

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating August 11, 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 Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Abraham's Song*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Last July 18 people gathered at the large chapel at the University of the Incarnate Word on short notice for a service to raise consciousness about the detention of children at our southern border. Chuck Gibbons was there, taking photographs to record the event:



The service at Incarnate Word Chapel was coordinated with a similar one in Washington, D.C., which was followed by an event in the Capitol rotunda where peaceful but inconvenient demonstrators were arrested. For an account forwarded by Sr. Martha Ann Kirk, see <http://saccvi.blogspot.com/search/label/immigrant>.

It is often said that people who ignore history are destined to repeat it. I would add another take on history: It is not possible to “connect the dots” without learning from history where the dots are. Many such dots, or points in history, connect through the disturbing biography of a Michigan ophthalmologist named John Tanton. I must admit never having heard of him until I read his obituary recently in the San Antonio *Express News*, where it appeared to have been abbreviated. If you want to “connect the dots” to find out where the current anti-immigrant ideology was cooked up, you might want to read the obituary for Dr. Tanton as it originally appeared in the *Washington Post*. It follows the poem, below.

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 August 7, 7:00pm-8:30pm, Peter Lumsdaine (Physicians for Social Responsibility and Veterans for Peace), “Protecting Humanity and Creation in the Artificial Intelligence Age.” First Unitarian Church, 4015 Normandy.

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.

Friday September 20, 11:00am, to **Saturday September 21**, 5:00pm, conference: The Art of Resilience—Latinx Public Witness in Troubled Times. Speakers include Fernando Segovia (Vanderbilt Divinity School), Daisy Machado (Union Theological Seminary), Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (Duke University). Free; registration required, at door or online up to September 13 at smu.edu/artofresilience. Multiple locations in Meadows School of the Arts and Perkins School of Theology. Information: <https://www.smu.edu/Perkins/PublicPrograms/LatinoCenter/Events/The-Art-of-Resilience>

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).

Sunday August 11, 3:00pm, film: *Threads*, on World War III. St. Joseph School Auditorium; enter through the school parking lot across from the church rectory, 1315 Travis.

Thursday August 13, 6:45pm, Pax Christi El Paso meeting. Guests welcome. Centro Mujeres de la Esperanza, 1102 Birch St.

Thursday August 15, 12:00pm-1:00pm, death penalty vigil, in front of El Paso County Courthouse.

Friday September 27, 7:00pm, film: *The Sultan and the Saint*, about the meeting of Sultan Malik al Kamil and Saint Francis of Assisi. Following the viewing, panel discussion moderated by Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv. Of Lexington, Kentucky, bishop-president of Pax Christi USA.

In Houston

Wednesday August 21, 6:30pm, film: *Ay Mariposa*, documentary on attempt by US Border Patrol to seize the National Butterfly Center for a border wall site in the Rio Grande Valley. Panel discussion follows. Rice Media Center, Cinema Auditorium, room #100. Use Entrance #8 via University Boulevard and Stockton Dr. Information: info@cechouston.org.

In San Antonio

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.

Saturday September 7, 10:00am, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting. Guests welcome. Residence of Tom Wakely, 16406 Ledge Point.

Wednesday September 11, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Gilbert King, author of *Beneath a Ruthless Sun. A True Story of Violence, Race, and Justice Lost and Found.* The book "plunges the reader deeply into the legal practices, civil rights battles, and stubborn sexual inequalities of the mid-20th century..." McCombs Center Rosenberg Skyroom, University of the Incarnate Word, near the entrance at the US 281 northbound frontage road immediately north of Hildebrand.

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.

Monday September 23, 4:00pm-6:00pm, Stephen Sheehi (William and Mary University), "Decolonizing the Humanities." Northrup Hall 040, Trinity University, One Trinity Place.

Second Reading (Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19)

"Now faith is the foundation of things hoped for, an inner conviction of unseen deeds." So reads verse 1. The chapter goes on to give examples of people who had faith: Abel, Enoch, Noah. The selection from the lectionary skips these and takes up the next example: Abraham. "By faith Abraham, when called, obeyed the command to go to a place that he was about to receive as an inheritance, and he left not having been assured where he was going." The point of the examples, that of Abraham in particular, is that God is calling us as well not to remain settled just as we find ourselves but to go on with confidence, albeit as sojourners, aliens. Speaking of themselves as aliens makes it clear "that they are seeking a fatherland." God's promise is not about what we already have but about what is to come about: "Therefore God was not ashamed to be called their God, for He was preparing a city for them." The point is not for us, humans, to feel good but for God to be satisfied.

Third Reading (Luke 12.32-48)

The reading might be abbreviated to Luke 12.35-40 in some churches, but it is worthwhile considering it in context. "And be prepared, because you do not know the hour that the son of humanity is coming." Jesus had been teaching the disciples that they should store up heavenly rather than worldly treasures, and that they should do so when they have the opportunity. He concludes with the statement about not knowing when the opportunity comes and goes.

"And Peter said, 'Lord, are you saying this parable to us or also to all?'" Jesus does not seem to answer Peter's question at first, but after a while he is seen to answer it indeed: "And to whom much is given, much will be sought, and to whom much is entrusted, an abundance will be asked."

Jesus did speak in parables, using such worldly events as the acquisition of wealth and preparations for wedding feasts to confront his listeners with issues of spiritual importance and responsibility toward others. What are "spiritual treasurers"?

A treasure is not something used in the immediate present to meet momentary needs but things saved for future contingencies. It is not saved by being put in storage, where a thief may find it, but put to productive use, invested. A spiritual treasure is an investment in the mind, mind understood in a broad sense. It is a preparation of one's power of anticipating outcomes. We generally call such an investment *wisdom*. It involves a breadth of awareness, a willingness to bring about proper developments, and a sense of proportion to guide one away from trivial goals and toward worthy ones. Such wisdom comes from educative experience.

Experience, of course, accumulates over time, but time can go by without that accumulation taking place. It is perfectly possible to squander time by, as it were,

sleepwalking through it. There is a difference, for example, between thirty years of experience and one year of experience repeated thirty times over.

Poem

Abraham's song

Did that schlepping Aramean
trumpet in lavish excess
when he sowed his seed
between the thighs of Sarah,
her servants' and his?

Did the death camp smokestacks
sigh in frustration,
knowing they worked in vain,
that around the same earth
that received
their fulsome spewing of bone ash,
under the same sky
that inhaled the stench of burning bodies,
everywhere Abraham's offspring
begot and delivered,
fresh from amniotic flush,
new beings,
so, nations yet to be known
would bless themselves by his name?

Tom Keene and Muse
1985

John Tanton, architect of anti-immigration and English-only efforts, dies at 85

By Matt Schudel

Washington Post July 21, 2019

John H. Tanton, a Michigan ophthalmologist who was the architect of a national anti-immigration movement that found expression in the policies of the administration of President Trump and who was labeled by watchdog groups as a thinly veiled white nationalist, died July 16 at a nursing center in Petoskey, Mich. He was 85.

A death notice placed by his family with Stone Funeral Homes of Petoskey said he died "after a 16-year battle with Parkinson's disease."

Dr. Tanton had a 35-year career as an eye doctor and surgeon in Petoskey, a prosperous resort community of about 6,000 on the shore of Lake Michigan.

He was best known for leading nationwide efforts to reduce immigration to the United States, primarily as a way to preserve American culture. He also spearheaded efforts to make English the official language of the United States and to abolish bilingual education.

“He is the most influential unknown man in America,” Linda Chavez, a disaffected associate and a onetime adviser to President Ronald Reagan, told the New York Times in 2011.

As early as the 1950s, Dr. Tanton showed interest in population trends and environmental conservation, later saying, “We have a responsibility to preserve these particular acres, so there will be something left for those who come after us.”

He helped found chapters of the Audubon Society, Sierra Club and Planned Parenthood in northern Michigan and soon focused on population expansion as a far-reaching social problem. He joined the Zero Population Growth organization (now called Population Connection) and was its national president from 1975 to 1977.

About that time, Dr. Tanton concluded that the best way to hold the line on population was to limit the number of immigrants allowed into the United States. He sought to promote his views at Zero Population Growth and the Sierra Club, but both groups were uneasy with his new fixation.

“The whole idea of people trying to hijack an organization to advance their cause was outrageous,” Carl Pope, a onetime executive director of the Sierra Club, told The Washington Post in 2006. “And I found many of the things he had said since I had known him deplorable and unconscionable.”

In 1979, Dr. Tanton established the Federation for American Immigration Reform, ostensibly a moderate, nonpartisan advocacy group.

“We don’t want to project an image of racism, jingoism, xenophobia, chauvinism or isolationism,” he wrote in FAIR’s mission statement. “We plan to make the restriction of immigration a legitimate position for thinking people, and to have FAIR identified in the minds of leaders in the media, academia and government as speaking for a consensus of American thought and opinion.”

He then went on to found a network of related organizations, including the Center for Immigration Studies, NumbersUSA, the Immigration Reform Law Institute, a journal called the Social Contract Press and a publishing company. The groups, most based in Washington or Northern Virginia, have had an outsized influence on Capitol Hill and in framing the national debate on immigration. All share a common goal of limiting the number of immigrants, particularly from Latin America.

In the early 1980s, Dr. Tanton teamed with former senator S.I. Hayakawa (R-Calif.) to organize U.S. English, an effort to fight what Dr. Tanton called the “erosion of the English language” because of a growing number of Spanish-speaking immigrants.

The movement gained momentum and had endorsements from former CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite and writers Saul Bellow and Gore Vidal. Chavez, now a conservative commentator, was president of U.S. English.

The group successfully fought for the passage of a 1986 ballot proposition in California, mandating English as the state’s official language. Other states followed suit.

“The people behind U.S. English and FAIR are a bunch of crazies . . . motivated by xenophobia and probably racism” Fernando Oaxaca, a Los Angeles radio station owner and Republican who served in the administration of President Gerald R. Ford, told the Los Angeles Times in 1986.

Dr. Tanton projected an image as a soft-spoken small-town physician, but in 1988 a two-year-old internal memorandum was leaked, putting his motivations in a different light. In the memo, he warned of a “Latin onslaught,” the increasing influence of the Catholic Church and a threat to the white majority because of the “greater reproductive powers” of Hispanic immigrants.

“As whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night?” Dr. Tanton concluded. “Or will there be an explosion?”

Chavez, Cronkite and Bellow severed ties with U.S. English, and Dr. Tanton eventually resigned as the group’s chairman.

“I am not a separatist,” he told the Detroit Free Press in 1989. “I believe in the melting pot. I don’t care what the pigment in your skin is or the slant of your eyes.”

He began to receive greater scrutiny for his leadership, fundraising and connections to extremists. In the 1980s and 1990s, Dr. Tanton’s flagship group, FAIR, received as much as \$1.5 million from the Pioneer Fund, a foundation that supported research aimed at showing that black people and other minorities are genetically inferior to whites.

Evidence from Dr. Tanton’s archives indicates that he corresponded with Holocaust deniers, a lawyer for the Ku Klux Klan and white nationalists. “I have come to the point of view,” he wrote in 1993 to a fellow supporter of limited immigration, “that for European-American society and culture to persist, it requires a European-American majority and a clear one at that.”

A year later, Dr. Tanton’s company published a translation of a French apocalyptic novel, “The Camp of the Saints,” which describes “swarthy hordes” from India overrunning France and putting French women in brothels. Former Trump White House adviser Stephen K. Bannon has spoken approvingly of the book.

In 2002, the Southern Poverty Law Center, which monitors extremist groups, put Dr. Tanton on the cover of one of its publications, calling him the “puppeteer” of the “organized anti-immigration ‘movement’ in America.” The SPLC designated FAIR and the Center for Immigration Studies as hate groups and later added other organizations founded by Dr. Tanton to the list.

Dr. Tanton denounced the SPLC and other detractors as “special interest groups, driven by the need to scare donors into shelling out more money, resorting to repeated, vicious smears and ad hominem attacks.”

Several early associates broke ranks, including Roger Conner, the first director of FAIR. He told the New York Times in 2011 that Dr. Tanton possessed a quiet charisma “so profound that the people around him disregarded things that we should have called him on.”

Dr. Tanton stepped away from leadership roles at FAIR and other groups in 2011, but they continued to thrive, often under his handpicked successors. In recent years, much of the financial support for his network has come from the Colcom Foundation, which was founded by Cordelia Scaife May, a Pennsylvania heir to the Mellon fortune. Scaife May died in 2005, but according to the Chicago Tribune and

other published reports, the foundation continues to fund Dr. Tanton's organizations, including more than \$70 million between 2010 and 2015.

Restrictive immigration policies long advocated by Dr. Tanton have found favor in the Trump administration, and several people connected to his organizations have had prominent roles in the government.

FAIR's former executive director, Julie Kirchner, is the ombudsman of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Kris Kobach, a former Kansas secretary of state and vice chair of the short-lived White House Commission on Election Integrity, was counsel for FAIR's legal arm, the Immigration Reform Law Institute. White House counselor Kellyanne Conway did polling for FAIR and other groups founded by Dr. Tanton.

John Hamilton Tanton was born Feb. 23, 1934, in Detroit. His father was a Canadian immigrant. In the mid-1940s, the family moved to a farm in Sebewaing, Mich.

Dr. Tanton graduated from Michigan State University in 1956 and from the University of Michigan medical school in 1960. After a medical residency in Denver, he settled in Petoskey in 1964.

He rose at 4 a.m. every day, was a beekeeper and taught himself to read German and play piano. Survivors include his wife of 61 years, the former Mary Lou Brown of Petoskey; two daughters; a sister; and two grandchildren.

About half of Dr. Tanton's archives at the University of Michigan are under seal until 2035. In 2016, Hassan Ahmad, an immigration lawyer in Northern Virginia, filed suit to have the documents released, arguing that they are public records of importance to the nation's civic discourse.

Ahmad won a legal victory in a Michigan appeals court in June, but a final ruling not been made. After reviewing thousands of documents in Dr. Tanton's archives, Ahmad said in an interview, "I think he's the architect, the mastermind of an effort to push a vile and white nationalist agenda, and I don't use those terms lightly."

In addition to Conner and Chavez, another former associate who turned against Dr. Tanton was Patrick Burns, FAIR's former deputy director.

"It's sad," Burns told the Detroit News in 2017. "It's like a dead cat in a well. It poisons a lot of good water. Tanton has been that cat for 30 years."

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/