

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating February 10, 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 section, the Sunday reading reflections are based on the lectionary selections for the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *One Man's Story*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. As the "shutdown" of some 25% of the federal government continued during January, it occurred to me how little the people who worked and the work that they do was being respected. After the poem my thoughts on that theme follow.

Calendar

In Austin

Monday February 4 to Wednesday February 6, Mid-Winter Lectures. Dr. Robert M. Franklin, Jr., "Moral Agency and Leadership." Dr. Miroslav Volf, "Trampling on Pearls? Theology and What Matters the Most." Katelyn Beaty, "New Norms for New Era." Shelton Chapel, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 100 E. 27th St. For details and registration, see <https://www.austinseminary.edu/page.cfm?p=3657>.

Wednesday February 6, 12:00pm-1:30pm, Charles R. Porter, Ph.D., "Water Security: Local, state, and International Challenges." Carter Auditorium, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. For parking permit: <https://www.stedwards.edu/contact-us/main/main-campus-united-states>.

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, Desert Dance Theatre, "Sister Moses. The Story of Harriet Tubman." King-Seabrook Chapel, Huston-Tillotson University, 900 Chicon St.

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 8th St. Information: tcadp.org

In Dallas

Friday February 8, 8:00am-10:00am, Tom Wong, "Public Charge & Voter Mobilization: Immigration Policy Concerns Debunked." 5th Floor, Jones Day Law Firm, 2727 N. Harwood St. Information: Bora Laci, tower@smu.edu, 214-768-4716; or use "register" button at <https://calendar.smu.edu/site/centerinstitutes/event/lcld-policy-forum/>

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, (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 February 5, 6:45pm, Pax Christi El Paso meeting. "Active Nonviolence." Centro Mujeres de la Esperanza, 1101 Birch St. Visitors welcome.

Fridays February 8, 15, 22, 12:00pm-1:00pm, peace vigils. In front of Federal Courthouse, corner of Campbell and San Antonio.

Sunday February 10, 3:00pm, Film, "Hidden Figures." St. Joseph School Auditorium; enter through school parking lot across from church rectory at 1315 Travis St.

Friday February 15, 6:00pm, Eduardo Scarel, "Learning More about 'Laudato Si.'" St. Joseph school Auditorium; enter through school parking lot across from church rectory at 1315 Travis St.

Saturday February 23, 9:00am-5:00pm, and **Saturday March 2**, 9:00am-5:00pm, Restorative Justice Training. #30. Register with Tepeyac Institute, 872-8420.

Sunday February 24, 2:30pm-4:00pm, panel with Jesus Chavez and others, "Gerrymandering and Social Justice: Toward Fair Redistricting in Texas." Maud Sullivan Gallery, El Paso Public Library Downtown, 501 N. Oregon.

Tuesday February 26, 6:30pm-8:00pm, Border gathering and public witness with Hope and Bishop Mark Seitz. At the Anapra Fence, New Mexico. Information: (915) 872-8400, ext. 200.

Thursday February 28, 12:00pm-1:00pm, death penalty vigil. In front of El Paso County Courthouse, 500 E. San Antonio.

In Houston

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.

Friday February 15, 8:00am-9:00am, Nathan Mallonee and Jonathan Wiles (both of Living Water International), "Most Significant Change Methodology: A Presentation from a Faith-Based NGO Addressing Water Inequalities." Lovett Hall, Rom 402, Rice e (use Entrance C). Info: Hayley Helmstreet, hj2@rice.edu, 713-348-3974. Register: https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20190215/event_id/20201.

Friday February 15, 11:00am, Brianne Donaldson, "Jainism and Bioethics: From Consequences to an 'Ethic of Carefulness.'" Mechanical Laboratory 209 (Campanille Road, between Ryon Engineering Laboratory and Campanille Lot), Rice University. Free; includes lunch. Information: chao.center@rice.edu.

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. Information: Hayley Hemstreet hjh2@rice.edu.

Thursday February 28, 4:00pm-5:30pm, Nayan Shah, "Seeking Asylum, Precarity and Bodily Defiance at the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands." Location to be determined. Info: rsvpcswgs@rice.edu. Free; no RSVP required.

In San Antonio

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.

Tuesday February 19, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Green Sacred Texts (environmentalist passages in the Bible). \$10. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Register at <https://www.upcsa.org/registration/>

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.

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.

Monday March 4, 6:00pm, 14th 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.

Tuesday March 19, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Green Sacred Texts (environmental passages from diverse traditions). \$10. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Register at <https://www.upcsa.org/registration/>

Second Reading (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

“Now I am making known to you, brothers and sisters, the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you already received, in which you have also made your stand and through which you are being saved....” If the Corinthians had received what Paul had proclaimed, why does he set about making it known again? We find out later on: “But if it is preached that the Messiah has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say there is no resurrection from the dead?” (1 Cor 15:12) Exactly what *resurrection* means is difficult to begin with. Somehow it was easier for the Corinthians to apply the idea of a transformed life to Jesus than to themselves. So Paul proceeds to repeat the elements of the creed he had received: “for I handed down to you principally what I also received: that the Messiah died because of our sins....”

Keeping safely in the past what is hoped for is something modern people also do. We have our familiar world and make our daily life in it. For Jesus to upset ancient hierarchs, tyrants, and empires was impressive, but rarely are we in our day ready to do likewise.

Third Reading (Luke 5.1-11)

Jesus, seated in a boat, had finished teaching the word of God to a crowd on the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret, or Sea of Galilee. He said to Peter, “Put out into the deep and let your nets down for a catch.” This can be taken as a simple miracle narrative: “Master, laboring all night we caught nothing, but on your say so I will cast the net.” Then the catch is so great that with a second boat they still have difficulty bringing it in. But the narrative of the ministry of Jesus as taken over from the *Gospel of Mark* had plenty of miracles. Why did Luke add this one?

Unlike the other Evangelists, Luke not only followed the narrative of Jesus up to the Passion and Resurrection but also added that of the founding of the Church. The narrative in Luke's *Acts of the Apostles* features several movements within the Church; today we would call them denominations. There were the movement led by James the Brother in Jerusalem, the movement led by Peter first also in Jerusalem but later in Antioch on the Orontes and eventually in Rome, and the movement led by Paul in cities of what are now Turkey and Greece. The movement led by James would disappear from history and from Christian consciousness, hinted at by a few references in Paul's *Letter to the Galatians*, a few legends recorded in *Acts* and in the history written by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, and the self-identification of the author of the *Letter of Jude* as one of the Brothers from James' community. The author of the *Letter of James* seems to have used the pen name *James* in memory of that community.

Luke's narrative would feature the movements around Peter and, especially, Paul. A rivalry developed between the two movements, and Luke went to great lengths to make them both a part of the one Christian narrative. His imagery, that of two boats with their crews working together to bring in a catch too large for both, has an evident meaning for us.

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Poem
One Man's Story
(Why have you forsaken me?)

A story of life, death, resurrection,
a persisting cycle we share
with all creatures:
 rocks and stars,
 tigers and trees,
 our body's trillions
 of quick-witted cells,
 our cosmos of uncounted galaxies.

From heights of intimacy
to depths of isolation
into a completion
to be shared with all.

A story without end.

Tom Keene and Muse
December 28, 2018

Respecting Those Who Work and the Work They Do

Anthony J. Blasi

“What should I do about this? What do cheaters deserve?” The teacher was a difficult person, but he had his strong points. “What is the meaning of cheating?” I was a few months from graduating from college. I did not own a car, and for my practice teaching I was assigned to this person whom others had had difficulty working with because his school was within walking distance from the university. The students were volunteering rather draconian measures against the un-named cheaters. The teacher had handed me a stack of essay tests to grade, and I had discovered two that were slightly off the topic of a question, but were the same, paragraph after paragraph, word for word. The two students could not have copied from one another during the test time because their assigned seats were some rows apart. “What is honor?” he continued. The tension of the situation stretched out. “Why should people be honest?” He lifted an encyclopedia volume from his desk and explained how two students had gone to the library, copied out the same article, and turned it in for a test question they were expecting to be asked. “What if the people in the office could be bribed to change grades?” He thumped his finger on the seating chart; I looked at one of the offending students in the desk he had indicated. She was in tears. “You are proposing severe measures,” he said to the class, never naming the two who had cheated. “I think it will be more important for them to come to terms with this with their parents.”

Whatever difficulties people had with that teacher, he knew his craft. He did not spell out a lot of history in his world history class by telling good stories, unlike my high school history teacher did, who had led me to an interest in his subject half a dozen years before. Instead he asked questions about deeds and motives, leaving the unfolding of the past to the text. Critical thinking about the past was what he wanted to make happen in the classroom. Yes, he knew his craft.

People depend on one another in this world. They know their own crafts well. Air traffic controllers keep us safe. Park rangers keep our parks safe from us so that future generations will have parks. Prison guards keep their charges safe from one another and direct the daily lives of people who in many cases have trouble directing their own lives. Work is more than a transaction—I do this for you and you pay that to me. Work is creative. Through it we fashion a world for one another.

I have the impression that work is under appreciated and under compensated today. At the same time inheritances seem too large and investments too lucrative. I think everyone who is able should learn a craft and be proficient in it, and that doing so should be sufficient to support a household. Instead, so much ends up in the hands of people who did not work for what they have and never developed personal character and responsibility.

As I write, eight hundred thousand people are either out of work because a politician—who never learned how to legislate—fails to see the value of their work and simply holds their endeavors hostage to get his way, or they are forced to work without even the insufficient compensation they would normally get. This latter case is not quite slavery, since there is a promise of future pay, but it is an unjust deprivation all the same.

The chatter in the opinion media would have it that making “the wall” along the southern United States border a moral issue hardens the political stalemate and makes it more difficult to resolve. Excuse me, morality takes precedence over difficulty, and constructing a wall so as to insult a neighbor and demean a people is a moral issue. Keeping useful work from being done is also a moral issue. Rendering the moral aspect of constructing a wall against a people a mere matter of tactic and compromise calls to mind the teacher’s question, “What if the people in the office could be bribed to change grades?” Both are methods in conflict with honor; the political negotiations become as meaningless as bought grades. And keeping people from their work calls to mind the problem behind copying an answer from a reference book rather than developing a thought on one’s own; it undermines the process of learning how to create honest value.

Links

Pax Christi International
<http://www.paxchristi.net/>

Pax Christi U.S.A.
<http://www.paxchristiusa.org>

Pax Christi Texas
<http://www.paxchristitexas.org>

Pax Christi Dallas
<http://www.Paxchristidallastx.org>

Pax Christi San Antonio
<http://www.paxchristisa.org>

Marianist Social Justice Collaborative
www.msjc.net

Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, International JPIC Committee
<http://saccvi.blogspot.com/>

San Antonio Peace Center
<http://www.sanantoniopeace.center>

Interfaith Radio, (*Interfaith Voices*)
<http://www.interfaithradio.org/>

Texas Catholic Campaign to End the Death Penalty
www.txccedp.org

Dialogue Institute of San Antonio

www.thedialoginstitute.org/san-antonio/

Climate Change

www.creation-care.com

NowCastSA

www.nowcastsa.com/