


Testimony
A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio
Anticipating January 6, 2019

Pax Christi San Antonio does not solicit donations. Thoughtful comments, however, may be sent to the editor at j6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com, with the understanding that permission to publish them is implied. Pax Christi International was founded in 1945 with the encouragement of Bishop Pierre Marie Théas of Montauban, France, by Marthe Dortel Claudot, as a Christian lay organization dedicated to preventing a repetition of the savagery of the twentieth century's world wars.

Editorial

After the Calendar, the Second and Third Reading sections are inspired by the readings for the Feast of Epiphany Tom Keene's poem is *Epiphany*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. Last month a panel discussion of the treatment of refugees and migrants from Central America was held at the Mexican American Catholic College here in San Antonio. San Antonio Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller gave the keynote address, with responses given by Sister Normal Pimentel (Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley) and Sean Carroll, S.J. (Kino Border Initiative). I give my "take-away" from the keynote address below.

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-campus-united-states>. Refreshments served. Register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cel-speaker-series-eric-wisberg-on-philosophy-and-climate-science-tickets-46804971931> .

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

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: Hayley Hemstreet, hjh2@rice.edu.

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. Fre, but register. See https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20190129/event_id/23533

In San Antonio

Saturday January 5, 10:00am, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting. Residence of Maria Tobin, apt. 27, 8715 Starcrest Dr.

Saturday January 12, 6:30pm-8:30pm, Colors of San Antonio Together Dinner. Raindrop Turkish House, 4337 Vance Jackson.

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.

Sunday January 20, 4:00pm-6:30pm, Martin Luther King 32nd 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.

Thursday January 24, 6:30pm-8:30pm, Performance: “¡No Es Justo! Emma Tenayuca’s struggle for Justice.” McNay Art Museum, Chiego Lecture Hall, 6000 N. New Braunfels Ave.

Second Reading (Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6)

The reading is from the *Letter to the Ephesians*, an essay written as if from Saint Paul. It was common practice in antiquity to write in the name of a founder of a tradition. Writing an essay in one’s own name, as opposed to a personal letter, was considered egoistical; for Christians in an era of official persecution, it could also be dangerous. This section of the essay argues that non-Jews were “no longer foreigners and aliens” from the perspective of the early Christian movement (2:19). After making that point, the author begins a new section, “On account of this...,” which is then interrupted and taken up some verses later (see 3:1a and 3:14). The reading for today consists of some of the early verses of the interruption.

“Surely you have heard of the stewardship of God’s favor that was given to me for you....” God’s favor was not limited to Paul’s own tribe. “...(S)o that upon reading you will be able to comprehend my insight into the mystery of the Messiah...”: Paul’s particular insight was that the good news was in fact meant for all people. This was something that “...was not made known to the children of humans in other generations....” Indeed, it comes with difficulty to today’s generation as well.

Third Reading (Matthew 2.1-12)

In the passage that describes what is traditionally termed *Epiphany*, Matthew blends several themes together. There is the infant Jesus, Messiah, but very un-Messiah-like. There are the magi, representatives of foreign religion. There is Herod the Great, obsequious to Caesar but obsessed that there not be any alternative to his own petty tyranny. There are the high priests and scribes who know where the Messiah should be but who do not know the Messiah. The scene does not deviate from according centrality to the humble Messiah, but it does give a place of honor to the foreign religions, which point to the Messiah without knowing where to look, until the contours of nature and the potentate's fears show the way. And the Hebrew scriptures of the Jews are given respect.

Matthew wrote about fifteen years after Mark, using Mark's gospel and a Greek version of Jesus' sayings for source material. The narrative about the great star in the east came from a separate tradition that the early Christian bishop of Antioch on the Orontes (today Antakya, in Turkey), who wrote *en route* to his martyrdom in Rome, reproduced in a letter:

Now the virginity of Mary and her giving birth were hidden from the ruler of this age....How, then, were they revealed to the ages? A star shone forth in heaven, brighter than all the stars; its light was indescribable and its strangeness cause amazement. All the rest of the constellations, together with the sun and moon, formed a chorus around the star, yet the star itself far outshone them all, and there was perplexity about the origin of this strange phenomenon which was so unlike the others. Consequently all magic and every kind of spell were dissolved, the ignorance so characteristic of wickedness vanished, and the ancient kingdom was abolished, when God appeared in human form to bring the newness of eternal life.... (*Ignatius to the Ephesians*, Ch. 19, ca. 110 CE)

Superstition and spells are called into question when the appearance of simple humanity comes into view in an infant, and tyranny marked by ignorance trembles when such simple humanity receives the honor due it. God knew what appearance to take on and what kind of Messiah to become to change the perspective, if not, unfortunately, the course, of history.

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Poem

Epiphany

Did the Eternal Word that Judean night
leap down from bright celestial height
collapsing the light years of distance
into the micro-measurement of presence?

Or like the shapeless zygote from which we rose,

did Eternal Form reach itself into toes
and teeth, eyes, ears, fingerprints and face
to drink the mother-milk of our race?

Or like a reverse of the Universe's primordial explosion
into space and time, did Utter Extension find implosion
in an infant dropped from ancestors' dreams of destiny
down a maiden's womb into Bethlehem's Epiphany?

What Patient Force sought to sire in minds the inconceivable,
that our hungry, death-strewn world now holds the unreachable,
that the fat and strong are cast down from their heights
and the bare and barren rise in the Wind like kites?

Tom Keene
December 13, 1990

Notes from the Panel, "A Conversation on Immigration"

One cannot but be haunted by the blank faces of the children who had been separated from their parents. The psychological defense against trauma was to deaden the pain. This defense mechanism will surely persist as psychological damage well after their being reunited with their parents. One can argue about the administrative aspects of the challenge of people fleeing violence and injustice in their homelands, but one cannot argue about the blank faces. Is there anyone who cannot be moved by such a sight? Why would anyone set up a wall except not to see? Would that not create a blankness in one's own heart, a blankness even greater than that on the faces of these children? And we cannot be silent; silence is complicity! Complicity in the deadening of hearts on one side of the wall, and deadening the natural liveliness of children on the other side.

Maybe it is easy to protest. So let us take a step beyond that and make some concrete proposals. People have been calling for a general immigration reform. So what would a reform in the light of Catholic social teachings look like? What would a Catholic immigration reform be? Here are some ideas:

- 1) There needs be a workable pathway to citizenship. Citizenship is the natural way for people to live in a modern society. A nation cannot claim to be democratic or even humane if people have some kind of lower status under the law since the law is supposed to be a means of protecting basic security and rights. In the course of acquiring citizenship, families should be kept together. Something like DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) should exist as a matter of course.

- 2) There should be no discrimination against "low skill" workers. At a practical level, we need such workers; there is a shortage of them. And their skills may be "low" in terms of formal education, but there is nothing "low" about them in terms of what they do for people. There should be no waiting time for families to live together. Keeping

someone's family out of the country makes no sense in terms of forming future adults, providing for families economically, or maintaining any level of morality. There should be no arbitrary "cap" on the number of immigrants; the market forces will draw or not draw people across borders without some resort of governmental coercion. In fact, all efforts to maintain caps have failed anyway. Moreover, the status quo maintains conditions that further human trafficking.

3) More immigration officials—legal counsel and judges—are needed to make the asylum system work. We as a nation are bound by international treaties to provide asylum for people who face persecution and danger in their home lands, and what the treaties call for is only just. It is a cruel trick to implement the asylum treaties in a way that is so slow that the asylum system does not in fact provide asylum. Justice delayed is justice denied.

4) Immigration law needs to be enforced in a way that respects people and their rights. It is simply not necessary to detain people simply because they are migrating to be contributing citizens better than would be the case in the lands they are from. Legal representation needs to be provided so that people are not penalized simply because they are unaware of legal technicalities. And obviously, there is no reason to arrest and imprison, even temporarily, people who are not criminals.

5) Most obviously, the causes that necessitate people fleeing their native lands should be addressed. Justice, peace, and economic development are the long-term solution. Rigorous asylum and immigration restrictions are no cure for injustice, violence, and endemic poverty.

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/