

# Testimony

## A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating January 20, 2019

Pax Christi San Antonio does not solicit donations. Thoughtful comments, however, may be sent to the editor at [j6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com](mailto: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 section, the Sunday reading reflections are based on the lectionary selections for the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *Shekinah 33 A.D.* For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Last December 8, the Vatican released the message of Pope Francis for January 1, 2019, the 52<sup>nd</sup> annual World Day of Peace. The message was widely but partially reported in the press. The full text follows below, after the poem.

### Calendar

#### In Austin

**Thursday January 17**, 5:00pm-6:30pm, Dr. Eric Winsberg on climate science chaos, and unpredictability. Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. For parking permit: <https://www.stedwards.edu/contact-us/main/main-campus-united-states>. Refreshments served. Register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cel-speaker-series-eric-wisberg-on-philosophy-and-climate-science-tickets-46804971931>.

**Thursday February 7**, 5:00pm-6:30pm, Rita Stephan, "Women in the Muslim World." Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cel-speaker-series-rita-stephan-on-women-in-the-muslim-world-tickets-46805163504>. For parking permit: <https://www.stedwards.edu/contact-us/main/main-campus-united-states>.

**Friday February 8 & Saturday February 9**, 7:30 performance, "Sister Moses. The Story of Harriet Tubman." Desert Dance Theatre. Contact Huston-Tillotson University.

**Saturday February 16**, 8:00am-4:00pm, Texas Coalition against the Death Penalty 2019 Annual Conference: Uniting for Justice. St. David's Episcopal Church, 301 E 8<sup>th</sup> St. Information: [tcadp.org](http://tcadp.org)

#### In Dallas

**Friday February 8**, 12:00pm-1:30pm, Bolin Family Public Life Personal Faith Scholarship Luncheon. Judy Woodruff, PBS Newshour, interviewed by Peggy Wehrmeyer. Information: John Martin, [johnma@smu.edu](mailto:johnma@smu.edu), (214) 768-2026.

**Friday February 8**, 2:00pm, Jeffrey Kopstein, "Intimate Violence: anti-Jewish Pogroms on the Eve of the Holocaust." Davidson Auditorium, University of Texas Dallas.

### **In El Paso**

**Tuesday January 15**, 12:00pm, death penalty vigil, in front of El Paso County Courthouse, 500 E. San Antonio.

**Wednesday January 30**, 12:00pm, death penalty vigil, in front of El Paso County Courthouse, 500 E. San Antonio.

### **In Houston**

**Friday January 18**, 8:00am-9:00am, Paul Froese (Baylor University), "Our Purpose: How We Create the Meaning of Life." Room 402, Lovett Hall, Rice University (use Entrance C). Information and registration: Hayley Hemstreet, [hjh2@rice.edu](mailto:hjh2@rice.edu).

**Sunday January 20**, 9:30am, Cherry Steinwender (Center for the Healing of Racism), "White Allies and the White Church). St. Philip Presbyterian Church, Room 201, 4807 San Felipe.

**Tuesday January 29**, 7:00pm-8:30pm, panel discussion, "Religion and the University." Sewell Hall, Room 309, Rice University. Information: Hayley Helmstreet, [hjh2@rice.edu](mailto:hjh2@rice.edu). Free, but register. See [https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20190129/event\\_id/23533](https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20190129/event_id/23533).

**Wednesday February 13**, 7:00pm-8:00pm, Richard Rothstein, on government creating racial segregation. Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet St. Paid parking available at 1144 Binz St.

**Thursday February 21**, 7:00pm-9:00pm, panel on spirituality ("Spiritual but not religious") and public action: Ashley Clemmer (Ruthko Chapel), Sean Fitzpatrick (Jung Center), moderated by Elaine Howard Ecklund, Ph.D. (Rice University). Jung Center, 5200 Montrose.

**Friday February 22**, 8:00am-9:00am, Tony Brown (Sociology, Rice University), "Disaffiliation among emerging adults: Implications for life satisfaction, moral relativism, and support of social justice." Lovett Hall 402, Rice University (use Entrance C). Free, but register at [https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20190222/event\\_id/20202](https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20190222/event_id/20202). Information: Hayley Hemstreet [hjh2@rice.edu](mailto:hjh2@rice.edu).

### **In San Antonio**

**Tuesday January 15**, 12:00pm-1:00pm, death penalty vigil, across from Bexar County Justice Center, 300 Dolorosa.

**Wednesday January 16**, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Brian Dillard and special guests, "Race and Spiritual Action" (Pub Theology discussion). The Friendly Spot Ice House, 943 S. Alamo.

**Friday January 18**, 6:30pm-9:00pm, "Otro Mundo Es Posible: Creating Positive Change under the Current Presidential Administration." Representatives from various community groups discuss the past two years. Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, 922 San Pedro.

**Saturday January 19**, 3:00pm, Dream Week panel, "Crises at Borders." San Antonio Central Public Library auditorium, 600 Soledad St. Sponsored by Jewish Voice for Peace.

**Saturday January 19**, 4:00pm, panel, "Human Rights in Turkey" (Dr. Fatma Korkmaz, Dr. Ferhat Ozturk, Beytullah Colak). Edmund Cody Branch Library, 1141 Vance Jackson Rd.

**Sunday January 20**, 4:00pm-6:30pm, Martin Luther King 32<sup>nd</sup> annual City-Wide Interfaith Worship Service. Second Baptist Church, 3310 E. Commerce.

**Monday January 21**, Annual Martin Luther King March. The march begins 10:00am, 3501 Martin Luther King Drive and ends at Pittman-Sullivan Park, 1101 Iowa.

**Wednesday January 23**, 6:30pm-8:30pm, film, *Why Women Kill*, followed by panel discussion (William S. Bush, Ph.D., Texas A & M; Patricia S. Castillo LMSW, P.E.A.C.E.; Cathy Marston, Ph.D., Free Battered Texas Women; and Doshie Piper, Ph.D., University of the Incarnate Word). Mabee Library Auditorium, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway. Information: [ldamico@uiwtx.edu](mailto:ldamico@uiwtx.edu).

**Thursday January 24**, performance, "¡No Es Justo! Emma Tenayula's Struggle for Justice." McNay Art Museum, Chiego Lecture Hall, 6000 N. New Braunfels Ave.

**Friday January 25**, 6:30pm, Dream Week panel, "San Antonio in the Holy Land." University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell Ave. (parking off Shook St.). Sponsored by Jewish Voice for Peace.

**Sunday January 27**, 3:00pm-5:00pm, Blessing of the Peacemakers. 2019 San Antonio Peace Laureates: Patricia Castillo, Rebecca Flores, Nickie Valdez. Sponsored by peaceCenter of San Antonio. Whitley Center, Oblate school of Theology, 285 Oblate Dr.

**Wednesday January 30**, 12:00pm-1:00pm, death penalty vigil, across from Bexar County Justice Center, 300 Dolorosa.

**Wednesday January 30**, 6:00pm, Former Congressman Charles Gonzalez and Sheriff Javier Salazar, "Gun Violence: What Can Be Done." Central Public Library, 600 Soledad.

**Tuesday February 5**, 4:00pm=5:00pm, William Egginton, Ph.D. (Johns Hopkins University) on our educational system embodying the very social and economic inequality it should challenge. Chapman Center Auditorium, Trinity University, One Trinity Place. Parking at Alamo Stadium.

**Thursday February 21**, 3:00pm-6:00pm, pre-immigration symposium. Keynote speaker, Sarnata Reynolds, "Building a Lifeline: A Proposed Global Platform and Responsibility Sharing Model for the Global Compact on Refugees." Sarita Kenedy East Law Library, Law Alumni Room, St. Mary's University, 1 Camino Santa Maria. Information: [pmartinez46@stmarytx.edu](mailto:pmartinez46@stmarytx.edu).

**Tuesday February 26**, 7:00pm, Marie Dennis, "Active Nonviolence: A Paradigm Shift to a More Peaceful World." Student Engagement Center Ballroom, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway. Marie Dennis was a primary organizer of the 2016 Conference on Nonviolence and Just Peace co-sponsored by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and Pax Christi International.

**Tuesday March 5**, 6:00pm, 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Dialogue and Friendship Dinner. Keynote speaker, Abdulhamit Bilici (former editor *Zaman*, newspaper in Turkey), "Free Press and Democracy: An Exiled Editor's View." University of the Incarnate Word Rosenberg Skyroom, 847 E. Hildebrand. \$45; RSVP at [www.dialoguedinner19.eventbrite.com](http://www.dialoguedinner19.eventbrite.com).

### **Second Reading** (First Corinthians 12:4-11)

This is a well-known passage from the *First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians*, which is cited by Pentecostals to legitimate their cultivation of breaking out semi-voluntarily into nonsense syllables and by critics of Pentecostals who note the little regard St. Paul has for such behavior. The passage is testimony as much to Paul's diplomacy as to any doctrinal stand. What Paul teaches is neither that glossolalia should be encouraged or discouraged but that genuine gifts of the spirit are ones that are useful to the Church. He first notes that whether an utterance is from the Spirit can be determined from what it says: "So I made it known to you that no one speaking in the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus curses someone'; and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except in the Holy Spirit." Then he lists a number of different "assignments" and notes they accord with the same Spirit.

The reading might occasion a consideration of contemporary "assignments" and how they are distributed. Is mandatory celibacy for the diocesan clergy useful to the People of God? In an era in which education is widespread, should so many different functions be included in a position called *priest* (not a biblical term for Christian ministers anyway)?

### Third Reading (John 2.1-11)

“They have no wine.” The traditional wedding ceremony was nearing its conclusion on Tuesday after it had begun, according to custom, the previous Wednesday. “My lady, what is that to us? My hour has not yet come.” Mary had expected something memorable from her son, but the festivity was almost over, its conclusion marked by the wine running out.

“Fill the water jars with water.” Visiting Cana, Jesus was a person of authority, evidently known for wisdom and teaching, but not yet for wondrous signs. The slaves filled the six nine-gallon stone jars. “Now ladle some out and bring it to the head waiter.”

“Everyone sets out the good wine first, and when they have drunk freely the rest; you have kept the good wine up to now.”

The evangelist, probably one of several members of a Christian teaching team whose versions of the Jesus traditions were edited into the *Gospel of John* as we have it today, used this narrative to depict Jesus in a particular light: “My lady, what is that to us? My hour has not yet come.” Jesus did not set about looking for an opportunity to put on a performance. He simply shared his wisdom, and disciples followed him. Here he was simply respectfully joining a wedding festivity. But Mary felt that something good should be promoted. So Jesus indeed made something good—“...you have kept the good wine up to now”—six nine-gallon stone jars of it! And so the disciples were emboldened, and others joined them.

© 2016 Anthony J. Blasi

### Poem

*Shekinah 33 A.D.*

With a warning howl  
she burst upon them:  
    praying men,  
    silent women,  
    playing children,  
crashed into the old room  
shaking its wood and stone.  
She came with  
pollen from the desert,  
salt from the sea,  
pulling their hair,  
stirring their blood.  
Like wine,  
she loosened their tongues  
to babble meaning  
to the deaf.  
People heard.  
A fetus of hope

kicked  
within the womb of destiny.

Tom Keene

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE  
**FRANCIS**  
FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE  
**52nd WORLD DAY OF PEACE**

1 JANUARY 2019

***Good politics is at the service of peace***

1. *“Peace be to this house!”*

In sending his disciples forth on mission, Jesus told them: “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to you” (*Lk 10:5-6*).

Bringing peace is central to the mission of Christ’s disciples. That peace is offered to all those men and women who long for peace amid the tragedies and violence that mark human history.<sup>[1]</sup> The “house” of which Jesus speaks is every family, community, country and continent, in all their diversity and history. It is first and foremost each individual person, without distinction or discrimination. But it is also our “common home”: the world in which God has placed us and which we are called to care for and cultivate.

So let this be my greeting at the beginning of the New Year: “Peace be to this house!”

2. *The challenge of good politics*

Peace is like the hope which the poet Charles Péguy celebrated.<sup>[2]</sup> It is like a delicate flower struggling to blossom on the stony ground of violence. We know that the thirst for power at any price leads to abuses and injustice. Politics is an essential means of building human community and institutions, but when political life is not seen as a form of service to society as a whole, it can become a means of oppression, marginalization and even destruction.

Jesus tells us that, “if anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all” (*Mk 9:35*). In the words of Pope Paul VI, “to take politics seriously at its different levels – local, regional, national and worldwide – is to affirm the duty of each individual to acknowledge the reality and value of the freedom offered him to work at one and the same time for the good of the city, the nation and all mankind”.<sup>[3]</sup>

Political office and political responsibility thus constantly challenge those called to the service of their country to make every effort to protect those who live there and to create the conditions for a worthy and just future. If exercised with basic respect for the

life, freedom and dignity of persons, political life can indeed become an outstanding form of charity.

### 3. *Charity and human virtues: the basis of politics at the service of human rights and peace*

Pope Benedict XVI noted that “every Christian is called to practise charity in a manner corresponding to his vocation and according to the degree of influence he wields in the *pólis*... When animated by charity, commitment to the common good has greater worth than a merely secular and political stand would have... Man’s earthly activity, when inspired and sustained by charity, contributes to the building of the universal city of God, which is the goal of the history of the human family”.<sup>[4]</sup> This is a programme on which all politicians, whatever their culture or religion, can agree, if they wish to work together for the good of the human family and to practise those human virtues that sustain all sound political activity: justice, equality, mutual respect, sincerity, honesty, fidelity.

In this regard, it may be helpful to recall the “Beatitudes of the Politician”, proposed by Vietnamese Cardinal François-Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận, a faithful witness to the Gospel who died in 2002:

Blessed be the politician with a lofty sense and deep understanding of his role.

Blessed be the politician who personally exemplifies credibility.

Blessed be the politician who works for the common good and not his or her own interest.

Blessed be the politician who remains consistent.

Blessed be the politician who works for unity.

Blessed be the politician who works to accomplish radical change.

Blessed be the politician who is capable of listening.

Blessed be the politician who is without fear.<sup>[5]</sup>

Every election and re-election, and every stage of public life, is an opportunity to return to the original points of reference that inspire justice and law. One thing is certain: good politics is at the service of peace. It respects and promotes fundamental human rights, which are at the same time mutual obligations, enabling a bond of trust and gratitude to be forged between present and future generations.

### 4. *Political vices*

Sadly, together with its virtues, politics also has its share of vices, whether due to personal incompetence or to flaws in the system and its institutions. Clearly, these vices detract from the credibility of political life overall, as well as the authority, decisions and actions of those engaged in it. These vices, which undermine the ideal of an authentic democracy, bring disgrace to public life and threaten social harmony. We think of corruption in its varied forms: the misappropriation of public resources, the exploitation of individuals, the denial of rights, the flouting of community rules, dishonest gain, the justification of power by force or the arbitrary appeal to *raison d'état* and the refusal to relinquish power. To which we can add xenophobia, racism, lack of concern for the natural environment, the plundering of natural resources for the sake of quick profit and contempt for those forced into exile.

### 5. *Good politics promotes the participation of the young and trust in others*

When the exercise of political power aims only at protecting the interests of a few privileged individuals, the future is compromised and young people can be tempted to lose confidence, since they are relegated to the margins of society without the possibility of helping to build the future. But when politics concretely fosters the talents of young people and their aspirations, peace grows in their outlook and on their faces. It becomes a confident assurance that says, "I trust you and with you I believe" that we can all work together for the common good. Politics is at the service of peace if it finds expression in the recognition of the gifts and abilities of each individual. "What could be more beautiful than an outstretched hand? It was meant by God to offer and to receive. God did not want it to kill (cf. *Gen 4:1ff*) or to inflict suffering, but to offer care and help in life. Together with our heart and our intelligence, our hands too can become a means of dialogue".<sup>[6]</sup>

Everyone can contribute his or her stone to help build the common home. Authentic political life, grounded in law and in frank and fair relations between individuals, experiences renewal whenever we are convinced that every woman, man and generation brings the promise of new relational, intellectual, cultural and spiritual energies. That kind of trust is never easy to achieve, because human relations are complex, especially in our own times, marked by a climate of mistrust rooted in the fear of others or of strangers, or anxiety about one's personal security. Sadly, it is also seen at the political level, in attitudes of rejection or forms of nationalism that call into question the fraternity of which our globalized world has such great need. Today more than ever, our societies need "artisans of peace" who can be messengers and authentic witnesses of God the Father, who wills the good and the happiness of the human family.

### 6. *No to war and to the strategy of fear*

A hundred years after the end of the First World War, as we remember the young people killed in those battles and the civilian populations torn apart, we are more conscious than ever of the terrible lesson taught by fratricidal wars: peace can never be reduced solely to a balance between power and fear. To threaten others is to lower them to the status of objects and to deny their dignity. This is why we state once more that an escalation of intimidation, and the uncontrolled proliferation of arms, is contrary to morality and the search for true peace. Terror exerted over those who are most vulnerable contributes to the exile of entire populations who seek a place of peace. Political addresses that tend to blame every evil on migrants and to deprive the poor of hope are unacceptable. Rather, there is a need to reaffirm that peace is based on respect for each person, whatever his or her background, on respect for the law and the common good, on respect for the environment entrusted to our care and for the richness of the moral tradition inherited from past generations.

Our thoughts turn in a particular way to all those children currently living in areas of conflict, and to all those who work to protect their lives and defend their rights. One out of every six children in our world is affected by the violence of war or its effects, even when they are not enrolled as child soldiers or held hostage by armed groups. The witness given by those who work to defend them and their dignity is most precious for the future of humanity.

## 7. *A great project of peace*

In these days, we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in the wake of the Second World War. In this context, let us also remember the observation of Pope John XXIII: “Man’s awareness of his rights must inevitably lead him to the recognition of his duties. The possession of rights involves the duty of implementing those rights, for they are the expression of a man’s personal dignity. And the possession of rights also involves their recognition and respect by others”.<sup>[7]</sup>

Peace, in effect, is the fruit of a great political project grounded in the mutual responsibility and interdependence of human beings. But it is also a challenge that demands to be taken up ever anew. It entails a conversion of heart and soul; it is both interior and communal; and it has three inseparable aspects:

– peace with oneself, rejecting inflexibility, anger and impatience; in the words of Saint Francis de Sales, showing “a bit of sweetness towards oneself” in order to offer “a bit of sweetness to others”;

– peace with others: family members, friends, strangers, the poor and the suffering, being unafraid to encounter them and listen to what they have to say;

– peace with all creation, rediscovering the grandeur of God’s gift and our individual and shared responsibility as inhabitants of this world, citizens and builders of the future.

The politics of peace, conscious of and deeply concerned for every situation of human vulnerability, can always draw inspiration from the *Magnificat*, the hymn that Mary, the Mother of Christ the Saviour and Queen of Peace, sang in the name of all mankind: “He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm; he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly; ...for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children for ever” (Lk 1:50-55).

*From the Vatican, 8 December 2018*

**Francis**

---

<sup>[1]</sup> Cf. Lk 2:14: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased”.

<sup>[2]</sup> Cf. *Le Porche du mystère de la deuxième vertu*, Paris, 1986.

<sup>[3]</sup> Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (14 May 1971), 46.

<sup>[4]</sup> Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), 7.

<sup>[5]</sup> Cf. Address at the “Civitas” Exhibition-Convention in Padua: “30 Giorni”, no. 5, 2002.

<sup>[6]</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the Authorities of Benin*, Cotonou, 19 November 2011.

<sup>[7]</sup> Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris* (11 April 1963), ed. Carlen, 24.

## 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](http://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](http://www.txccedp.org)

*Dialogue Institute of San Antonio*  
[www.thedialoginstitute.org/san-antonio/](http://www.thedialoginstitute.org/san-antonio/)

Climate Change  
[www.creation-care.com](http://www.creation-care.com)

NowCastSA  
[www.nowcastsa.com/](http://www.nowcastsa.com/)

