

Testimony 
A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating November 17, 2019

Communications with the editor may be sent to j6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com. 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 Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *The Carpenter and the Shepherds*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Following the poem is a joint statement issued on the occasion of the United Nations Climate Action Summit 2019, by the Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité, an umbrella group of Catholic development agencies.

Note that Pax Christi San Antonio is sponsoring a viewing of *American Prophet*, Monday November 18 (details in the calendar section). The video highlights the events that led retired Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit to a social consciousness and conversion to non-violence. The video will be followed by a panel discussion. I knew of Bishop Gumbleton through the newspapers, and in 1986, when a friend responsible for a meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion in Detroit asked me who might give a welcoming address, I recommended Bishop Gumbleton. My advice was followed, and afterwards my friend exclaimed, "What a classy bishop!"

Calendar

In Austin

Thursday November 14, 5:00pm-6:30pm, Rita Stephen, "Women in the Muslim World." Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. Information: Sherri Defesche, sherrid@stedwards.edu.

Sunday November 17 (3rd Sunday of the month), 7:00pm, Pax Christi Austin meeting. Fr. Payne House, St. Ignatius Church, 126 Oltorf St.

In Columbus, Georgia

Saturday November 16, 7:00pm, Pax Christi USA program at the school of the Americas protest, "The Spirituality of Nonviolence Lived Out in the Central American Martyrs and Today." Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 1953 Torch Hill Road.

In Dallas

Monday November 11, 7:00pm-8:30pm, continuation of the Faiths in Conversation series. Information, location, and tickets: dallasinstitute.org/faith-in-conversation/

Wednesday November 13, 7:00pm, film: *The Penalty*, about capital punishment, followed by discussion. Angelika Film Center, 5321 E Mockingbird Lane #230.

Thursday November 14, 5:30pm-7:30pm, film: *The Penalty*, about the death penalty, followed by discussion. SMU, Harold Clark Simmons Hall 101A, \$15.00. Tickets at <https://bit.ly/SMUDRpenaltyfilm>.

Friday November 22, 12:00pm-1:30pm, Nicholas Bucerda (Linfield College), "The Fire is Upon Us: James Baldwin, William F. Buckley Jr., and the debate over Race in America." Forum (Lower Level), 3140 Dyer St. Free, but reservations required: <https://whozin.com/M79-4CY-9EUM-NMDF>.

Monday December 2, 1:00pm-8:00pm, National Security Symposium: Arms Control and Nonproliferation. Two panels and dinner with keynote speaker, Rose Gottemoeller. Free, but RSVP: <https://calendar.smu.edu/site/centersinstitutes/event/tc-national-security-symposium-arms-control-and-nonproliferation/>

Monday December 9, 7:00pm-8:30pm, continuation of the Faiths in Conversation series. 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).

Wednesday November 20, 12:00pm-1:00pm, death penalty execution vigil in front of the El Paso County Courthouse.

Sunday November 24, 5:30pm-7:00pm, Sixth Annual Lighting of the Star on Our Mountain, a call to end the death penalty. Parking lot, 1171 N. Walnut St.

Friday November 29, 9:00am-2:00pm, Alternative Black Friday Sale: Fair Trade Christmas shopping, specializing in products made by refugees. Columban Mission Center, 816 Magofin Ave.

In Fort Worth

Tuesday November 12, 6:30pm, screening of *The Penalty*. First Congregational United Church of Christ – Fort Worth, 4201 Trail Lake Dr.

In Houston

Monday November 11, 7:30pm-9:30pm, Karen Armstrong, “The Lost Art of Scripture: Rescuing the Sacred Texts.” Congregation Emanu El, 500 Sunset Blvd. \$45.00-\$150.

Wednesday November 13, 11:45am-1:15pm, Lunch and Learn Dialogues, “Exploring Identity,” Center for the Healing of Racism, 3412 Crawford St. (at Holman). Park in HCC Lot 9. Free, donations appreciated; bring lunch. RSVP at efhr1@juno.com or 713-520-8226.

Wednesday November 13, 6:00pm, Earl Lewis (University of Michigan), “Race: It’s Always Personal.” RMC/Ley Student Center, Farnsworth Pavilion, Rice University. Info: Campbell@rice.edu.

Thursday November 14, 6:00pm, Earl Lewis (University of Michigan), “What Our World Needs Now: Undoing the Third Slavery.” RMC/Ley Student Center, Farnsworth Pavilion, Rice University. Info: Campbell@rice.edu.

Sunday November 17, 9:45am, Ross Pierkowski (More to Live), “Telling Our Stories,” on transgender. St. Philip Presbyterian Church 201, 4807 San Felipe.

Sunday November 24, 9:45am, “that Was then, This is Now,” on transgender issues before the Texas Legislature, Mary Sinderson and Eric Schroeder. St. Philip Presbyterian Church 201, 4807 San Felipe.

Sunday November 24, 6:00pm-7:00pm, Lisa Brenskelle, “The Ecological Crisis & the Response of Faith.” Live Oak Friends Meeting House, 1320 W. 26th St.

Sunday December 1, 9:45am, “Being Transgender in Challenging Situations,” on experiences in the military and experiences of refugees to the U.S. St. Philip Presbyterian Church 201, 4807 San Felipe.

Wednesday December 4, 11:45am-1:15pm, Lunch and Learn Dialogues, “Shattering of Stereotypes.” Center for the Healing of Racism, 3412 Crawford St. (at Holman). Park in HCC Lot 9. Free, donations appreciated; bring lunch. RSVP at efhr1@juno.com or 713-520-8226.

Saturday January 11, 9:00am-11:30am, Prayer and Labyrinth Walk to End Human Trafficking. Dominican Center for Spirituality, 6501 Alameda Rd. contact Ceil Roeger @713-440-3714 or croeger@domhou.org

Saturday February 29, Racial Wealth and the Income Gap, presented by NETWORK. Dominican Center for Spirituality, 6501 Alameda Rd. Contact Ceil Roeger @713-440-3714 or croeger@domhou.org

In San Antonio

Monday November 11, 3:30pm, video, *Inhabit—A Permaculture Perspective*. Christus Heritage Hall, The Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway.

Monday November 11, 6:00pm-8:00pm Rabbi Samuel Stahl, “Interfaith Relations: A Jewish perspective.” Light dinner, photo ID required, free, Auditorium C, 1st floor, Jewish Community Campus, 12500 NW Military Dr.

Wednesday November 13, 9:00am-11:30am, Mission-Driven development Summit, on the potential uses of congregationally-owned real estate. Travis Park Church, 230 E. Travis. Free parking in St. Mary’s Garage. Register by November 12

at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/city-of-san-antonio-mission-driven-development-summit-tickets-60316324751>

Wednesday November 13, 6:30pm, Coalition Against the Death Penalty SA chapter meeting. Oblate School of Theology, Building 4 of the Oblate Renewal Center (285 Oblate Drive).

Thursday November 14, 6:00pm doors open, 6:30pm-8:00pm program. “Island Energy—From Hawaii to the Texas Grid,” Jim Ajello (Hawaiian Electric Industries) and Cris Eugster (CPS Energy). Chapman Great Hall, Trinity University, One Trinity Place. Register at <https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/EnergyInnovationCenter/t4p-1.html>.

Monday November 18, 6:30pm, video, *American Prophet*, followed by a panel; sponsored by Pax Christi San Antonio. The video focuses on the early career of Bishop Gumbleton and his emergence amidst the then-controversial racial integration of Catholic parishes in Detroit. Tom Gumbleton would later become the Bishop President of Pax Christi USA. The Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway. Concerning parking call Arthur Dawes (210) 213-5919.

Tuesday November 19, 5:30pm-7:00pm, panel discussion, “Restorative Justice—How to Make It Work” (Joe Gonzales, Bexar County DA; Robert Rico, UTSA; Judge Ron Rangel; Judge Stephanie Boyd). Lago Vista Cypress Community Center 121 and 122, Northwest Vista College, 3535 N. Ellison Dr.

Tuesday November 19, 6:30pm, “A Day in the Life of San Antonio’s Waste Management, the Problem with Plastic, and the Zero Waste Movement,” City of San Antonio and Alamo Group Sierra Club. Eco Centro, 1802 N. Main.

Wednesday November 20, 2:00pm-4:00pm, film, “System Error,” on the capitalist tenet of endless growth and realistic limits. Mabee Library Room 221, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

Second Reading (Second Thessalonians 3:7-12)

This is one of the most misinterpreted passages from the New Testament. The focus of attention is the verse that reads, "...if someone does not want to work, let that person not eat." The misinterpretation is to make the inference that charity should not be extended to the poor, as if the poor do not work.

It should be remembered that the author was writing in an age when poor people were either slaves or low status craftspeople who hand-produced goods that they sold. They had no choice but to work. The author, writing in the name of Paul, gives Paul as an example; Paul had made leather tents. Idle people were not poor, but rather hangers-on who associated themselves with powerful politicians. As I translate the follow-up verse, "For we hear of some going about idly among you, not working but networking."

The entire letter was actually written from the perspective of people who were working-poor, a populist perspective, as it were. The author looked askance at sycophants, at people whose mission in life was to join the ranks of the few by calling attention to themselves.

Third Reading (Luke 21:5–19)

In the early modern period it became the architectural fashion in the Alpine or Tyrolean region—western Austria and northern Italy—to install huge clocks in church towers. People in the Tyrol are known for being prompt and business-like. To this day people to the south, in peninsular Italy, joke about their northern neighbors, saying that they put clocks on their churches and worship them.

Some who read the ancient end-times discourses from Christian tradition, such as that from the *Gospel of Luke* which is read at the last numbered Sunday ("ordinary time"), worship time in a way similar to the mocking reference to worshipping clocks. "The Rapture" becomes more important than living as the Messiah lived. This is despite the fact that the Messiah is quoted as saying, "See that you are not misled." "Do not go after" the people who say, "The time is near." Jesus, as depicted by Luke, did not make time a matter of doctrine or revelation.

Matters may become frightening, and people may be tempted to look for the End-time. "Do not become alarmed." What is frightening may simply "lead you into testimony," that is, carefully speaking the truth. Speaking with what words? Do not worry: "...I will give you mouth and wisdom...."

How do we know wisdom when we see it? It appears to depend on a long-term rather than immediate perspective, a broad contextual view rather than one contained in a stimulus-response reaction. And the long-term extends beyond a single life and self, to a historical sense of proportion and community-wide good. From that bigger picture, there is no real loss. "And not a hair from your head will be lost."

Poem

The Carpenter and the Shepherds

Having worked with once-living wood
to make beams and posts for homes,
chairs and tables for families to gather,

the carpenter watched in awe
how shepherds would warn wolves
to keep their distance,

pet with affection lambs, ewes and rams,
giving each a name for calling them back
lest they lose the flock,

doing the poetry that lights the world.

Tom Keene and Muse
October 1, 2019

CIDSE JOINT STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE UN CLIMATE ACTION SUMMIT 2019

September 19, 2019

This is a climate emergency. This is a social crisis. This is an environmental catastrophe. We have been procrastinating for too long, while the vulnerable suffer and our planet literally burns before our eyes. Like many public offices, Pope Francis declared a climate emergency on 14 June. Hundreds of thousands of

youths and adults will unite to strike on 20 September, in front of the UN Climate Action Summit in New York and around the world. They deserve an answer and response to their calls. Current Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) barely represent a third of the emissions reduction needed to limit warming to 1.5°C and instead allow for over 3.5°C of warming. Leaders must heed the title of the summit, Climate Action, and fulfil their moral duty.

There is no lack of ideas – just, sustainable and well-researched – for governments to implement an ecological transition. Communities, social movements and civil society organisations have a wealth of expertise in innovative models of food and energy production proven to work at scale, such as agroecology and democratic renewable energy systems. Nature-Based Solutions – just one of the nine themes of the UN climate summit – can contribute significantly to staying within 1.5°C rise in average global temperatures by avoiding emissions from deforestation, forest degradation and losses of wetland ecosystems, restoring degraded land and scaling up agroecological food systems. There is no reason to resort to speculative, potentially catastrophic experimentation with geo-engineering. And we have serious concerns on other false ‘solutions’, such as climate-smart agriculture, large scale bioenergy (such as BECCS),¹ hydrofuel, agrofuels, coal and nuclear.

The urgency to tackle climate change is increasingly to the fore in both scientific and faith-based narratives. A few years after the publication of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis has convened a special assembly of Bishops from 6-27 October in Rome (Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon). The Synod aims to determine how the Church can respond to injustices and extractivism in the Pan-Amazon region which fuel climate change. The Church is defining how to contribute to the protection of the Amazon – a key resource of Nature-Based Solutions – and the indigenous communities that implement restoration and conservation strategies. Indigenous communities are principle defenders on the frontlines of the destruction of ecosystems. What’s more, like other communities most vulnerable to climate change impacts, these are the least responsible for the greenhouse gas emissions that put us in this position of human and ecological collapse.

A recent study has estimated 75% of the effort required to fulfill the Paris Agreement must come from government action and 25% from individual initiatives. Individual citizens and communities have a critical role to play, but

¹ Bio energy with carbon capture storage

their efforts will be largely ineffective without a systemic change supported by transformational policies.

European and all other governments must rapidly increase ambition and review their NDCs in order to limit global temperature increases to 1.5°C. This must be reflective of their historical responsibilities and in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The new EU 2030 climate target proposed by the Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen of reducing emissions by 55% is not sufficient. Emissions will need to be reduced to at least 65% to stay on the 1.5°C pathway.

It's not enough to organise and participate in a summit, make some calls and recognise the emergency while doing little to address it. Real commitment is demonstrated by policy targets, finance, and implementation measured in reduced emissions. Real integrity is demonstrated by the coherence of implementation policies with social justice, which is a basic requirement in order to achieve the Agenda 2030. Bringing to scale the models and solutions proposed by civil society in policy at the national level would challenge the status quo of business as usual, but this is what has to be done. The scientific warnings will not cease. The moral duty to act is unprecedented.

List of Signatories:

- Christine Allen, Director of CAFOD/England & Wales
- Anja Appel, Director of KOO/Austria
- Caoimhe de Barra, Director of Trócaire/Ireland
- Gianni Del Bufalo, Director of FOCSIV/Italy
- Marian Caucik, Director of eRko/Slovakia
- Manuèle Derolez, Director of CCFD-Terre Solidaire/France
- Alistair Dutton, Director of SCIAF/Scotland
- Axelle Fischer, Director of Entraide et Fraternité/Belgium
- Josianne Gauthier, CIDSE Secretary General
- Patrick Godar, Director of Partage.Lu/Luxembourg
- Susan Gunn, Director of Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns/USA
- Lieve Herijgers, Director of Broederlijk Delen/Belgium and President of CIDSE
- Peter van Hoof, Director of Vastenactie/The Netherlands
- Serge Langlois, Director of Development & Peace/Canada
- Jorge Libano Monteiro, Director of FEC/Portugal
- Bernd Nilles, Director of Fastenopfer/Switzerland

- Clara Pardo Gil, President of Manos Unidas/Spain
- Pirmin Spiegel, Director of Misereor/Germany
- Kees Zevenbergen, Director of Cordaid/The Netherlands
- Bishop Abune Tesfaselassie Medhin, CIDSE Ecclesiastical Assistant, Bishop of Adigrat Eparchy/Ethiopia

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.sanantoniopace.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/