

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating July 28, 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 Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *A boy and His Ball*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>.

The National Council of Churches and Sojourners developed a statement about the policies that may lead to another war in the Persian Gulf; it was published July 8. Two Catholic bishops signed the statement, along with many other faith leaders: Bishop John E. Stowe of Lexington Kentucky, bishop-president of Pax Christi USA, and Bishop Marc Stenger of Troyes, France, c-president of Pax Christi International. The statement follows the poem.

Calendar

In Austin

Sunday August 18 (3rd Sunday of the month), 7:00pm, Pax Christi Austin meeting. Fr. Payne House, St. Ignatius Church, 126 Oltorf St.

In Dallas/Fort Worth

Wednesday July 24, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Lloyd J. Dumas, "The Peacekeeping Economy: Using Economic Relationships to Build a More Peaceful, Prosperous and secure World." Raible Chapel, First Unitarian Church of Dallas, 4015 Normandy Dr.

Saturday September 14, 8:00am-4:00pm, conference, "Compassion in Action: Applications in Today's Times." For information see <https://compassionconference2019.simpletix.com/SimpleTixExpress/Events/EventsSectionDetail.aspx?Showid=41594&EventTimeld=10124#ShowDetails>. First United Methodist Church, 503 N. Central Expressway, Richardson, TX 75180. \$55.00 to \$65.00.

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).

In San Antonio

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

Saturday August 3, 1:30pm, film, "The River and the Wall," about the Rio Grande environment. Christus Heritage Hall, 4707 Broadway.

Tuesday August 20, 6:00pm, Alamo Group, Sierra Club meeting: Daniel Boice (Scientific Studies & Consulting) and Michelle Garza (San Antonio River Authority), "The Head is On! Understanding San Antonio's Urban Heat Island Effect and What We Can Do about It." Eco Centro, 1802 N. Main.

Wednesday September 18, 7:00pm-9:30pm, Peter Steinfels lecture. University Center, Conference Room A, St. Mary's University. Parking in Lots D and H. Information: Cynthia Stookesberry, cstookesberry@stmarytx.edu, 210-436-8054.

Thursday September 19, 4:00pm-8:30pm, symposium, "Dealing with Crisis in the Church," featuring Peter steinfels. University Center, Conference Room A and Foyer, St. Mary's University. Information: Susie Elias selias@stmarytx.edu, 210-436-3516.

Second Reading (Colossians 2:12-14)

This brief excerpt from the pseudepigraphic *Letter to the Colossians* is located within a section that encourages distinguishing between human religion on the one hand and on the other faith in the God Who lives within Jesus the Messiah. As such, it involves some earthly antiauthoritarianism. The translation used at mass turns a participial phrase into an independent sentence; while this is a legitimate translation practice designed to change from the Greek style, which consisted of a main sentence and a string of dependent participial constructions, it has the disadvantage of separating passages from their context. The Greek sentence begins three verses earlier, speaking of the Messiah, Jesus: "For all the fullness of divinity dwells bodily in him, and you have been fulfilled in him, and he is the head of every power and authority, by whom you were circumcised with a circumcision not done by hands, by the circumcision of the Messiah with the removal of the body of the flesh, buried with him in baptism; you were also raised by him through trust in the power of God, Who raised him from the dead."

The passage goes on to draw an analogy between circumcision and resurrection. The verse that comes after the reading reiterates the antiauthoritarianism: "Removing the powers and the authorities, he made an example, with boldness, by him triumphing over them."

Third Reading (Luke 11.1-13)

Luke does not use the liturgical version of the Lord's prayer as found in the *Gospel of Matthew* 6.9-13 or in the *Didache* 8.2 (an ancient local church booklet) but

presents it as part of his narrative: “When you pray, say, Father, let your name be made holy, let your kingdom come; give us each day our sustaining bread; and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone wronging us; and bring us not into temptation.”

Let your name be holy: God is respected as God, not addressed as an instrument to be bent to our wishes.

Let your kingdom come: Kingdom, domain, imperium—the term was commonly used for what the Roman Emperor possessed. It is the *basileia* of God that is called for in prayer, not the one of emperors who overpower peoples and nations, not one by which one might be tempted.

Give us each day our sustaining bread: Bread was the simple meal of those who worked and produced; give us that food, not the worked-over delicacies of those who would be somebody.

And we have discovered what it is to forgive.

This is a prayer of few words; that feature is accentuated in Luke’s version. Prayer is not principally words. With practice its words become fewer.

So a visitor comes in from the road. The days were hot in Palestine. We in San Antonio understand such days as those. Travelers walked in the relative cool of the night and arrived when people usually had already turned in for the night. Often nothing was left over from supper. The prayer is not a request for something for oneself but for something to serve to another, to meet the need of a weary traveler.

Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. And what is it that the parable is really about? The Father will “give the holy spirit from heaven to those asking him.” Here the holy spirit from heaven is mind to serve.

Poem

A Boy and his Ball

A story has it that a mother,
looking out her window,
watched her kid play with his ball,
tossing it up and catching it,
over and over, laughing and smiling.

When he came in, she asked,
What were you doing?
I was playing with God.
How did God play with you?
I threw the ball up.
God threw the ball down.

Can we reckon ourselves
with the imagery to perceive

how when birds sing, God sings with them,
when ocean waves splash ashore, God is in motion,
when we walk, God walks with us,
when we dream, God dreams with us?
This us that we are.

Tom Keene and Muse
July 5, 2019

Back from the Brink: No War in Iran National Council of Churches

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. – Matthew 5:9

Jesus' words, "children of God," are directed not to those who merely proclaim their opposition to violence and war, but to those who seek better, life-saving ways to resolve inevitable human conflicts.

A United States war with Iran would be an unmitigated disaster, morally and religiously indefensible; U.S. faith leaders must be among the first to rise up, say "No!"—and call for better, more effective, and life-saving ways forward.

Given the escalation of confrontation between the United States and Iran, it is time for leaders from our faith communities to point to more effective ways to transform conflict and to speak strongly against military action that could have enormous human and financial costs, and which could easily and broadly escalate.

With tensions rising over attacks on chemical tankers, the shooting down of an unmanned U.S. surveillance drone, and threatened retaliatory air strikes, urgent action is needed now, particularly in the context of an unraveling Iran nuclear deal from which the U.S. irresponsibly withdrew.

Therefore, we as U.S. faith leaders demand that our political leaders seek real diplomatic and humanitarian solutions to the current crisis and refrain from military confrontation with Iran.

While we agree that Iran should repudiate terrorism and not resume uranium enrichment, we stand as religious leaders to say that war is not the answer with Iran and is unjustifiable on moral and religious grounds. Such war would likely have disastrous human and environmental consequences, would be strategically unnecessary, and would lead to regional destabilization, increased terrorism, and unsustainable financial burdens..

Since the start of the war in Iraq, the cost of wars in the Middle East has been almost \$6 trillion and 500,000 lives lost. As people of faith, we are motivated by the humanitarian needs and suffering of all people, including the Iranians, who are already afflicted by severe sanctions and who would be the principal victims of military confrontation. We urge our political leaders to learn from the failed policies of the past. Preventing another costly and unjust U.S. war in the Middle East is a moral imperative.

It is time for a different approach.

1. The United States should offer to return immediately to the Iran nuclear deal and use the resulting discussions with Iran to engage in an effective diplomatic process for enhancing regional security. In the meantime, we urge the United Nations and governments in Europe and beyond to create a new forum for diplomacy with Iran, an international platform that could help restore the positive momentum created by the Iran deal and address the multiple geopolitical issues at the roots of the current confrontation, some of which were not covered in the agreement.

2. The United States should end its policy of harsh and punitive trade sanctions against the Iranian people. Some targeted sanctions may be appropriate to counter Iranian support for armed militancy and weapons proliferation in the region, but these measures should be multilateral in nature and targeted against Iranian officials, not against the entire economy or the general population.

3. If necessary, establish safeguards for commercial shipping in the Gulf. The international naval patrols that have helped to stem piracy off the coast of Somalia may provide a model. This would require agreement from multiple countries and a willingness by the United States to cooperate with other states in coordinated operations. In an atmosphere of close confrontation, blunders must not be used as a pretext for escalating military conflict.

In all of these actions, we pray that our government will step back from military action as an option in this crisis and instead be guided by political wisdom, international legal standards, and the ethical principles of peacemaking, humanitarianism, and civilian immunity. Threats, tearing up diplomatic agreements, and punishing the Iranian people have not worked and are making matters worse.

We call for a different way.

Our scriptures instruct us to avoid war and to live as peaceably as possible with all. We call on all our religious leaders, theologians, clergy, and laypersons to speak out against the option of war with Iran. Loving peace is never enough; we must stop making war and do the hard work of learning to make peace, which will require courage, calm resolve, and responsible leadership.

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/