

Testimony



A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating January 23 and 30, 2022

Communications with the editor should 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

It seems that a preliminary draft of this issue was sent out last Sunday by mistake, without calendar items. So the present issue has calendar items, as well as some added material that should have been in last Sunday's transmission. After the calendar, the Sunday Liturgical Reading reflections are based on the readings for the Third and Fourth Weeks of Ordinary Time. The readings for two Sundays are reviewed because the editor has a scheduled hospitalization. Tom Keene's poem is *Prayer*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the poem are two items: The first is the January 1 World Day of Peace message of Pope Francis. The second is a news item from Pax Christi International on a United Nations-sponsored meeting on killer robots as weapons of war.

Earlier this month Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe issued a pastoral letter, "Living in the Light of Christ's Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament," which has sparked an important discussion in the contemporary church.

Calendar

Times are given for the Central Time Zone.

Tuesday January 18, 11:30am (12:30pm ET), online dialogue "Pro-Life Movement at a Crossroads: Dobbs and a Divided Society," Erika Bachiochi (Ethics and Public Policy Center), Destiny Herndon-DeLaRosa (New Wave Feminists), Gloria Purvis (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops), and Dave Williams (University of West Georgia), moderated by Kim Daniels (Georgetown University). RSVP at: <https://catholicsocialthought.georgetown.edu/events/pro-life-movement-at-a-crossroads#rsvp>

Tuesday January 18, 5:30pm-7:45pm, "San Antonio Is a 'Compassionate City'? What Does This Mean?" Six local San Antonio people share how they contributed to the Compassionate City movement. Register at:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/san-antonio-is-a-compassionate-city-what-does-this-mean-registration-192765275127>

Tuesday January 18, 6:00pm, online "Simulating Solutions to Climate Change—Put Yourself in the Driver's Seat," Stuart Birnbaum (Citizens' Climate Lobby; emeritus UTSA) and Bill Hurley (Citizens' Climate Lobby). This program is hosted by the Lone Star Chapter, Sierra Club. RSVP at:
https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?id=7013q000002GMECAA4&formcampaignid=7013q000002G9uYAAS&data=e6d5213d8552141c5906a0d246ce7019376167d30f31dbd03d22a899fce829cb388bd14dc9f9e99bc1578c4122c73052&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sierraclub&utm_campaign=outings

Tuesday January 18, 7:00pm-8:00pm (8:00pm-9:00pm ET) online film, *Oh Mercy*, about a migrant and refugee detention camp across the US/Mexico border, in Mexico. The viewing will be followed by a discussion. RSVP at:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0kcOygrT8tEtJ9MDVIT3OHuj2gaH_HXsvK

Wednesday January 19, 6:30pm-8:00pm, online, Freedom is the Future: Challenging Common Discourse Frameworks for Palestinian Liberation. For information: https://dreamweek.org/evt/freedom-is-the-future-challenging-common-discourse-frameworks-for-palestinian-liberation/?fbclid=IwAR0jfWgNWiU1_WE6Ak11ROMLW-btFCX_zgqUZgrV8cTx0Qh1oHc4ZT5_W0c
To register: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScdCUpPalq5TTjk9AHv-MDq2VseAbrk-agrVc6xY_6CtfGIEw/viewform

Thursday January 20, 5:00pm, online "Known, Loved, and Served: Finding God in Immersion Zeal," James Menkhaus (Gilmour Academy, Gates Mills, Ohio, author of *Immersion: A Pilgrimage into Service*). This is a program of the Holy Cross Institute at St. Edward's University. Register at:
https://stedwards.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_SJT-BAidQme8hkOv0h9XHA

Thursday January 20, 2:00pm-3:00pm (3:00pm-4:00pm ET), webinar "Religion & Animal and Food Justice," Christopher Carter (University of San Diego) and Lori G. Beaman (University of Ottawa), hosted by Andrea R. Jain (Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis) and Jonathan Sparks-Franklin (independent scholar). Register at:
https://iu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_8z_hFuFrQ7CBCY3ovD45mw

Thursday January 20, 5:00pm-6:00pm (6:00pm-7:00pm ET), online panel discussion, "Why a Synod on Synodality?" Kristin Colberg (College of St. Benedict and St. John's University) and Rafael Luciani (Boston College). Register at:
https://bccte.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_5N76jv-pTuiF4vNitTY0cQ

Friday January 21, 10:00am-11:00am (11:00am-12:00pm ET), online panel "the Life and Beatification of Rev. Rutilio Grande, S.J.," assassinated advisor to the assassinated saint, Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador. Panelists: Congressman James McGovern (Massachusetts), Carolyn Forché (Georgetown University), and David Hollenbach, S.J. (Georgetown University), moderated by David Collins, S.J. (Georgetown University). RSVP at:
https://georgetown.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_LnU_--DASDe54FQhc-vgvw

Sunday January 23, 2:30pm-4:00pm, online "The Future of Faith," a program about multireligious landscapes and a common future lived in peace and justice; Ron Nirenberg (mayor, San Antonio), Adam Russell Taylor (*Sojourners*), and a representative from the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. This program is hosted by the SoL Center at University Presbyterian Church. Register at: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration/>

Monday January 24, 5:00pm (6:00pm ET), online panel discussion "Theologies of Transformation and Actions for Justice," Timothy Matovina (University of Notre Dame), Mahan Mirza (University of Notre Dame), and Rabbi Karen Compane (Temple Beth-El, South Bend, Indiana). Register at:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/theologies-for-transformation-and-actions-for-justice-tickets-237831880557>

Tuesday January 25, 9:00am-10:15am, online "Reading the Bible against the Bible: Reimagining the Marginalized" Anthony Pinn (Rice University). Register at: <https://hopin.com/events/midwinter-lectures-2022/registration>
Also in person in Austin; see below.

Tuesday January 25, 10:45am-12:00pm, online "Lessons on Courage: What the Church Can Learn from Young People," Evelyn Parker (Perkins school of Theology, Dallas). Register at: <https://hopin.com/events/midwinter-lectures-2022/registration>
Also in person in Austin; see below.

Saturday January 29, 1:00pm (11:am pacific), online "Subverting Violence: Following the Nonviolent Jesus," Shane Claibourne (The Simple Way, Philadelphia). Register by January 25 at: <https://beatitudescenter.org/>

Thursday February 3, 6:00pm-7:30pm, online "Climate Change and Migration: Why Do People Leave the Homes They Love?" Ali Noorani (National Immigration Forum) and Tabitha Sookdeo (Sookdeo Consulting), moderated by Eamon Ormseth. This program is hosted by the Interreligious Eco-Justice network. Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/climate-change-and-migration-why-do-people-leave-the-homes-they-love-tickets-233530174037>

Saturday February 12, 1:00pm (11:00am Pacific), online "Abolish War: Another Way of Saying 'Blessings,'" Kathy Kelly (Voices for Creative Nonviolence). Register by Feb. 8 at: <https://beatitudescenter.org/>

Tuesday February 15, 5:30pm-7:30pm (6:30pm-8:30pm ET) online, Network's 50th Anniversary Intergenerational Dialogue, between the sister founders of Network and younger social justice advocates. Individuals in the latter group (ages 18-30) are invited to apply to join the panel: <https://networklobby.org/intergendialogue/>. All applicants will receive a recording of the event. Special guest speaker will be Olga Segura, author of *Birth of a Movement: Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church*.

Saturday February 26, 9:00am-2:00pm, online, Texas Coalition for the Abolition of the Death Penalty annual conference. The keynote address will be given by Sister Helen Prejean. There will be four concurrent breakout sessions, as well as a panel

discussion on successful abolition efforts in other states: LaKeisha Cook (Virginia), Rep. Robert Renny Cushing (New Hampshire), and Denis Maes (Colorado). Prices vary by category: \$50 to \$90. Register at: <https://tcadp.org/tcadp-2022-annual-conference-registration/>

Saturday March 12, 1:00pm (11:00am Pacific), online "The Nonviolence of St. Francis and St. Claire," Ken Butigan (DePaul University). Register by March 8 at: <https://beatitudescenter.org/>

In Austin

Tuesday January 25, 9:00am-10:15am, "Reading the Bible against the Bible: Reimagining the Marginalized" Anthony Pinn (Rice University). Part of the Midwinter program at Austin Presbyterian Seminary. Register at: <https://hopin.com/events/midwinter-lectures-2022/registration>
Proof of Covid vaccination required. Austin Presbyterian Seminary, 100 E. 27th St.

Tuesday January 25, 10:45am-12:00pm, "Lessons on Courage: What the Church Can Learn from Young People," Evelyn Parker (Perkins school of Theology, Dallas). Part of the Midwinter program at Austin Presbyterian Seminary. Register at: <https://hopin.com/events/midwinter-lectures-2022/registration>
Proof of Covid vaccination required. Austin Presbyterian Seminary, 100 E. 27th St.

Thursday February 24, 6:00pm-8:30pm, Community Engagement Meeting Hosted by the Austin Police Department. Holy Cross Church Family Life Center, 1110 Concho St., Austin.

In San Antonio

Tuesday January 18, 5:15pm-7:30pm, San Antonio Is a "Compassionate City"? What Does This Mean? Presentations by six local activists and artist Lionel Sosa. Sponsored by Compassionate San Antonio. Refreshments, as COVID norms permit. Cody Library, 1141 Vance Jackson Road. Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/san-antonio-is-a-compassionate-city-what-does-this-mean-tickets-192765275127>

Sunday January 23, 2:30pm-4:00pm, symposium "The Future of Faith and Faith in the Future...Exploring Intersections of Religious practice and 21st Century Life." Ron Nirenberg (mayor, san Antonio), Adam Russell Taylor (*Sojourners*), and a yet-

to-be-named representative from the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Discussion of faith and the city and politics, activism and social justice, faith-based perspectives of young adults, and multi-religious collaboration. The SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell Ave. (enter off Shook). Free. Register at: <https://sourceoflightsa.org/classes-and-events>

Wednesday January 26, 2:00pm-3:30pm, conversation about peace studies courses in San Antonio, led by Andrew J. Hill (St. Philip's College). Northwest Vista College, 3535 N. Ellison Dr. Free. Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-future-of-peace-conflict-studies-in-san-antonio-tickets-192635727647>

Notice

Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance Investing, Charles Powell and Georges Enderle (both University of Notre Dame). Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zntfJiu8KE

January 23, Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading (Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10)

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah, as we have them, were a single book, evidently composed as an appendix to the books of Chronicles. Passages in the Ezra section and the Nehemiah section were displaced into one another; commentators devote much effort to identifying the displaced passages and establishing their original order. That need not detain us here.

The Lectionary presents us with a section in which Ezra, in his first term at governing Judah as a province in the Persian Empire after the Babylonian captivity, reads his strict version of the religious Law and the local people weep. Ezra and his assistants, who are named in verses that the Lectionary deletes, try to convince them to be happy. The next chapter in Nehemiah says the people went away happy. Most commentators agree that the Ezra narrative of the reading of the Law had been displaced from the Ezra section of the book and ended up in the Nehemiah section. Nehemiah, it turns out, had a milder version of the law, and the public reading of that version is what made the people happy.

Ezra had led a contingent of returnees from Babylon who had a nationalistic agenda. They ended up in a conflict with the local people, who had established peaceful relations with their non-Hebrew neighbors. Nehemiah, in his term in office, wanted to re-establish those friendly relations. This sounds so familiar, centuries, millennia, later! Should there be legal barriers around the faithful, or openings and outreach?

Second Reading (1 Corinthians 12:12-30)

“If the foot were to say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not part of the body,’ it is not on that account not part of the body; and if the ear were to say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not part of the body,’ it is not on that account not part of the body.” This continues Paul’s discourse on the variety of assignments in the church, the reading of which began last Sunday. In the development of his argument, a fundamental distinction is made between what someone claims and what is true.

We have been witnessing in current affairs extravagant departures from reality in political discourse. Of course, I have in mind the debate over “the wall,” but there are many other cases as well. Rhetorically we hear about an invasion of thousands of terrorists from the Middle East (There’s a stereotype, for sure!) sneaking across the U.S. border with Mexico; in reality there are refugee families trying to escape gang terrorism in Central America. Rhetorically we hear about a “humanitarian disaster” that requires a wall; in reality the refugee question has become a “disaster” because a dishonorable government refuses to live up to treaties about the treatment of refugees. Also in reality, a wall would neither feed, clothe, nor house anyone.

Walls do not provide security half as well as justice does. The Berlin Wall did not protect the Communist regime of the former East Germany from the quest for freedom. The big walls between Israeli occupied lands and Palestinian communities will be gone before the century is over because the injustices they harden will in the long run undo the false legitimacy they are intended to shield.

What are such walls really for? The reading actually alludes to an answer: “...one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slave or free....” A wall is essentially a symbol of a division—a division that is ultimately a falsehood.

Third Reading (Luke 1.1-4, 4.14-21)

It is tempting to skip over Luke's introduction to his gospel, but we can learn some things about early Christianity from it. The practice was to catechize new Christians with the sayings of Jesus: "...the sayings by which you were catechized." These would include such passages as the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, and the parables. Luke says he was adding the narrative of the deeds of Jesus, which he was putting in a serviceable order:

Whereas many attempted to reorder the narration of the doings that have been confirmed among us, as eye-witnessed from the outset and those who became ministers of the word handed down to us, I too, having traced everything accurately from the beginning, thought to write it in an order for you, O excellent Theophilus, so that you may learn to have confidence in the sayings by which you were catechized.

The focus of the good news was the largely ethical content of the Jesus sayings, which also appear in Matthew's gospel. The narrative of the actions of Jesus, which appears to have come largely from the Gospel of Mark, were in an order in that gospel that Luke found less useful for teaching purpose. Luke may well have had such works as the Gospel of Mathew in mind when he mentions other attempts at reordering, but he does not appear to have used Matthew's gospel as a source. We should remember that an early Christian church was in place before a Christian Bible was published. The written Bible came from the church, not the church from the written Bible. Taking the Bible as the literal words of God rather than as traditional words witnessing to the Word, is to mistake the messenger for the message. Luke himself felt free to change the presentation in the service of what was to be presented.

Luke designed the excerpt from the fourth chapter of his gospel to present the theme of Jesus' teaching. Already a reputable teacher elsewhere in Galilee, Jesus enters the synagogue in Nazareth and reads from a few passages of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus did not turn to the Law or teach the Law; that was not his theme.

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me." *Anoint* is the same word stem as that of *Messiah* or, in Greek, *Christ*. It refers to the conferral of a life's mission. The spirit "...has sent me to announce good news to the poor." What is good news to the poor is not, at least superficially, good news to the rich.

The Isaiah selections go on to speak of the release of people from prison. That would be debtors' prison. Before the modern era, criminals were punished physically or executed, not imprisoned after being convicted; but poor people who could not pay their bills were held in prison until friends, family, or a sympathetic person paid off the debt, or they might be sold into slavery. To proclaim release to the imprisoned would be far more destabilizing to an oppressive system of rule than to help one or two criminals escape.

Isaiah, as quoted by Jesus, also proclaims a "recovery of sight to the blind...." This is from the widely used "Septuagint" Greek translation; the Hebrew probably intended to refer to prisoners emerging from darkness into the light of the outdoors. Either way, the release of the poor and the abandonment of restricting the poor involve an enlightenment.

January 30, Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading (Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19)

The *Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* begins with a title and introduction, the beginning of a dialogue between Jeremiah and God in which God calls Jeremiah as a prophet, a God-given vision that Jeremiah has, and a continuation of the dialogue between Jeremiah and God—all in one chapter. The Lectionary selects the opening lines of the dialogue and the entirety of the resumed section of the dialogue. The clear intent is to draw a parallel between the call of Jeremiah as a prophet and the call of Jesus as a prophet, which will be presented in the Third Reading.

Second Reading (1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13)

This is a controversial passage among biblical scholars because they are unsure whether the beautiful love poem ("Love waits patiently; love shows kindness....") was written by Paul as a part of his letter or whether it was accidentally included as part of the letter at a later date. Paul's Corinthians letters had been scrambled, with the pages getting out of order. In fact, *Second Corinthians*, as we now call it, is a mixture of several letters. *First Corinthians* has kept its order better, but there is a seam toward the beginning of today's lectionary reading.

First, let's take the letter as it reads without the love poem. Paul had been talking about the different assignments that existed in the church, a discussion in chapter 12 occasioned by some people speaking in "tongues".

³⁰Not all have the gifts of healing, do they? Not all speak tongues, do they? Not all interpret, do they? ³¹But strive for the greater gifts. And I am showing you a still more superior way. ¹⁴¹Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. ²For one speaking in a tongue is not speaking to humans but to God, for no one is heard but is speaking mysteries in the spirit; ³but one prophesying is saying something constructive, an encouragement, and a consolation to humans.

Note how smoothly the discussion proceeds with the Love Poem of Chapter 13 taken out. Note also how Paul highlights useful ministry.

The Love Poem (1 Corinthians 12:31b-14:1a) itself is a sublime work. "If I speak in the tongues of humans and messengers, but do not have love, I have become a brass-noise gong or a clashing cymbal." "Love waits patiently; love shows kindness...." One can readily see why, upon finding it with Paul's correspondence, someone would assume it went with the discussion of assignments in the church.

Third Reading (Luke 4.21-30)

"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." The scripture was about good news being proclaimed to the poor and a Jubilee Year in which debts would be written off. And all "...were amazed at the words of good will that were coming from his mouth." Many see what comes afterwards in the narrative as evidence of skepticism in Nazareth about Jesus, but it should be understood as evidence of local pride: "Is he not the son of Joseph?" Luke has Jesus understanding it that way: "Undoubtedly you will recite the proverb to me, 'Physician heal yourself. Do what we heard came about in Capernaum also here in your homeland.'" But Jesus would have nothing to do with even the slightest parochialism. His mission was to proclaim good news to the poor, not boost local pride. Local pride would be a distraction.

So Jesus cites two cases from the Hebrew scriptures where divine favor was shown to foreigners rather than to Israelites—Elijah's extension of the meagre food supply of the generous widow of Zarephath in Sidon (1 Kings 17) and Elisha's

curing Naaman the leper from Syria (2 Kings 5). His citing such cases reversed the attitude of the people in Nazareth: “And when they heard these things in the synagogue, they were filled with much anger....”

Parochialism, of course, is not unique to first century Nazareth. It is not simply a matter of reluctance to find wisdom in a faith tradition other than one’s own, but also a refusal to extend good will to the “other” in general. That begins with a repressed doubt about one’s own homeland, i.e. an underlying lack of confidence: The locals in Nazareth “...were amazed at the words of good will that came from his mouth.” The accompanying doubt about other homelands is usually less repressed.

Poem

Prayer

Deliver us from illusions of separation.
May we wake to our Oneness in you.
All we ask is the clarity, the courage
to do, to co-create with you
what we already are.

Tom Keene and Muse
February 27, 2021

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE
FRANCIS
FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE
55th WORLD DAY OF PEACE

1 JANUARY 2022

***Dialogue Between Generations, Education and Work:
Tools for Building Lasting Peace***

1. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace” (Is 52:7).

The words of the prophet Isaiah speak of consolation; they voice the sigh of relief of a people in exile, weary of violence and oppression, exposed to indignity and death. The prophet Baruch had wondered: “Why is it, O Israel, why is it that you are in the land of your enemies, that you are growing old in a foreign country, that you are defiled with the dead, that you are counted among those in Hades?” (3:10-11). For the people of Israel, the coming of the *messenger of peace* meant the promise of a rebirth from the rubble of history, the beginning of a bright future.

Today the *path of peace*, which Saint Paul VI called by the new name of *integral development*, [1] remains sadly distant from the real lives of many men and women and thus from our human family, which is now entirely interconnected. Despite numerous efforts aimed at constructive dialogue between nations, the deafening noise of war and conflict is intensifying. While diseases of pandemic proportions are spreading, the effects of climate change and environmental degradation are worsening, the tragedy of hunger and thirst is increasing, and an economic model based on individualism rather than on solidary sharing continues to prevail. As in the days of the prophets of old, so in our own day *the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth* [2] constantly make themselves heard, pleading for justice and peace.

In every age, peace is both a gift from on high and the fruit of a shared commitment. Indeed, we can speak of an “architecture” of peace, to which different institutions of society contribute, and an “art” of peace that directly involves each one of us. [3] All can work together to build a more peaceful world, starting from the hearts of individuals and relationships in the family, then within society and with the environment, and all the way up to relationships between peoples and nations.

Here I wish to propose *three paths* for building a lasting peace. First, *dialogue between generations* as the basis for the realization of shared projects. Second, *education* as a factor of freedom, responsibility and development. Finally, *labour* as a means for the full realization of human dignity. These are three indispensable elements for “making possible the creation of a social covenant”, [4] without which every project of peace turns out to be insubstantial.

2. *Dialogue between generations to build peace*

In a world still gripped by the pandemic that has created untold problems, “some people attempt to flee from reality, taking refuge in their own little world; others react to it with destructive violence. Yet between selfish indifference and violent protest there is always another possible option: that of dialogue. Dialogue between generations”. [5]

All honest dialogue, in addition to a correct and positive exchange of views, demands basic trust between the participants. We need to learn how to regain this mutual trust. The current health crisis has increased our sense of isolation and a tendency to self-absorption. The loneliness of the elderly is matched in the young by a sense of helplessness and a lack of a shared vision about the future. The crisis has indeed been painful, but it has also helped to bring out the best in people. Indeed, during the pandemic we encountered generous examples of compassion, sharing and solidarity in every part of the world.

Dialogue entails listening to one another, sharing different views, coming to agreement and walking together. Promoting such dialogue between generations involves breaking up the hard and barren soil of conflict and indifference in order to sow the seeds of a lasting and shared peace.

Although technological and economic development has tended to create a divide between generations, our current crises show the urgent need for an intergenerational partnership. Young people need the wisdom and experience of the elderly, while those who are older need the support, affection, creativity and dynamism of the young.

Great social challenges and peace processes necessarily call for dialogue between the keepers of memory – the elderly – and those who move history forward – the young. Each must be willing to make room for others and not to insist on monopolizing the entire scene by pursuing their own immediate interests, as if there were no past and future. The global crisis we are experiencing makes it clear that encounter and dialogue between generations should be the driving force behind a healthy politics, that is not content to manage the present “with piecemeal solutions or quick fixes”, [6] but views itself as an outstanding form of love for others, [7] in the search for shared and sustainable projects for the future.

If, amid difficulties, we can practise this kind of intergenerational dialogue, “we can be firmly rooted in the present, and from here, revisit the past and look to the future. To revisit the past in order to learn from history and heal old wounds that at times still trouble us. To look to the future in order to nourish our enthusiasm, cause dreams to emerge, awaken prophecies and enable hope to

blossom. Together, we can learn from one another”. [8] For without roots, how can trees grow and bear fruit?

We need only think of care for our common home. The environment, in fact, “is on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next”. [9] We ought to esteem and encourage all those young people who work for a more just world, one that is careful to safeguard the creation entrusted to our stewardship. They go about this with restlessness, enthusiasm and most of all a sense of responsibility before the urgent change of direction [10] required by the challenges emerging from the present ethical and socio-environmental crisis. [11]

On the other hand, the opportunity to build paths of peace together cannot ignore education and labour, which are privileged settings and contexts for intergenerational dialogue. Education provides the grammar for dialogue between generations, and in the experience of labour men and women of different generations find themselves able to cooperate and to share expertise, experiences and skills in view of the common good.

3. Teaching and education as drivers of peace

In recent years, there has been a significant reduction worldwide in funding for education and training; these have been seen more as expenditures than investments. Yet they are the primary means of promoting integral human development; they make individuals more free and responsible, and they are essential for the defence and promotion of peace. In a word, teaching and education are the foundations of a cohesive civil society capable of generating hope, prosperity and progress.

Military expenditures, on the other hand, have increased beyond the levels at the end of the Cold War and they seem certain to grow exorbitantly. [12]

It is high time, then, that governments develop economic policies aimed at inverting the proportion of public funds spent on education and on weaponry. The pursuit of a genuine process of international disarmament can only prove beneficial for the development of peoples and nations, freeing up financial resources better used for health care, schools, infrastructure, care of the land and so forth.

It is my hope that investment in education will also be accompanied by greater efforts to promote the culture of care, [13] which, in the face of social divisions and unresponsive institutions, could become a common language working to break down barriers and build bridges. “A country flourishes when constructive dialogue occurs between its many rich cultural components: popular

culture, university culture, youth culture, artistic culture, technological culture, economic culture, family culture and media culture”. [14] It is essential, then, to forge a new cultural paradigm through “a global pact on education for and with future generations, one that commits families, communities, schools, universities, institutions, religions, governments and the entire human family to the training of mature men and women”. [15] A compact that can promote education in integral ecology, according to a cultural model of peace, development and sustainability centred on fraternity and the covenant between human beings and the environment. [16]

By investing in the education and training of younger generations, we can help them – through a focused programme of formation – to take their rightful place in the labour market. [17]

4. Creating and ensuring labour builds peace

Labour is an indispensable factor in building and keeping peace. It is an expression of ourselves and our gifts, but also of our commitment, self-investment and cooperation with others, since we always work *with* or *for* someone. Seen in this clearly social perspective, the workplace enables us to learn to make our contribution towards a more habitable and beautiful world.

The Covid-19 pandemic has negatively affected the labour market, which was already facing multiple challenges. Millions of economic and productive activities have failed; short-term workers are increasingly vulnerable; many of those who provide essential services have an even lower public and political profile; and in many cases, distance teaching has led to a deficit in learning and delays in completing programmes of study. Furthermore, young people entering the job market and recently unemployed adults presently face bleak prospects.

In a particular way, the impact of the crisis on the informal economy, which often involves migrant workers, has been devastating. Many of the latter are not even recognized by national legislation; it is as though they did not exist. They and their families live in highly precarious conditions, prey to various forms of slavery and with no system of welfare to protect them. Currently only one third of the world’s population of working age enjoys a system of social protection, or benefit from it only in limited ways. Violence and organized crime are on the increase in many countries, impinging on people’s freedom and dignity, poisoning the economy and hampering the development of the common good. The only answer to this is an expansion of dignified employment opportunities.

Labour, in fact, is the foundation on which to build justice and solidarity in every community. For this reason, our aim should not be “that technological

progress increasingly replace human work, for this would be detrimental to humanity. Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfilment". [18] We need to combine our ideas and efforts in order to create the solutions and conditions that can provide everyone of working age with the opportunity, through their work, to contribute to the lives of their families and of society as a whole.

It is more urgent than ever to promote, throughout our world, decent and dignified working conditions, oriented to the common good and to the safeguarding of creation. The freedom of entrepreneurial initiatives needs to be ensured and supported; at the same time, efforts must be made to encourage a renewed sense of social responsibility, so that profit will not be the sole guiding criterion.

In light of this, there is a need to promote, welcome and support initiatives that, on all levels, urge companies to respect the fundamental human rights of workers, raising awareness not only on the part of institutions, but also among consumers, civil society and entrepreneurial entities. As the latter become more and more conscious of their role in society, the more they will become places where human dignity is respected. In this way, they will contribute to building peace. Here, politics is called to play an active role by promoting a fair balance between economic freedom and social justice. All who work in this field, starting with Catholic workers and entrepreneurs, can find sure guidelines in the Church's social doctrine.

Dear brothers and sisters, as we seek to combine our efforts in order to emerge from the pandemic, I renew my thanks to all those who continue to work with generosity and responsibility in the areas of education, safety and protection of rights, in supplying medical care, in facilitating meetings between family members and the sick, and in providing economic support to the needy and those who have lost their jobs. I continue to remember the victims and their families in my prayers.

To government leaders and to all those charged with political and social responsibilities, to priests and pastoral workers, and to all men and women of good will, I make this appeal: let us walk together with courage and creativity on the path of intergenerational dialogue, education, and work. May more and more men and women strive daily, with quiet humility and courage, to be artisans of peace. And may they be ever inspired and accompanied by the blessings of the God of peace!

From the Vatican, 8 December 2021

FRANCISCUS

- [1] Cf. Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967), 76ff.
- [2] Cf. Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 49.
- [3] Cf. Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), 231.
- [4] *Ibid.*, 218.
- [5] *Ibid.*, 199.
- [6] *Ibid.*, 179.
- [7] Cf. *ibid.*, 180.
- [8] Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (25 March 2019), 199.
- [9] Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 159.
- [10] Cf. *ibid.*, 163; 202.
- [11] Cf. *ibid.*, 139.
- [12] Cf. *Message to the Participants in the 4th Paris Peace Forum*, 11-13 November 2021.
- [13] Cf. Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 231; *Message for the 2021 World Day of Peace: A Culture of Care as a Path to Peace* (8 December 2020).
- [14] Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), 199.
- [15] Cf. *Video Message for the Global Compact on Education: Together to Look Beyond* (15 October 2020).
- [16] Cf. *Video Message for the High Level Virtual Climate Ambition Summit* (13 December 2020).
- [17] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens* (14 September 1981), 18.
- [18] Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 128.

The Few States Opposed to New Law Against Killer Robots Block the Many States in Favor--Again

[News item on December Pax Christi International Website]



Photo: Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems of CCW (2015) UN Photo / Jean-Marc Ferré

Weapons programmed to hunt and kill people? That's the urgent, hi-tech question governments representing most of humanity just debated for 10 days in Geneva. A majority argued strongly to negotiate a ban on such weapons—a step already supported by nearly 70 states and more than 180 civil society organizations, including Pax Christi International.

No, said a small minority of governments with big militaries already working towards autonomous weapons, the existing laws of war apply to killer robots. 10 more days of meetings next year will do.

So, faced with growing prospects of robots that select and strike targets on their own, members of a United Nations treaty set up to curb especially

dangerous weapons could only agree to keep talking. It is the ninth year of deadlock on the issue at the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), after 2013 referral from the UN Human Rights Council.

“It’s now clear that a minority of states including the US and Russia, already investing heavily in the development of autonomous weapons, are committed to...block progress towards an international legal response to autonomy in weapons systems,” the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots concluded. Pax Christi International is a member of the campaign.

“States should feel confident that outside this room, the majority of public opinion, experts in artificial intelligence and technology, researchers and academics, faith leaders from around the world and the UN Secretary General, will all be with us” in negotiating a new treaty, Ousmann Noor of the Stop Killer Robots campaign told the closing session.

Throughout the 10 days of debate, states and civil society organizations from Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East pushed for urgent action on legally binding prohibitions and obligations regarding robotic weapons. A carefully crafted compromise to build on past work was developed at an experts meeting during the first week of the CCW conference, 6-17 December 2021. However, the misuse of consensus at the United Nations enables failure in such circumstances. Paragraph by paragraph and even word by word, Russia took the lead in rejecting or watering down the compromise. The delegations of the United States, Israel, United Kingdom, Australia and South Korea offered varying degrees of support plus much silence.

“It is important to remind ourselves that on the other side of decisions in Geneva are human beings. The time to act on killer robots is now,” Merel Selleslach, a campaigner from Pax Christi Flanders, said of the meeting. “A clear majority of states is calling for a legally binding framework on lethal autonomous weapons, making me hopeful to see treaty negotiations starting up next year.” It is a way forward on the minds of many there.

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>

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

Catholic Books Review

<http://catholicbooksreview.org>

Beloved Community Project

<http://belovedcommunityproject.org/>