


Testimony
A Pamphlet from Pax Christi Texas

Anticipating February 2, 2020

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 Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. Historically associated with the fourth century Jerusalem church, Roman Catholics observe this feast (also called Candlemas) on February 2; it takes precedence over the Sunday in Ordinary Time when it occurs on a Sunday.

Tom Keene's poem is *On Holding a Grandson*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>.

Following the poem is my translation of a November 27, 2019, post on the website of Pax Christi France, on the demonstrations in Lebanon. The Lebanese protest is one of many in the Middle East and throughout the world, demanding just governance. It is reminiscent of the Solidarity Movement in Poland two decades ago.

Calendar

In Austin

Thursday January 30, 12:30pm-1:30pm, discussion on "Colleges Must Choose: Pursue Truth or Harmony/Social Justice." Read for the discussion the article at <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Are-Colleges-Failing/244544>. Fleck Hall 305, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress.

Monday February 3, 3:00pm, documentary *Emanuel*, on the aftermath of the shooting at the Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC. Sharon Risler, whose mother was one of the victims, will be present to sign copies of her book, *For Such a Time as This: Hope and Forgiveness after the Charleston Massacre*. Austin Presbyterian Seminary, 100 E. 27th St.

Sunday February 16 (3rd. Sunday of the month), 7:00pm, Pax Christi Austin meeting, Fr. John Payne House, St. Ignatius Catholic Church, 126 W. Oltorf St.

In Dallas

Wednesday February 5, 12:00pm-1:30pm, “*Colin Powell: Seeking Monsters to Destroy: How America Goes to War from Jefferson to Trump*,” Jeffrey A. Engel (Southern Methodist University). Hughes-Trigg Student Center, Southern Methodist University Center.

Thursday February 13-Friday February 14, conference, “‘In the Face of Barbarism:’ Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Culture, Humanity and the Importance of Ordinary Life.” Perkins School of Theology. Registration for the full conference is \$10 for students and \$25 for the general public. Pricing includes lunch on Friday. Please note that both the keynote lecture on Thursday evening and the one-person play on Friday evening are free events open to the public. Perkins School of Theology, 5915 Bishop Blvd. Contact the Perkins School of Theology for details: (214) 768-8436.

Thursday February 27, 6:30pm, “Building the Good Society,” Lloyd Jeff Dumas (University of Texas, Dallas). Times 10 Cellars, 6324 Prospect. Books \$28. Sponsored by Nuclear Free World Committee, Dallas Peace & Justice Center.

Saturday March 21, 7:00pm-9:00pm, “and You Welcomed Me: A Catholic Meditation on Immigration and Race for a Changing *Community*,” Hosffman Ospino (Boston College). Church of the Incarnation, 1809 Maher Lane, Irving.

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).

In Houston

Monday January 27, 4:00pm, “The Hungarian Holocaust,” Moshe Y. Vardi (Rice U.). Sewell Hall 301, Rice University.

Tuesday January 28, 12:15pm-1:30pm, “Death of the Black Church: How Religious Diversity Erodes Racial Solidarity among African Americans,” Jason Shelton (U. of

Texas, Arlington). Kyle Morrow Room, Fondren Library, Rice University.
Information: Shirley Tapscott , sht1@rice.edu.

Tuesday January 28, 7:00pm-8:30pm, panel discussion “Race and Evangelical Politics,” Richard Mouw (Fuller Theological Seminary), Jason Shelton (U. of Texas, Arlington), Janelle Wong (U. of Maryland). Sewell Hall 309, Rice University.
Information: Hayley Hemstreet, hjh2@rice.edu.

Wednesday January 29, 7:00pm-9:00pm, screening, *Gaza Fights for Freedom* (2018 Great March of Return). Dominican Center for Spirituality, 6501 Almeda Rd.

Sunday February 2, 9:45am, “The Immigration Mess: One Presbyterian’s Story,” Nancy Kral, Ph.D. (Lone Star College, retired). Room 201, St. Philip Presbyterian Church, 4807 San Felipe.

Sunday February 2, 6:00pm-8:30pm, musician and satirist Roy Zimmerman benefit performance for Peace Camp Houston. \$20. Unitarian Fellowship of Houston, 1504 Wirt Rd.

Thursday February 6, 4:00pm, “Antisemitism, Pornography, and American Jews,” Josh Lambert (University of Massachusetts). Information: jewishstudies@rice.edu. Registration: https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20200206/event_id/69900

Friday February 7, 8:00am-9:00am, “Making Monday Matter: American Evangelicalism and the Deprivatization of Economic Orientations in the 20th Century,” Andrew Lynn (University of Virginia). Information: Hayley Hemstreet, RPLP Program Manager, hjh2@rice.edu, 713-348-3974. Register: https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20200207/event_id/69060

Saturday February 8, 9:00am-2:00pm, bus tour, “Toxic Tour of Houston.” Guides Juan Parras and Yvette Arellano; focus will be on East Houston. Begins at Rothko Chapel, 3900 Yupon St. \$20. Register at rothkochapel.org.

Thursday February 20, 10:00am-6:00pm, Workshop: The Medical Ethics of Consciousness, Sunil Kothari (Memorial Hermann Hospital), Christos Lazaridis (University of Chicago), Andrea Lavazza (CUI, Italy), and Lan Li (Rice University);

discussant Tim Bayne (Monash University). Founders Room, Lovett Hall, Rice University. Information: Dr. Uriah Kriegel, uriah.kriegel@rice.edu.

Sunday February 23, 9:45am, "Physician-Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia after the Holocaust," Sheldon Rubinfeld, M.D., FACP (Baylor College of Medicine). Room 201, St. Philip Presbyterian Church, 4807 San Felipe.

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

Sunday January 26, 3:00pm, Fourteenth Annual Blessing of the Peacemakers, honoring the 2020 San Antonio Peace Laureates: Lionel Sosa, Gurvinder Pal (G.P.) Singh, and Cappy Lawton. Whitley Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate Dr.

Tuesday January 28, 7:00pm, Lecture by Eboo Patel (Interfaith Youth Core). Jackson Auditorium, Weston Center, Texas Lutheran University, 1000 W. Court Street, Seguin.

Saturday February 1, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting. Residence of Tom Wakely, 16406 Ledge Point.

Saturday February 1, 1:30pm, film, *Healing Sore Lands and Sacred Headwaters*. Christus Heritage Hall, The Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway.

Monday February 3, 3:30pm, screening, *Super Hummingbirds*. Christus Heritage Hall, The Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway.

Saturday February 8, 5:00pm-7:00pm, Jewish Voice for Peace open house. 467 E. Park Avenue.

Monday February 10, 7:00pm-9:00pm, LGBTQ+ and the Spiritual Journey Series: "Interfaith Insights on Human Sexuality," Father John Markey, op (Oblate School of Theology) and Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl (Temple Beth-El, emeritus). \$10 before

Feb. 3, \$15 after. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Registration: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration>.

Wednesday February 12, March 25, and April 20, 7:00pm-9:00pm, “Living Together in Difference: Upending Violence through Alternative Community Building,” Derick Wilson. \$15.00 before Feb. 5, \$20 after. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Registration: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration>.

Monday February 17-Tuesday February 18, 8:00am-5:00pm both days, “Conference on Justice and Social Concerns. Schedule to be announced. Conference Room A, University Center, St. Mary’s University, One Camino Santa Maria.

Wednesday February 19, 7:00pm-9:00pm, “Activism through a Buddhist Lens,” Thomas Bruner. \$15 before Feb. 12, \$20 after. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Registration: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration>.

Monday February 22, 1:30pm, screening, *Journey of the Whooping Crane*. Christus Heritage Hall, The Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway.

Tuesday February 25, 7:00pm-9:00pm, “The Trouble with Fracking,” Sr. Elizabeth Riebschlaeger, ccvi. Free; register by Feb. 18. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). Registration: <https://upcsa.org/sol-center-registration>.

Saturday February 29, 8:30am-4:00pm, Texas Coalition Against the Death Penalty 2020 Annual Conference. Whitely Theological Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate. Pre-register, \$60.00, at <https://tcadp.org/tcadp-2020-annual-conference-registration/>

Second Reading (Hebrews 2:14-18)

The reading is excerpted from a very early essay that presents Christianity as a new religion, distinct from Judaism. A brief letter is attached to the end of the

essay, resulting in the title being created, "Letter to the Hebrews." The early part of the essay, including the passage read this Sunday, argues that somehow God had to share in humanity in order to redeem humanity. Sometimes, redemption is described as Jesus being executed as a substitute for sinful humanity in order to appease an angry god. The theology presented in *Hebrews* is quite far from that: "...he had to become like the brothers and sisters in all things, so that he would become a merciful and faithful high priest before God..." It was not a matter of vengeance but complete empathy: "for insofar as he himself has suffered, being tested, he could help those who are being tested." It was not God who had to be won over but humans. Jesus was a "high priest before God, in order to expiate the sins of the people..." Expiation is a prayer of sorrow for sins, not a redirection of wrath. What wrath there might be, needing treatment, is not God's but humans' toward one another.

Third Reading (Luke 2:22-40)

Observant of the Torah, Joseph and Mary brought their child to the Temple for her ritual purification and that of Jesus; the latter's ritual circumstance was that of being associated with that of his mother. The narrative says that Simeon came to the Temple precincts, believing from a dream that he would see the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. There was a historical figure named Simeon, the son of Hillel; Simeon was known for holiness and seeking the Messiah. Simeon son of Hillel actually taking up the infant Jesus in arms is a matter of legend and of no particular importance. Luke uses the narrative to set up the poetic prayer of Simeon that follows:

Now you may dismiss your servant, Master,
In peace, according to Your word.
Because my eyes have seen Your salvation,
Which you prepared before the face of all peoples,
A light for revelation for the gentiles,
And glory for your people Israel.

These words have long been used by Christians as a night prayer before retiring. They clearly reflect Luke's theology: revelation for gentiles, a point of pride for Jews.

Luke typically paired a narrative about a man, in this case Simeon, with one about a woman, in this case Anna daughter of Phanuel. Anna was an elderly prophetess, and when she beheld the infant Jesus she began talking about him.

Poem

On holding a grandson

Did babies sleep
through London's blitz?
Hiroshima's holocaust?
Bagdad's bombing?

In what did they trust?

The hands that held them?
The breasts they lay on?
The bliss of sleep itself?

What did they know and we did not?
What did they not know and we did?

Tom Keene

Since October 17, the Lebanese have been on the streets. Faced with a people demanding citizenship, leaders of corrupt political parties intend to keep their privileges.

Pax Christi France

A country paralyzed, roadblocks, schools and banks closed, the Lebanese pound on the verge of devaluation, and not the slightest dollar, the benchmark currency of the country, in the currency exchanges ... But dances, songs, and continuous forums in the squares of cities. Anger broke out on October 17, the day after an announcement by the Ministry of Communication imposing a tax on WhatsApp messaging to all users.

By spreading rapidly, the revolt surprised Fady Noun, journalist for the daily *L'Orient-Le Jour*, who did not expect it: "the movement of 2005 which called for the departure of the Syrian troops, had only affected Beirut . The 2019 revolution is igniting the whole country this time. In 2005, the enemy was Syria. In 2019 it's corruption. "

On Sunday October 27, the 11th day of the movement, a human chain of 171 km, stretching from Tripoli in the north to Tire in the south, linked thousands of Lebanese of all faiths (170,000 according to the organizers). Hand in hand, the participants peacefully demanded, in a festive atmosphere, the resignation of a corrupt government. In some localities in the south, controlled by the two Shiite political parties (Hezbollah and Amal), residents had not hesitated to join the chain, defying the bans imposed by their leaders who were hostile to change. Thus Hussein (pseudonym), 36, from Nabatiyeh, stronghold of pro-Iranian Hezbollah, says he is well aware of the risk he runs by defying the orders of the chiefs, "but if I want a future for my children, my place is here. Hezbollah and Amal keep us in a denominational system. We want a united Lebanese citizenry." It is all symbolic of this revolution.

What do these thousands of protesters want? Quite simply a rule of law with decent and accessible public services... What do they reject? Lebanon's clientelist system ruled from father to son, always by the same families, which confessionalizes the country to best parcel out jobs and wealth. In his televised address on October 24, President Michel Aoun, at the end of his rope, apologized for "not having been able to eradicate confessionalism and corruption, as he had promised when he returned to Lebanon in 2005."

Prime Minister Saad Hariri's resignation on October 29 did not demobilize the protesters. "We will remain until a new government is appointed, warns Alain, a young Maronite from Jbeil, a government of experts and not of incompetents with their clan mentality."

Support of the Maronite Church of the Revolution

In Lebanon, however, joy mingles with concern, especially as the two Shiite parties, Hezbollah and Amal, in order to protect their caste interests, advocate the status quo. And both have the capacity to destroy this mad hope for citizenship by force, with their militias.

On November 12, President Michel Aoun's second television intervention did not calm the street—on the contrary. Paralyzed by the eternal clan struggle, and undermined by confessionalism, power seems paralyzed. After 29 days of

revolt, Lebanon still has no Prime Minister. And the first victim, killed by a policeman at a roadblock in the southern suburbs of Beirut, increased public anger tenfold.

Despite the uncertainties, Cardinal Béchara Raï, head of the Maronite Church, the country's largest Christian community, strongly supports the movement. At the Patriarchate of Bkerké, in his Sunday homilies, the Patriarch constantly reminds us "that we must listen to the demands of the demonstrators" describing the present revolution as "positive."

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

NowCastSA
www.nowcastsa.com/