

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating September 1, 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 Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Potluck with Jesus*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is a statement by Pax Christi USA on the shootings in El Paso and Dayton. These shootings strike home; El Paso is home for one of our Pax Christi Texas chapters, and Dayton is my own original home town. The El Paso gunman's animus was directed against people who comprise the majority of our neighbors in San Antonio.

Calendar

In Austin

Sunday September 15 (3rd Sunday of the month), 7:00pm, Pax Christi Austin meeting. Fr. Payne House, St. Ignatius Church, 126 Oltorf St.

Thursday October 10, 7:00pm-8:30pm, author Jose Antonio Vargas on human rights of immigrants. Recreation and Convocation Center, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. Free; register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/jose-antonio-vargas-freshman-seminar-speaker-tickets-65683054785#tickets>.

In Dallas

Monday September 9, Reception :30pm, program 7:0pm-8:30pm, Faiths in Conversation: What Is Religion. This is the first of a series. The Dallas Institute, 2719 Routh St. Students free; price varies for others \$10-20 per session, \$40-80 per semester. Information and tickets: dallasinstitute.org/faith-in-conversation/

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.

Saturday September 14, 8:30am-after 3:00pm, The Open Window, a conference on priestly ordination of women in the Catholic Church. Featured speakers: Gretchen Klotten Minney, author of *Called—Women Hear the Voice of the Divine*, and Rev. Patricia Sandall. White Rock United Methodist Church, 1450 Old Gate Lane. Pre-registration \$35.00; check made out to The Open Window should be mailed to Joan Dolan, 3732 Townsend, Dallas, TX 75229-3722, along with name and contact information. Walk-ins \$40.00. Lunch included in the conference fee.

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](https://www.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).

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

Tuesday September 3, 12:15pm-1:30pm, Simranjit Khalsa, “Experiencing Othering: The Intersection of Religion and Race among Sikhs in England and the US.” Kyle Morrow Room, Fondren Library, Rice University. Information: Shirley Tapsatt, sht1@rice.edu.

Sundays September 22 and 29, Bruce Yeager, “The Jail and Torches that Never Were: Debunking the Scopes-Trial Myth (Background to the Trial). St. Philip Presbyterian Church, room 201, 4807 San Felipe. Information: mmcgm63@gmail.com.

Tuesday September 24, 6:30pm-8:00pm, Secularity and Science: What Scientists Around the World Really Think About Religion. Elaine Howard Ecklund (Rice University) and John H. Evans (University of California, San Diego). Info: Hayley Hemstreet hjh2@rice.edu, 713-348-3974.

Saturday September 28, 3:00pm, and **Sunday September 29**, 9:30am, film: “Out of Order,” documentary on struggles of LGBTQ clergy. St. Philip Presbyterian Church, 4807 San Felipe. Information: tolerance@rice.edu.

In San Antonio

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.

Saturday September 14, 9:00am-3:00pm, Spirituality and Social Justice Institute, *Restoring Justice: Breaking the Cycle of Violence, Crime, and Incarceration.* Featured speaker: Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J. Whitley Theological Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate Dr., Suggested payment \$50.00. Meal included. Information and payment: <https://ost.edu/event/ssji2019/>

Wednesday September 18, 7:00pm-9:30pm, Peter Steinfels, “Sex Abuse and the Future Church.” 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, “Moving the Church Forward,” 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.

Thursday October 24, 6:00pm, film, *The Sultan and the Saint*, and interfaith gathering t share the *Document of Fraternity for Humanity for world Peace and Living Together* of Pope Francis and Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Al-Tayyeb (Abu Dhabi, February 4, 2019). St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 4201 De Zavala Rd. Free, but tickets required: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-sultan-and-the-saint-an-interfaith-gathering-tickets-66686409847>.

Second Reading (Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24)

In *Exodus* 19 the presence of God is described as frightful, complete with thunder claps and storm clouds. The author of *Hebrews* suggests that one need no longer approach God with dread: “For you have not approached something groped after, a consuming fire, darkness, gloom, a tempest, the echo of a trumpet call, and the sound of words that those hearing begged that the saying not be applied to them....” Approaching God, however, would bring one to something no less divine, however: “...you have approached Mount Sion and the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem,

and thousands of messengers, a solemn festival, and the gathering of the first born who have been enrolled in heaven, God the judge of all, the spirits of the just who have been perfected, the mediator of the new covenant, Jesus....” The author takes the trouble to say this to encourage the early Christians in face of opposition and persecution. The passage speaks of a sprinkling of blood, “speaking better than that of Abel.”

Third Reading (Luke 14.1, 7-14)

“But when you hold a reception, call the poor, the crippled, lame, and blind; and blessed would you be, because they have nothing to repay you with, for you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just.” Luke presents Jesus applying his banquet parable to the end-time judgment. The householder who invites in the poor and afflicted is termed “just.” Before that, Luke presented Jesus as advising guests at banquets to seek humble rather than honored places—in antiquity guests were explicitly placed by social rank at banquets and were even given more expensive or less expensive food according to social rank.

Have you ever attended an event only to be seated next to someone who had no intention of getting to know you or let you become acquainted in return, but who only wanted to get the attention of someone else more important? I do not think that is what is being recommended when Luke has Jesus advising people to take the less honorable places. Those who merely tolerate the *déclassé* around them only as long as they can leave the lower status people behind are hardly being “just.” Parables are meant to provoke thought, and thoughtfully engaging this one will not leave us satisfied with a mere tactic for advancement, a humility that is put on as a mere stratagem. That is why the narrative goes on to depict Jesus advising his host to bring in the poor, crippled, lame, and blind.

The insight behind the parable applies beyond interpersonal behavior. In workplace politics many people ally themselves with bosses, however wrong-headed and unjust the latter may be. It is also the case that in voting behavior, the mass of the many sometimes wants to be counted among the number of the few—something when looked at from afar is obviously a mathematical impossibility. Then there are those who adopt dress styles, buy vehicles, and even inhabit homes, sometimes at great financial sacrifice, in order to identify with the privileged.

I was once making this point at a RCIA session, and mentioned not buying pricey automobiles that would be intended to impress people. To my surprise, a few intended converts rejected the suggestion out of hand. An unsuccessful lesson? A few weeks later a young woman pulled me aside; she had to talk to me. Our parish seemed better off than she was, and she had been driving her own old, battered car on Sunday mornings to her in-laws’ and switching to their fancier vehicle to make the drive to the church parking lot, so as not to be embarrassed. She wanted me to know that after that RCIA session she began to drive her own car to the church, different-colored door and all.

Thank you, Lord!

Poem

Potluck with Jesus

When he came into our village contentions,
he asked the women to get up a potluck.

Bakers brought breads,
gardeners their goods,
householders their steaming stews.
We toasted and tasted ourselves
with homemade wines.

In his reach,
we felt in one another
his lighter than gravity,
electromagnetic touch,
finding us, binding us,
freeing us.

When he left,
he stayed in our memories
of how we beheld one another then
and how he continues with us now
in our sabbath potlucks.

Tom Keene
March 1, 2016

Statement

Mass Shooting Tragedies Are the Expected Consequences of Hatred and Violence

August 5, 2019

Pax Christi USA, the national Catholic peace and nonviolence movement, joins with the thousands of individuals and groups who have raised their voice over the mass shooting events of the past ten days.

These mass shooting tragedies are not the new normal, but they are the expected consequences of the continued and growing rhetoric of hatred, fear, bigotry, racism, and intolerance voiced consistently from the White House.

The name calling, the demonizing of our cities and their citizens for the systemic and racial inequalities that exist there, along with the subtle and not so subtle violent chants are having an effect that breeds contempt for and violence towards brown and

black immigrant and refugee communities and towards anyone else who disagrees with the tone and policies of the Trump administration. Furthermore, blaming violent mass shootings on mental illness is a pathetic attempt to victimize yet another group of people. It is also a cop-out for implementing common-sense gun legislation, background checks, and eliminating access to weapons of war.

The lack of sensible gun control, the promotion of the National Rifle Association's values over a respect for people's lives, the hate-filled rhetoric, and the implicit and explicit support of White Nationalism are violent factors contributing to the 249 mass shootings that have taken place in the United States in 2019 alone. The violence will only continue to grow until we address these core issues.

Praying for a change of heart and direction for our country is important but ACTION is needed, too. We know that silence means complicity and consent, and people who care about ending hate-filled rhetoric and gun violence can no longer remain silent by-standers. Enough is enough.

Pax Christi USA invites every individual and organization who believes in the values of being welcoming, open, and accepting and who understand the profound truth that we are our sisters' and brothers' keepers must make their voices heard.

"Peace with justice" is not a catchy phrase. It is a dream rooted in the Gospel. It is at the heart of what is best about our U.S. democracy. It is the desire of every person who believes that instilling fear, violence, and hatred is never the answer.

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/