

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating September 22, 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-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Let There Be Land*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After last week's lengthier than usual 1928 essay by Paul Hanly Furfey, this week the essay entry is a short Pax Christi Asia Pacific statement on the situation in Hong Kong. The conflict in Hong Kong is very troubling; it could easily lead up to a massacre dwarfing that of Tiananmen Square in 1989.

[If the brevity of this week's essay leaves some extra time, go back to last week's and finish reading and thinking about that one.]



Pax Christi San Antonio and the Texas Coalition Against the Death Penalty staffed tables at the Labor Day Picnic at Aggie Park.

On Sunday September 8, marking the conclusion of the fourth annual World Heritage Festival, San Antonio Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller celebrated mass at the "El Camino de San Antonio: Caring for Creation" celebration at Mission San Francisco de la Espada. The mass was followed by a procession to Mission San Juan. Both missions are part of the World Heritage sites in San Antonio. Speaking of Espada, he said, "It's a

very tiny mission, but it represents our voice. We are ready to take care of the beautiful Mother Earth.” He added, “The water, the air, the land. These are gifts given to us to be handled on to our grandchildren.” He went on to urge people to read the encyclical of Pope Francis on the environment, *Laudato Sí*, which called upon people to live more simply.

Calendar

In Austin

Tuesday September 24, 6:00pm, screening of *Documented*: journalist Jose Antonio Vargas’s development as an activist for immigrant rights. Carter Auditorium, St. Edward’s University, 3001 S. Congress. Contact: Jennifer Ansier, jennj@stedwards.edu.

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>.

Monday October 14, 5:15pm, “Doubt as an Integral Part of Calling: The Qur’anic Story of Joseph” Younus Mirza (Georgetown University). Carter Auditorium, St. Edward’s University, 3001 S. Congress.

Sunday October 20 (3rd Sunday of the month), 7:00pm, Pax Christi Austin meeting. Fr. Payne House, St. Ignatius Church, 126 Oltorf St.

Wednesday October 30, film *The Penalty*, on the death penalty, followed by a panel discussion. Carter Auditorium, St. Edward’s University 3001 S. Congress.

In Dallas

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>

Wednesday October 2, 6:00pm-7:00pm, “Love your Enemies” Arthur Brooks (Harvard Kennedy School) on contemporary political climate in the U.S. Crum Auditorium, Southern Methodist University. Information: Candy Crespo, 2147683436, ccrespo@smu.edu.

Monday October 14, Reception 6:30pm, program 7:00pm-8:30pm, Faiths in Conversation: The Role of Intellect from the Major Faith Perspectives. This is the second of a series. Students free; price varies for others \$10-20 per session. Information, location, and tickets: dallasinstitute.org/faith-in-conversation/

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).

Texas execution date: September 25, unless stays are granted. Vigil, 12:00pm-1:00pm, in front of the 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

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.

Friday September 27, 2:00pm-4:00pm, panel discussion, "Art in the Space of Social and Political Advocacy," followed by address by Patrisse Marie Cullors. Student Center Theatre, University of Houston, 4455 University Drive. Park in Welcome Center Garage.

Friday September 27, 6:00pm-7:00pm, An Evening with Social Activist and Best-selling Author Patrisse Marie Cullors. Student Center Theatre, University of Houston, 4455 University Drive. Park in Welcome Center Garage. RSVP:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/signin/?referrer=%2Fpreview%3Fid%3D66492162849>

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.

Sunday October 6, 9:45am, "Calvin, the Valois Dynasty, and the French wars of Religion," John H. Zammito (Rice University). St. Philip Presbyterian Church 201, 4807 San Felipe.

Sunday October 13, 9:45am, "The Second Vatican Council and Ecumenical Efforts Towards Dialogue" Garland Pohl. St. Philip Presbyterian Church 201, 4807 San Felipe.

In San Antonio

Tuesday September 17, 6:00pm-6:45pm, "Beyond the Text: Public Defenders, Juvenile Justice and Constitutionalism," Emma Cantu (Harris County Public Defender's Office). Mabee Library 221, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

Tuesday September 17, 6:30pm, Deborah Reid (Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance), "Enhancing Our Parks and Green Spaces to Assist in Meeting San Antonio's Air and Water Quality Goals." Sierra Club meeting, Eco Centro, 1802 N. Main.

Wednesday September 18, 2:00pm-4:00pm films *New American Nazis* and *White Right: Meeting the Enemy*. Mabee Library 221, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

Wednesday September 18, 7:00pm-9:30pm, Peter Steinfelds, "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 Steinfelds. University Center, Conference Room A and Foyer, St. Mary's University. Information: Susie Elias selias@stmarytx.edu, 210-436-3516.

Thursday September 19, 7:00pm, "Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Path to Nonviolence," Roger Barnes. Mabee Library Auditorium, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

Saturday September 21, 10:00am-1:15pm, Youth climate Rally. Main Plaza.

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 September 24, 6:30pm-7:30pm, William H. Willimon (Duke Divinity School), "Racism as Sin: Confessions of a southern Church Leader." Parker Chapel, Trinity University, One Trinity Place. Park at Alamo Stadium.

Saturday September 28, 1:30pm, film, *The Human Element*, on climate change. Christus Heritage Hall, 4707 Broadway.

Saturday September 28, 7:00pm, "'Project Life-Line,' Children in Crisis-Dehumanization and Immigration detention, A conversation between Doctors and Faith Leaders." Student Engagement Ballroom, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway. Information: <https://www.facebook.com/events/274017726659120/>

Sunday September 29, 8:00am, one day caravan to the McAllen Detention Center. Leave from the Convocation Center, University of the Incarnate Word. Join by sending

message to projectlifeline2018@gmail.com. Information:
<https://www.uiw.edu/eccl/Special-Events/index.html>

Saturday October 5, 10:00am, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting, residence of Tom Wakely, 16406 Ledge Point St.

Thursday October 24, 6:00pm, film, *The Sultan and the Saint*, and interfaith gathering to 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 (1 Timothy 2: 1-8)

“So I urge, first of all, petitions, prayers, requests, thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a tranquil and peaceful life in all piety and holiness.” Who can argue with bringing one’s mind and heart to God with all other people in mind? And “kings,” i.e. people who have power? That can be a hard saying! The intent is that “We may lead a tranquil and peaceful life....” The point is not that rulers should prosper but that those subject to them may live in peace “in all piety and holiness. This would be good and pleasing before God....”

So much religious talk avoids any mention of what government should be about—enabling ordinary people to live without the distraction of grievances, to live in a just society.

Third Reading (Luke 16.1-13)

“‘How much do you owe my master?’ And he said, ‘One hundred baths of oil.’ And he said to him, ‘Take the note and, sitting, quickly write fifty.’” A bath was a Hebrew measure, between eight and nine gallons. It was against the religious law to charge interest; so instead someone who owed a sum worth a vast amount of olive oil would be required to write a promissory note for a larger amount. The debtor would borrow money or, more often, rent land for a sum worth forty gallons of oil, and then be required to sign a note promising to pay fifty. Here the unjust manager had required a note promising payment of one hundred. He had expected to keep fifty gallons or so for himself as his commission. When the unjust manager’s master found out about it, he was ready to fire him and directed him to write up an inventory of the accounts. The manager proceeded to do so, cancelling his exorbitant commissions. “And the master praised the unjust manager because he acted prudently....”

Even in the comparatively simple world of antiquity, there were technically legal ways to engage in unjust transactions. The kind of injustice described in the parable found in the *Gospel of Luke* involved taking advantage of people who needed an extension of credit. The people who are wise in the ways of the world know of many

more ways to take advantage of people and situations today. One thinks of pay-day lenders and car title lenders. And sometimes the standard “service charge” which is imposed at banquets in lieu of informal “tips” or “gratuities” never goes to the servers at all. Sometimes the purpose of a graduated income tax is subverted by legislators, who are in the pay of the wealthy, imposing lower tax rates for the kinds of income (as opposed to amounts of income) that come from wealth rather than from work. Sometimes insurance companies find ways to avoid paying up when they evidently should.

The “master” in the parable is obviously a stand-in for God. What may be less obvious is that all of us are mere managers and that we will all be dismissed.

Poem

Let there be land

You called the land
to rise from roiling seas,
lined the river basins
with fertile loam.

You steeped in greens
the forest-jungles,
rolled out the plains,
beige and flat as corn tortillas,
raised the mountains to make
fuchsia shadows with the sun.

You made the land
a place to plant and build,
free as the air,
open as the oceans,
vital as rivers and rain,
ours as much as the stars.

Now tell us, God,
when did you sell
the land to the rich?

Tom Keene and Muse
May 1, 1990

Pax Christi Asia-Pacific releases statement on the situation in Hong Kong

4/9/19 - The following statement was released by our regional network, Pax Christi Asia-Pacific, last week.



The people of Hong Kong have shown the world their commitment to the protection of democracy through protests and demonstrations with no clear end in sight.

These demonstrations are a culmination of events that frustrated the people of Hong Kong, especially the youth: the curtailment of the right to elect their own political leaders, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the increasing cost of housing and house rents, increasing interference by China in the internal affairs of Hong Kong, including increasing interference in the judiciary. The bill that would have allowed Hong Kong residents to be extradited to mainland China angered people more intensely. Since 15 June, the bill has been suspended but its withdrawal has not been announced. Running for 4 months in August, these demonstrations have morphed into a call for free elections. The 2019 protests have drawn an estimated two million people.

What started as relatively peaceful protests have spiraled to violence. Police have arrested hundreds in rallies. Amnesty International has called out Hong Kong police for using tear gas and rubber bullets "in a way that have fallen short of international standards." A few protestors have also taken to attacking police offices, district headquarters and police family quarters, or defacing government and public property.

Pax Christi Asia Pacific upholds the values of nonviolence, justice, reconciliation and human rights. We call on all parties involved to sit down, listen, and respond to concerns in a way that does not harm the people and its territory.

We believe that violence solves nothing, and urge everyone involved to choose the path of nonviolence in finding solutions to the issues that currently confront the territory.

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://sacvvi.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/