

Testimony



A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating January 2, 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

After the calendar, the Sunday Liturgical Reading reflections are based on the readings for the Epiphany of the Messiah. Tom Keene's poem is *Epiphany*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>. After the poem is an opinion piece first posted by the Religion News Service, by CEOs of three refugee settlement organizations: *This is an all-hands-on-deck moment for refugee resettlement in this country*. It was first posted in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

Calendar

Times are given for the Central Time Zone.

Saturday January 1, 7:00pm (8:00pm ET), Pax Christi USA 50th Anniversary Year Kickoff Event. Register at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUrd-igqT4jGNBDDfkOH59CrpwzC4LbLjWW>

Thursday January 13, 2:00pm, online interactive webinar "Shifts in Mission: Awareness of Systemic Racism," on changes in mission that come from an awareness of white privilege; Sister Marvelous (Marvie) Lomerio Misolas, M.M., representative of the Maryknoll Sisters to the United Nations. Register at: https://mission.maryknoll.us/resistingracism?utm_medium=email&_hsmi=183192499&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8lZXLdcHllbDiZzTlghKt6X3mXLdh_83uKeD3myALQKq0B0VXmCcNkxRhsfB7PTgq5xZj24QwmZM8Fm6LWweuDTdidpA&utm_content=183192499&utm_source=hs_email

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

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.

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*.

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).

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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 11, 8:30am-3:30pm, "@ The Intersection Multi-Faith Symposium," briefings every half hour by San Antonio leaders: Mayor Nirenberg, Ann Helmke, etc. Topics include Compassionate Community, housing, houselessness, domestic violence, food security, mental health, immigration, refugees, resourcing, and public safety. Register at:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/theintersection-multi-faith-symposium-tickets-220039382717>

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>

First Reading (Isaiah 60:1-6)

The passage from the *Book of Isaiah* marks the first song attributed to the third author of the book's materials. It joyously welcomes the re-establishment of Jerusalem and the Temple after the Babylonian Captivity. It depicts the renewed presence of the Lord as a light radiating out over the city and out to the nations. In the gospel of the day, Matthew cites this passage with his reference to caravans of camels bringing gold and frankincense. But Matthew adds Myrrh, which is used in embalming. A theme of pure joy is insufficient; rather, joy would be proclaimed in the face of challenges.

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

The Lectionary uses a translation that breaks up a long sentence in the Greek into shorter sentences in translation. When it deletes verse 4, the result is different in content from deleting verse 4 in the Greek. Here is what the full sentence says:

Surely you heard of the stewardship of God's favor that was given to me for you, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above, so that upon reading you will be able to comprehend my insight into the mystery of the Messiah, which was not made known to the children of humans in other generations as it has now been revealed by the spirit to his holy apostles and prophets, that the gentiles are coheirs, fellow members, and sharers of the promise in Messiah Jesus, through the good news, of which I became a minister according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of His power.

It helps to read such a sentence phrase by phrase.

God's favor was given for you. The author speaks in the name of St. Paul, and the pronoun *you* refers to the readers. The important point of this phrase is that God's favor, often referred to as *grace*, was given not to benefit St. Paul but others. There is always a danger of making faith too individual a matter.

The mystery is made known by revelation. This is not only a matter of doctrines that challenge our very mode of thinking, such as the Incarnation and

the Trinity. The very frame of mind we call “faith” is not a delivery of a statement but itself is above the very thought-form of statements. There is always the danger of reducing religion to the imposition of orthodox statements.

Upon reading, we will be able to comprehend Paul’s insight into the mystery of the Messiah. It is not the mystery that is comprehended, but Paul’s insight, his faith.

The people who approach faith from outside one’s own religious forms are coheirs, fellow members, and sharers of the promise in Jesus. For Paul, his own nationality was not the only one in which faith can arise. For us, it is not our nationality that is the only one in which faith can arise. This inevitably leads to the question: How much of what I trust and believe is a matter of nationality and how much from insight into revelation?

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 Ignatius, the early Christian bishop of Antioch on the Orontes (today Antakya, in Turkey), 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.

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 the reverse of the universe's primordial explosion
into space and time, did Utter Extension find implosion
in an infant dropped from ancestor's 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 frail and afraid rise in the Wind like kites?

Tom Keene

December 12, 2001

This is an all-hands-on-deck moment for refugee resettlement in this country

Mark Hetfield, Richard L. Santos, and Krish O'Mara Vignarajah¹

Refugee resettlement has always been a public-private partnership, relying on the generosity of American communities who come together and welcome newcomers.

(RNS) — As we gather together with friends and loved ones this holiday season, about 35,000 Afghan evacuees are still waiting on U.S. military bases for the chance to be resettled in communities where they can start their new lives.

Each of our organizations has deployed staff members to the military bases to help with processing and welcoming Afghan families. They have told us about the inspiring resilience, strength and optimism they have encountered there. They have told us about a family with three young children and a baby on the way, who barely made it onto one of the last planes out with only one suitcase among them. They have told us about the sisters who chose freedom at the high cost of leaving their parents behind. We have shared meals and prayers with them as they reflect on the hope they hold for a new future free from fear.

Military bases were never meant to be a long-term solution. It is time for these families to finally start the next chapter of their lives in their new homes. As the leaders of three of the nation's nine resettlement agencies, we know resettling these newest neighbors will require all the resources, creativity and compassion the United States has to offer. This is an all-hands-on-deck moment for refugee resettlement in this country.

For decades, resettlement agencies have supported refugees selected to start their new lives in the United States. These refugees are often the most vulnerable: women heads of households in cultures where men traditionally serve as protectors, orphaned and separated children and persecuted LGBTQ people, among others. Our organizations support these new Americans through every

¹ Mark Hetfield is the president and CEO of HIAS (founded as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society). Richard L. Santos is the president and CEO of Church World Service. Krish O'Mara Vignarajah is the president and CEO of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.

step of their journey, from welcoming them with open arms at the airport to providing ongoing career and language support as they adjust to their new home.

After nearly five years of historically low refugee arrivals, our local partners are just now rebuilding. They are hiring staff; contacting landlords, employers and schools; and otherwise getting ready to welcome Afghan families into their communities. While they are working around the clock to prepare and welcome Afghan families, we simply can't do it all on our own.

Across the nation, Americans from all backgrounds must come together to welcome Afghan families.

Refugee resettlement has always been a public-private partnership, relying on the generosity of American communities who come together and welcome newcomers. Each of our organizations has always harnessed the people power of volunteers and community support networks to ensure each arriving refugee has what he or she needs to rebuild and thrive.

As we enter the season of generosity and sharing with our own family and friends, we urge Americans to consider opening their hearts and homes to Afghan families in need of support. Together with our agencies, individuals can volunteer to welcome families and help them acclimate to their new lives. Property owners can provide safe and affordable housing, one of our most urgent needs.

Groups of private citizens can also join together in "sponsorship circles" to sponsor Afghan evacuees during the initial resettlement process, helping Afghan refugees with basic services during their first 90 days in their new home. Among other things, these groups will help secure housing, provide necessities like furniture and clothing and assist in accessing government benefits such as schooling, food and health care.

Working in close concert with traditional resettlement, this initiative as well as rapidly growing our existing volunteer and community sponsorship efforts will help us quickly and securely create an expansive network of support to resettle Afghan families in their new homes. Our deeply experienced professional staff will help guide the sponsorship circles, community sponsors and volunteers and set them up for success.

How we respond and welcome Afghan evacuees today will have implications for decades. Together we can ensure each newcomer gets a warm welcome and the best start possible, putting them on a path to quickly becoming contributing members of our communities and securing a bright future for all of us.

The web sites for the three organizations are as follows:

HIAS: <https://www.hias.org/>

Church world Service: <https://cwsglobal.org/>

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service: <https://www.lirs.org/>

These are sister organizations of Catholic Charities.

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/>