

More

Message View

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating July 1, 2018

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.

Please do not respond to this newsletter's address; but send comments on the newsletter to J6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com.

Editorial

After the calendar, the *Third Reading* commentary is based on the gospel reading for the thirteenth Sunday in ordinary time. Tom Keene poem is *America on Parade*. See <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php> for more of Tom's poems. My reflection, *Sport and Paid Patriotism*, follows the poem.

Calendar

In Austin

Saturday June 30, noon, Families Belong Together Rally. Texas State Capitol Building. Official sign up: <https://act.moveon.org/event/families-belong-together/19862/signup/?source=&s=>

In Dallas

Saturday June 30, 10:00am-noon, Families Belong Together Rally. Dallas City Hall. Official sign up: <https://act.moveon.org/event/families-belong-together/19927/signup/?source=&s=>

In El Paso

Saturday June 30, 9:00am. Families Belong Together Rally. San Jacinto Plaza. Official sign up: <https://act.moveon.org/event/families-belong-together/20092/signup/?source=&s=>

In Houston

Saturday June 30, 10:00am. Families Belong Together Rally. Houston City Hall. Official sign up: <https://act.moveon.org/event/families-belong-together/19851/signup/?source=&s=>

In San Antonio

Tuesday June 26, 5:30pm-6:30pm, "How Humanitarian Efforts Can Help the LGBTQ Populations of the World." Focuses on finding safety in new nations. Guillermo's, 618 McCullough Ave. \$15.00; sponsored by the World Affairs Council of San Antonio.

Saturday June 30, 10:00 a.m., Families Belong Together Rally. Main Plaza. Official sign up: https://act.moveon.org/event/families-belong-together_attend1/19908/attend/?action_id=265195288&akid=.38609790.hX2Nn

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Saturday July 7, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting. Maria Tobin's, 8715 Starcrest, Apt. 27. Call 210 238-0067 to arrange parking. Some park across Starcrest in a church parking lot.

Tuesday July 10, 11:00am, anti-death penalty event, release of letter from faith leaders concerning the case of Christopher Young, at whose trial a potential juror was dismissed on the grounds of religious affiliation. Bexar County Courthouse, 100 Dolorosa.

Thursday July 12, 9:00 a.m. – noon, Faith-Based Initiative tech day. **Website content management and design by Stefanie Young, CEO, Innov8 Place; website security by Isaac Castillo, CEO, Founder, Echo Design Solutions; simple, reliable, inexpensive website hosting options by Chris Turner, CEO, Turner Logic. Central Library Auditorium, 600 Soledad.**

Friday July 13-Sunday July 22. National Hispanic Institute Summer Conference. The Texas Lorenzo de Zavala Youth Legislative Session will be held on the St. Mary's University campus. For information, Latinx young adults may contact the National Hispanic Institute: jcotto@nhimail.com, or 512-357-6137.

Third Reading (Mark 5:21-43)

The Lectionary provides for the option of skipping the middle section of this Sunday's reading, which is unfortunate. The reading is the narrative of Jesus setting out with Jairus, who had asked him to heal a daughter who was sick at home. On the way a woman suffering from an issue of blood touched Jesus' cloak in the hope of being healed. She was. This is the section that some would

skip.

Mark sometimes makes his point through indirection, juxtaposing different narratives so that the juxtaposition says something more than each story would say taken alone. Here he accomplishes his purpose by having one story interrupt the other. That they are to be read together is made evident by some parallels—the woman had suffered for twelve years, the daughter of Jairus was twelve years old; the disciples mock Jesus (“You see the crowd pressing around you, and you say, ‘Who touched me?’”), and the mourners at the home of Jairus laughed at him (“The child did not die but is sleeping.” And they were laughing at him).

The passage is commonly understood to be a figure of the New Covenant replacing the Old. I disagree: The issue of blood afflicts the woman; the girl has no blood-related problem. The Old Covenant did not come about with bleeding; Moses was not crucified. The New Covenant came about with the crucifixion of Jesus. Moreover, the narrative associates the synagogue and its official, Jairus, with the girl, who is raised up, not with the woman.

It helps to consider for whom Mark was writing—Roman Christians soon after the year 70. The Roman Christians had suffered a gruesome persecution under Nero, and many of them had been killed by the State. Problems broke out throughout the Empire, but Nero was too occupied with political intrigue and lavish living to rise to the occasion; he chose instead to take his own life. The Roman church, wounded for sure, survived Nero, and emerged anew, lively like a youngster.

Try as it might to eliminate and obliterate anything Christian, misused power does not outlive the force of life that the Creator breathed into humanity.

Poem

America on Parade

Come watch our parades.
See our soldiers
marching all in step, marching,
horizon to horizon: united.
America on parade.

We had no desire to make war on you, the children,
but your president did a bad thing.
So, we had to do what we did.

The aerial incendiaries we dropped in the desert made fire storms
to suck the air from your soldier-fathers' lungs
and crisp their intestines. When we found, in the bunkers,
their blackened, oozing corpses we bulldozed it all
and said a Christian prayer over the rubble.

But come, behold our machines roll on in the march,
lift your head, thrill to the fly-overs,
listen to their roar splitting the sky.

We could not trust your president with that oil,
not as we have trusted Texaco and Exxon.
So, we had to guide
those missiles into the shelters

where your mothers and sisters hid.

Come wave with us our flags, wear our yellow ribbons,
let martial music rouse your hearts, stir your blood.
Do not harden your faces against our pride in being America.

Your president was our friend for many years
and we managed to help his soldiers kill the children of Iran,
whose Ayatollah-leader was a bad man.
Are you following this? Do you understand?
But now your president turned bad and we had to kill you.

But do we really care to know you, your neighbors and playmates,
and do we want you present at our parades? How could you,
so far away, so different, share the joy of our goodness and might?

Soon you, and more children than any of you could count,
will die with cholera and dehydration,
because clean water and sewers are gone,
food and medicine blockaded.

These things are sad, but not so real to us
as the bombers and missiles we pay for,
loyally and freely, year after year, every April fifteenth.

More real than you they are.
More real than the homes and college
we could give our children with the money instead.

One thing only is more real, more important to us:
that you know, that the world know, that our consciences know,
that we killed you in a good cause, for freedom and democracy,
truth and justice, hot dogs and pizza, and our way,
our way of life, of life, of life.

June 12, 1991

Sport and Paid Patriotism

Anthony J. Blasi

Athletic teams have long been part of the social scene on college and university campuses. What began as a way to keep male adolescents occupied became in turn entertainment and then a fund-raising venture. Now, big-time sport is all but a requirement in higher education. In some settings it has been a corrupting influence, no longer the occasion for healthy competition that it once was. I myself once faced the wrath of an irate administration when I insisted that members of a high profile football team were to write their own examinations. Elsewhere the next year—that it was elsewhere was no surprise—older professors regaled me with stories of basketball players “practicing” evenings in a certain outdoor location and making their arrangements with bookmakers. Even when coaches and administrations sought to run clean programs that offered student athletes genuine opportunity, the arrangement could result in the exploitation of hapless young adults by multi-million dollar organizations; see the ethnography of a top university basketball team by Patricia and Peter Adler (*Backboards and Blackboards*, 1991). Despite all, many athletes who become professional athletes gain genuine educations in the process.

I worked in a public historically African American university for seventeen

years. Its glory days in intercollegiate competition were long in the past. The coaches were interested in placing their most promising players in the professional teams while running clean programs so that the student athletes could acquire an education; the football coach would peer into my classes to make sure his players were where they were supposed to be. The tutors were located down the hall from my office; they were erstwhile and hard working. It was a classy operation. I think what was most important was the compressed schedule of workouts, practices, classes, and games, which demanded a higher level of discipline than most eighteen-year-olds could imagine. I am confident that a good number of athletes who go on to professional leagues do so with solid habits of thinking and analyzing, based in part on their educations and in part on the practice of reading opponents' plays and articulating their own teams' plays with situations.

Is it any surprise when members of professional sports teams engage in social protest, and are right on point when they do so? There is no time to do so in the course of the games, and there is not much point in doing so when not in the public limelight. And when their government—national, state, and local—fails to live up to the national ideals, the protest befits the ceremonials performed per custom prior to the games. The athletes, after all, are citizens, not circus animals, and they are often intelligent educated citizens at that. No doubt there are some who are not particularly enlightened, but the person often pointed to, Ty Cobb, was a victim of slander; he was actually supportive of the racial integration of his sport and supportive of education.

Unfortunately, the field of professional athletics has become the occasion for promoting the military. The Pentagon spends millions of dollars to polish the image of the armed forces, if not war itself, with camouflage versions of team jerseys and even warplane flyovers before games. In the past, football teams stayed out of sight during the national anthem, but as soon as the Pentagon money entered the scene the players were trotted out as props in the

ceremonies. The Roots Action online organization (endorsed by Jim Hightower, Barbara Ehrenreich, Cornel West, Daniel Ellsberg, Glenn Greenwald, Naomi Klein, Bill Fletcher Jr., Laura Flanders, former U.S. Senator James Abourezk, Frances Fox Piven, Lila Garrett, Phil Donahue, Sonali Kolhatkar, and many others) summarizes the situation this way:

The U.S. military has paid the National Football League many **millions of public dollars** to praise the military. Until 2009 NFL football teams were not even on the field yet when the national anthem was played at games. The militarized culture of permanent wars for "freedom" has been eroding our rights and our freedom of expression steadily for years now -- to the point that when several athletes protested police killings, they were accused of "disrespecting our troops." Once it is evident that the National Football League—and who knows how many other leagues—is in the pay of the military, the pre-game ceremonials lose their credibility as reflections of genuine and spontaneous loyalty and take on the quality of "paid patriotism," i.e., propaganda.

Maybe if our governmental apparatus, from the president down to the local police officer, actually respected citizens with liberty and justice for all, patriotism would not have to be a budget item, but might appear spontaneously. And the genuine respect for the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence and given legal force in the Fourteenth Amendment would be honored by the national symbols, not the national symbols being given paid-for prominence at the cost of those ideals.