

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating August 6, 2017

Pax Christi San Antonio does not solicit donations; however, anyone wishing to join should make a donation to Pax Christi U.S.A. and notify Maria Tobin, matob@aol.com, to receive email messages sent to members. 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 *Third Reading* commentary is based on the gospel reading for the Feast of the Transfiguration. Tom Keene's poem is *We See At Last*. See <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php> for more of Tom's poems. An essay about Ben Salmon, an American World War I resister, follows; it is taken from the Pax Christi USA website.

Calendar

Saturday August 5, 10:00am, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting. Residence of Maria Tobin, 8715 Starcrest Dr., Apt. 27. (Go north on Starcrest from I-410; Starcrest becomes a divided road. The apartment complex is located between Hidden Drive and Granby Court, on the south-bound side of Starcrest. It is possible to park on Hidden Drive.)

Thursday August 10, 6:00pm-8:30pm, Dine out to support Headwaters. The mission of Headwaters, a non-profit sponsored Earth care ministry of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, is to preserve, restore, and celebrate the rich natural, cultural, historical, spiritual, and educational values of the headwaters of the San Antonio River. At The Hoppy Monk, 1010 N. Loop 1604 (east-bound service road, between Stone Oak Parkway & U.S. 281). 15% of the bill will be donated. **Note:** Make reservations before August 4 at www.groupraise.com/events/33070.

Tuesday August 15, 7:00pm, meeting of the San Antonio Sanctuary Network. First Unitarian Universalist Church, 7150 I-10 frontage road.

Saturday September 2, 10:00am-2:00pm, in Austin, Rally: Day of Resistance and Noncompliance with SB4, organized by Jolt Texas and Basta Texas. Texas State Capitol, 1100 Congress Ave., Austin. More information: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1308974945890276/>

Thursday September 7, 6:00pm-8:30pm. Performance: To Be Honest (Islam in American Politics). Dramatic readings from 2016 interviews with San Antonians about the perception of Islam in American politics. McNay Art Museum, 6000 N. New Braunfels.

Thursdays September 7, 14, 21, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Ron Rolheiser, O.M.I., "Simply Being Good-Hearted is Not Enough: A Spirituality of Charity, Justice, and Prophecy, parts 1, 2, &3." \$60.00; 20% group discount. Contact Brenda, 210-341-1366, ext. 212. Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate Dr., Whitley Theological Center.

Wednesday September 13, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Devery S. Anderson, "The Murder of Emmett Till." University of the Incarnate Word Concert Hall, 4301 Broadway. The concert hall is next to the Administration Building, facing Broadway at the Hildebrand-Broadway intersection. Parking is in front. It has sign ("Concert Hall") in front.

Wednesday September 27, 7:00pm, Abdullah Ahmed An-Na'im, "Religious Freedom and the Universality of Human Rights: A Modernist Islamic Perspective." Saint Mary's University, One Camino Santa Maria, University Center, Conference Room A. Parking in Lots D and H.

Thursday September 28, Robert George, "Constitutional Structures, Civic Virtue, and Political v. Culture." Saint Mary's University, One Camino Santa Maria, University Center, Conference Room A. Parking in Lots D and H.

Third Reading (Matthew 17:1-9)

Things are not what they seem to be; they are more. We have a commonplace metaphor for this: the tip of the iceberg. The narrative of the Transfiguration of Jesus, featured in this Sunday's reading, presents us with a similar message. Peter, James, and James' brother John hike up a mountain with Jesus—plain old Jesus. And they discover there is much more about him than they imagined. But when they hike back down from the mountain top, Jesus seems to be his plain old self again. He even tells them not to carry on about the glory stuff.

The reading is from the *Gospel of Matthew*, which in turn is based on the narrative in the shorter *Gospel of Mark*. As is often the case in Mark's gospel, Peter is accorded the role of the non-stellar disciple, slow to get the point that the rabbi Jeshua is making. Here, Moses and Elijah, personages representing the Law and Prophet sections of the Hebrew Bible respectively, appear conversing with their rabbi. Peter would construct three separate booths for them. The apparition, of course, does not isolate the three from one another but has them conversing. A voice, obviously divine, cuts Peter off: "This is my beloved son. Listen to him." If Moses and Elijah converse with him, who is Peter to separate them? Such is Mark's narrative, putting in written form Peter's self-deprecating testimony.

Matthew's gospel would draw another lesson from the narrative. The writer whom we call Matthew appears to have written from the perspective of a Judean group that had left Judea and settled in what is now Jordan. He was much concerned with the Law and with the tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures in general. He adds to the depiction of the transformed Jesus the detail that "his face shone like the sun." This may well have been an allusion to apocalyptic imagery found in the *Book of Daniel*, but it is likely more to the point that the *Book of Exodus*, chapter 24, has Moses going up the mountain and coming back down with his face shining. Matthew begins the narrative with a reference to six days, as does *Exodus*. Matthew has a radiant cloud overshadowing the disciples as Peter was speaking, and *Exodus*, chapter 40 refers to the cloud of the divine presence overshadowing the tabernacle so that Moses could not enter.

In Matthew's gospel, the voice from heaven adds, "by whom I am pleased," to what Mark's gospel has. It is because of passages such as this that Christians speak of a new, or renewed, covenant.

The Law described and prescribed a just world, as best as a very ancient people could conceive of one. The prophets urged upon the people and especially their rulers the just society that the wealthy and powerful had failed to maintain. Jesus was engaging in a conversation with that world, using the discourse of that kind of society. Who was Peter, and who are we, to place such imperatives in mummified form inside tabernacles?

Poem

We See At Last
(Peter muses: Luke:9: 28-43)

On ascending,
we sit in a circle.
We see ourselves brilliant,
a gazing into sun without going blind.

Elijah, Moses, Jesus, John, James, me.
Hard to tell us apart,
blurring bleeding into one corona,
where notions of each other
make sense no more.

On descending,
we find the man,
screaming blather,
flailing futility,
begging to burst his prison.

Our common gut

seized by a loathing,
a panic to flee, to cast out.
Then, as in a sudden dawn,
he's struck with calm.

We see at last,
from heady highs
to feet-in-the-dirt hurt,
the Healing Wholeness.

Tom Keene

“Ain't No Such Thing as A Just War” – Ben Salmon, WWI resister

by Kathy Kelly

Several days a week, Laurie Hasbrook arrives at the Voices office here in Chicago. She often takes off her bicycle helmet, unpins her pant leg, settles into an office chair and then leans back to give us an update on family and neighborhood news. Laurie's two youngest sons are teenagers, and because they are black teenagers in Chicago they are at risk of being assaulted and killed simply for being young black men. Laurie has deep empathy for families trapped in war zones. She also firmly believes in silencing all guns.

Lately, we've been learning about the extraordinary determination shown by Ben Salmon, a conscientious objector during World War I who went to prison rather than enlist in the U.S. military. Salmon is buried in an unmarked grave in Mount Carmel Cemetery, on the outskirts of Chicago.

In June, 2017, a small group organized by “Friends of Franz and Ben” gathered at Salmon's gravesite to commemorate his life.

Mark Scibilla Carver and Jack Gilroy had driven to Chicago from Upstate NY, carrying with them a life size icon bearing an image of Salmon, standing alone in what appeared to be desert sands, wearing a prison-issue uniform that bore his official prison number. Next to the icon was a tall, bare, wooden cross. Rev. Bernie Survil, who organized the vigil at Salmon's grave, implanted a vigil candle in the ground next to the icon. Salmon's grand-niece had come from Moab, Utah, to represent the Salmon family. Facing our group, she said that her family deeply admired Salmon's refusal to cooperate with war. She acknowledged that he had been imprisoned, threatened with execution, sent for a psychiatric evaluation, sentenced to 25 years in prison, a sentence which was eventually commuted, and unable to return to his home in Denver for fear of being killed by antagonists. Charlotte Mates expressed her own determination to try and follow in his footsteps, believing we all have a personal responsibility not to cooperate with wars.

Bernie Survil invited anyone in the circle to step forward with a reflection. Mike Bremer, a carpenter who has spent three months in prison for conscientious objection to nuclear weapons, pulled a folded piece of paper out of his pocket and stepped forward to read from an article by Rev. John Dear, written several years ago, in which Dear notes that Ben Salmon made his brave stance before the world had ever heard of Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, or Mohandas Gandhi. There was no Catholic Worker, no Pax Christi, and no War Resisters League to support him. He acted alone, and yet he remains connected to a vast network of people who recognize his courage and will continue telling his story to future generations.

Had his wisdom and that of numerous war resisters in the U.S. prevailed, the U.S. would not have entered W.W. I. The author of *War Against War*, Michael Kazin, conjectures about how W.W. I. would have ended if the U.S. had not intervened. "The carnage might have continued for another year or two," Kazin writes, "until citizens in the warring nations, who were already protesting the endless sacrifices required, forced their leaders to reach a settlement. If the Allies, led by France and Britain, had not won a total victory, there would have been no punitive peace treaty like that completed at Versailles, no stab-in-the back allegations by resentful Germans, and thus no rise, much less triumph, of Hitler and the Nazis. The next world war, with its 50 million deaths, would probably not have occurred."

But the U.S. did enter WWI, and since that time each U.S. war has caused a rise in taxpayer contributions to maintain the MIC, the Military-Industrial complex, with its vise-like grip on educating the U.S. public and marketing U.S. wars. Spending for militarism trumps social spending. Here in Chicago, where the number of people killed by gun violence is the highest in the nation, the U.S. military runs ROTC classes enrolling 9,000 youngsters in Chicago public schools. Imagine if equivalent energies were devoted to promoting means and methods of nonviolence, along with ways to end the war against the environment and creation of "green" jobs among Chicago's youngest generations.

If we could share Laurie's revulsion in the face of weapons and inequality, imagine the possible results. We would never tolerate U.S. shipment of weapons to opulent Saudi royals who use their newly purchased laser guided munitions and Patriot missiles to devastate the infrastructure and civilians of Yemen. On the brink of famine and afflicted by an alarming spread of cholera, Yemenis also endure Saudi airstrikes that have wrecked roadways, hospitals and crucial sewage and sanitation infrastructure. 20 million people (in regions long plagued by U.S. gamesmanship), would not be expected to die this year from conflict-driven famine, in near-total media silence. Just four countries, Somaliland, Southern Sudan, Nigeria and Yemen, are set to lose fully one third as many people as died in the entirety of the Second World War. None of that would be a normal occurrence in our world. Instead, perhaps religious leaders would vigorously remind us about Ben Salmon's sacrifice; rather than attend the annual Air and Water show, (a theatrical display of U.S. military might which turns out a million "fans"), Chicagoans would make pilgrimages to the cemetery where Ben is buried.

At this point, Mount Carmel cemetery is known for being the burial place of Al Capone.

The small group at the gravesite included a woman from Code Pink, a newly ordained Jesuit priest, several Catholic Workers, several couples who were formerly

Catholic religious and have never stopped ministering to others and advocating for social justice, five people who've served many months in prison for their conscientious objection to war, and three Chicago area business professionals. We look forward to gatherings, in Chicago and elsewhere, of people who will take up the organizing call of those who celebrated, on July 7th, when representatives of 122 countries negotiated and passed a U.N. ban on nuclear weapons. This event happened while warlords wielding hideous weapons dominated the G20 gathering in Hamburg, Germany.

Laurie envisions building creative, peaceful connections between Chicago youngsters and their counterparts in Afghanistan, Yemen, Gaza, Iraq, and other lands. Ben Salmon guides our endeavors. We hope to again visit Salmon's gravesite on Armistice Day, November 11, when our friends plan to set up a small marker bearing this inscription:

"There is no such thing as a just war."

Ben J. Salmon

Oct. 15, 1888 – Feb. 15, 1932

Thou Shalt Not Kill

Kathy Kelly (kathy@vcnv.org) co-coordinates *Voices for Creative Nonviolence*, www.vcnv.org

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

COPS / Metro Alliance
www.copsmetro.com/

Marianist Social Justice Collaborative
www.msjc.net

Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, International JPIC Committee
<http://sacsvi.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