El Paso

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

Saturday June 22, 6:00pm, Voice of the Voiceless Solidarity Dinner, in recognition of the living conditions of the Latin American poor, especially refugee children of the border. Keynote speaker, Lynn Coyle, Esp. Border Witness Recipient, Teresa Todd, Esp. \$50. Santa Lucia Church, 518 Gallagher St. Information and tickets: <https://vov2019.brownpapertickets.com/> or 915-545-4509.

In Houston

Saturday June 22, 11:00am, Juneteenth Brunch, hosted by young adult Catholics of African descent. Texas State University Newman Center, 3535 Wheeler St. "Open to all young adults."

In San Antonio

Tuesday June 18, 6:00pm-9:00pm, Wild and Scenic Film Festival. "Where activism gets inspired." Sponsored by the San Antonio River Authority. Santikos Palladium, 17703 IH-10 Frontage Road.

Tuesday June 18, 6:30pm-8:00pm, "Retrofitting Ecology into the Urban Environment," sponsored by the Sierra Club. Eco Centro, 1802 N. Main.

Sunday June 23, 4:00pm-6:00pm, 50 Years of Hope: A Pride Interfaith Service. 50 years after the Stonewall Riots. Madison Square Presbyterian Church, 319 Camden St.

Wednesday July 10, 6:00pm-7:30pm, film, *In the Light of Reverence* (about sacred spaces of Native Americans). Sinkin Eco Centro, 1802 N. Main.

Saturday August 3, 10:00am, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting. Residence of Tom Wakely, 16406 Ledge Point St.

Second Reading (1 Corinthians 1:23-26)

In this brief passage, Paul is recounting the Christian tradition of worship as he had received it “from the Lord” in the Christian community: “that the Reverend Jesus on the night he was handed over took bread and giving thanks broke it and said, ‘This is *my* body which is for you; do this in memory of me.’ And likewise the cup after eating . . .” I italicize “my” in the translation because Paul moved it forward from its normal grammatical place in order to emphasize it. The body is his; it is not something for people to divide up as if it were theirs.

It *is* the body and blood of the Messiah, not in the way he had a body and blood when he walked around Palestine but a risen body and blood: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you are proclaiming the death of the Lord until he comes.” When prayer would raise our hope and confidence, there is always the temptation to bring the divine down to our level. The real presence is a special kind of presence.

Third Reading (Luke 9.11b-17)

The reading is Luke’s version of the legend of Jesus multiplying loaves and fishes, which has been preached on for centuries as an allegory for the Eucharist or for the generous sharing of food, the latter premised on the assumption that the people in the crowds were hiding their provisions under their garments. Luke takes over the essential narrative from Mark 6.32-44, the first of two such multiplications in Mark’s gospel. While Mark places the multiplication near the southern shore of the Sea of Galilee and has Jesus send the disciples by boat to Bethsaida afterward, Luke has it occur in Bethsaida, which was on the north shore of the lake. Both describe their setting as a desert place, though Mark has two multiplications—one for Judeans and Galileans and one for gentiles—while Luke narrates only one. A major point that Luke pursues rather consistently is that there is only one Christianity; so he writes of only one multiplication and blessing and places it at the margin between the Jewish and gentile worlds.

Can there ever be a Eucharistic Blessing that is divisible? Luke did not think there could be. Could there be a generous sharing of food that is ethnically exclusive? Again, Luke did not think there could be. It would be to engage in an erroneous literalism to limit the ethical point Luke was making, to limit it to bread and small fish, or to food for that matter.

Poem

Body of Christ (At breakfast with fellow activists)

We dare to embody you in our communion
over tacos and coffee, amid laughter at ourselves,
our talk about matters that matter.

We embody you in our recall:

of your presence then,
 your healing touches,
 your startling stories,
 your embracing glances
 that seized us to the core.

of your presence now,
in our hungers for justice,
in our grief over cruelty,
in our pleasure at each of our
faltering forward steps,

of your lasting presence
as the arc of our becoming
bends toward the all we together can be.

Tom Keene
August 12, 2016

Blessed Maria Restituta Kafka¹

Blessed Maria Restituta Kafka was a Franciscan nun condemned to death under the Nazis for her opposition to the regime.

Blessed Maria was born in 1894 in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire and was baptized Helena. Helena's father was a shoemaker. When she was very young, Helena's family moved to Vienna, the capital, and she grew up in the bustling city.

As a young woman, at the exciting turn of the twentieth century, Helena found work in Vienna first as a salesclerk, and then as a nurse. While working as a nurse in the hospital, she came into contact with the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Despite being surrounded by the glamor and comforts of city life as a young woman, Maria was attracted to these religious sisters' simple and self-giving way of life. Helena

¹ From <http://faith.nd.edu>

joined their community at the age of 20, taking the name Maria Restituta after an early Christian martyr.

As the brightness of the new century faded into the horror of war, Maria continued to serve as a nurse in the hospital during World War I. Eventually, through her skill and dedication, Maria became the head surgical nurse at her hospital. When the nationalist-socialist regime came to power, in the inter-war years of the 1930's, Maria Restituta was not afraid to speak out against it. When the hospital built a new wing, Maria placed a crucifix inside every room. The Nazi government demanded that she remove the crucifixes, but Maria refused. Clearly, a principled, stubborn woman was going to be an obstacle, so the Nazis made up their minds to remove her. The Nazis wanted to arrest her but were prevented from doing so immediately because Maria was so indispensable to the hospital.

A doctor who supported the Nazis eventually betrayed Maria and handed her over to them on a trumped-up false charge. In 1942, as Maria was coming out from an operation, she was arrested by the Nazi police and sentenced to death for treason. Maria was given the choice to renounce her religious community and thus to spare her life. She declined.

During more than a year in prison, she cared for other prisoners. In one of her letters from that time, she wrote, "It does not matter how far we are separated from everything, no matter what is taken from us: the faith that we carry in our hearts is something no one can take from us. In this way, we build an altar in our own hearts."

The Nazis beheaded Maria on Maria 30, 1943—she was only 48.

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.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/