

# Testimony

## A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating December 17, 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](mailto: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. Send comments on the newsletter to [J6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com](mailto:J6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com).

### Editorial

After the calendar, the *Third Reading* commentary is based on the gospel reading for the Third Sunday of Advent. Tom Keene's poem is *Spin Off*. See <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php> for more of Tom's poems. A prophetic essay, *#MeToo and Agape*, by Aubrey Hartnett follows; it appeared earlier in the November *Just Jottings*, an online publication of the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative. We are grateful to Aubrey Hartnett for giving us permission to republish her essay.

### Calendar

**Wednesday December 13**, 6:30pm-7:30pm, San Antonio Chapter, Texas Coalition Against the Death Penalty meeting. Alumni Room, St. Mary's University Law School Library. One Camino Santa Maria; enter campus through the 36<sup>th</sup> St. gate to park.

**Thursday December 21**, 7:00pm, 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Homeless Persons' Memorial Service. Milam Park, 500 W. Commerce St.

**Tuesday January 2**, 3:30pm, film on western photographer Ansel Adams. This Spring the video series at Christus Heritage Hall will feature artists who promoted ecological consciousness through their works. Christus Heritage hall, The Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway.

**Friday January 5**, 6:30pm-8:30pm, Religion and Its Relationship to the Trans Community—A Conversation. SoL Center, University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (park off Shook). RSVP at [dreamweek.org/events/](http://dreamweek.org/events/)

**Saturday January 6, 10:00am, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting**, residence of Maria Tobin, 8715 Starcrest Dr., #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 at a church across the street.)

**Monday January 8**, 4:00pm-9:00pm, SoL Center, Building Bridges: Naming & Negotiating Differences. Economic and Socio-Cultural Divides Panel, 4:00-6:00; Religious Differences Panel 7:00-9:00. University Presbyterian Church, 300 Bushnell (Park off Shook). Register at [www.upcsa.org/registration/](http://www.upcsa.org/registration/). The title needed in the online form is Building Bridges: Naming & Negotiating Differences.

**Thursday January 11**, 7:00pm-8:30pm, MLK Jr. Commemorative Lecture, Kathleen Neal Cleaver, human rights activist. Laurie Auditorium, Trinity University, One Trinity Place. Park at Alamo Stadium, off Stadium Drive.

**Thursday January 11**, 7:00pm, to **Saturday January 13**, 12:00pm, From Conflict to Communion: 500 Years of Christian Reform. Multiple speakers. Whitley Theological Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate Dr. \$40 + \$10 box lunch for Friday. For complete schedule: <https://ost.edu/events/conflict-communion-500-years-christian-reform/>. Register with Brenda Reyna at [breyne@ost.edu](mailto:breyne@ost.edu) or 210-341-1366, ext. 212.

**Thursday January 18**, 6:00pm-8:00pm, film about the death penalty: "The Last 40 Miles," followed by dialogue with film maker Alex Hannaford and with Kristin Houlé, Executive Director, Texas Coalition Against the Death Penalty. Chapel Auditorium, Our Lady of the Lake University, 411 SW 24<sup>th</sup> St. More information from [cwcs@ollusa.edu](mailto:cwcs@ollusa.edu).

**Thursday January 25**, 2:00pm-3:30pm, **in Austin**, Kiberly D. Russaw, Ph.D., "What Shall We Tell our Sons and Daughters," addressing violence against women as narrated in the Bible. Agard-Lovinggood Auditorium, 900 Chicon St., Huston-Tillotson University. Parking available on Chalmers Avenue. Information: Rev. Donald E. Brewington, [debrewington@htu.edu](mailto:debrewington@htu.edu).

**Sunday January 28**, 3:00pm-5:00pm, Annual Blessing of the Peacemakers and Announcing 2018 San Antonio Peace Laureates. Whitley Theological Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate.

**Tuesday January 30**, 4:00pm. Laurie Brink, O.P., Ph.D., "Love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44): Interpreting gospel ethics in an age of polarization." Reinbolt Hall, Assumption Chapel, St. Mary's University, One Camino Santa Maria. Park in Lot D near the NW 36<sup>th</sup> St. entrance, or in Lot H near the Culebra Rd. entrance.

### Third Reading (John 1:6-8, 19-28)

Since the *Gospel of Mark* is much shorter than *Matthew* and *Luke*, it is occasionally supplemented in the Sunday readings by passages from the *Johannine Gospel* in the second, Markan, year of the three-year liturgical cycle of gospel readings. One such supplement occurs on the Third Sunday of Advent. In the Second Sunday reading Mark had placed the Christian tradition squarely in the prophetic rather than the ritual Hebrew tradition. He had written that Jesus' ministry originated in that of John the Baptizer, a first century prophet (social critic).

The *Johannine Gospel* begins with a theological poem: "In *Genesis* there was speech, and the speech was to God, and the speech was God" (John 1:1, translating *logos* as "speech" rather than "word" in order to make the subsequent part of the verse understandable). The first of the passages that form today's reading actually interrupts that poem. My own theory is that the final author/editor of the *Johannine Gospel* preserved earlier Christian writings relevant to his gospel in side bars, much as we might place pertinent quotations in footnotes today. When the ancients had copies made, not having photocopy machines, they had a reader recite the text aloud to a room of scribes taking dictation, and the scribes wrote the side bars into the main text as they heard it.

"A man named John came to be sent by God. He came for testimony, so that he may give testimony about the light, so that all would believe through it. He was not the light, but to testify to the light. The true light, which shines on all people, was coming into the world." So begins the side bar, with a statement about the nature of prophecy. Prophecy testifies about the light that shines on all people. If some testimony shines on only some people, it is not true light. Whatever or whoever casts a shadow that leaves some people in darkness is obscuring the light and is therefore not true prophecy. One thinks of a line from the *Charter of Compassion*, "...any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate."

The second part of the reading (John 1:19-28) begins the narrative written by the final author/editor, following the introductory poem; it is this passage that cued in the side bar that had interrupted the poem. The narrative begins, "And this is the testimony of John, when the Judeans sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?'" Maybe we should read this, "Who are *you*?"

Prophecy raises the whole question of clericalism. The priests and Levites from Jerusalem and their scriptures preserved ancient truth. The Christian author responsible for our text acknowledges this by citing the Hebrew Bible—"In *Genesis* there was speech." The poem that begins the *Johannine Gospel* parallels the Creation Poem in *Genesis*, which begins, "In the beginning God..." (Genesis 1:1), and early on adds, "and God spoke..." (Genesis 1:3). But if it is *these* scriptures, *theirs*, that preserve the ancient truth, any other is suspect: "Why then do you baptize if you are not the messiah, Elijah, or the prophet?" Prophet John harkens back to part of the tradition that the clergy seemed less concerned with.

## Poem

### *Spin Off*

When the One just was,  
before sex or even time,  
how did that un-neutered entity  
decide to create?

What pondering of possibilities,  
foreboding of Frankensteins  
weighed in the balance  
with being content?

“Tis not to be, I question,”  
said the One to the nihilic shadow.  
“Being is all,  
world without end  
or beginning.  
The dilemma  
is whether to do,  
to extend:  
    eternity to time  
    infinity to space  
    self into other  
    the singular subjective  
    into the objective all  
    the exclusive I  
    into the inclusive We.”

Better to do nothing  
and let nothing be,  
thought the shadow,  
than by doing  
to let our secret go.

The One deliberated,  
took a deep breath  
and in a big bang  
said, “Yes...”

Tom Keene  
1985

## **#MeToo and Agape**

Aubrey Hartnett

Tarana Burke's #MeToo Campaign was recently reignited following the breaking news of the Harvey Weinstein sexual harassment scandal. Yet in the following weeks as new accusations against other powerful individuals came to light, I encountered only silence at Mass. At an anti-human trafficking symposium I recently attended, one woman invited those in attendance to challenge their priests to speak on that subject and it made me realize that the silence from the pulpit on sexual harassment might be something else I need to challenge.

Sexual harassment and assault are not easy topics to discuss. For anyone. I also know this is not an easy topic to broach with a parish priest in order to request that he bring this subject to light at Mass. I have brought my #MeToo experience up privately with my pastor on a number of occasions as I have worked through some of my own struggles. And while I appreciate the time he has spent with me individually on the topic, I still wish that he would address it more publicly. He has found a way to address other sensitive topics in his homilies (eg, LGBT rights, increased roles for women in the church, gun violence), yet sexual violence is never mentioned. I do understand it is an uncomfortable topic, and that the Church has a complicated history with sexual abuse, particularly with how publicly it played out in the Archdiocese of Boston.

Yet, as traumatic as sexual violence is, we have to come to terms with the fact that, statistically speaking, about 25% of women in the pews have experienced assault and even more have experienced harassment, and there are also significant numbers of men affected. It is pervasive in our society and yet it largely goes unspoken. Even at my darkest moments, the pain of silence was worse than the pain of having these experiences treated as invisible. And when spoken about, the reaction of 'well, at least it wasn't your fault' minimizes the suffering and implies that the victim bears some of the shame. Both silence and minimizing tell suffering members of our community that their pain is inconvenient at best. Neither does anything to heal.

One of the best responses I received from sharing some of my own experiences was from my middle school headmaster, who I trusted with my story as an adult based on his consistent treatment of me with dignity and respect, even as a child. When I shared my own #MeToo experience he became quiet, but when he spoke he shared with me a message of Agape. He said the love he wanted to share with me, and the love he wished for me, and the love he assured me that God had for me, was Agape. His conversations with me since then have echoed that message, one that has stayed with me as a deep source of peace.

So, how can we as a larger Church community react differently? I don't have a perfect answer. Perhaps we start by providing women with safe settings to tell their stories in our faith communities. Perhaps we challenge our religious educators to address this issue with their male and female students. If we are comfortable, we can ask our pastors to incorporate this topic into their homilies in the context of Respect for the Dignity of the Human Person, the first tenet of Catholic Social Teaching.

If we bring this problem to light, we can find fellowship in our strength and survival and feel that here, in our faith communities, our pain has been acknowledged and our value and worth affirmed. Simply naming the issue in our churches could say: *I see your pain, I see your struggle, I am here, this community is here, we can heal together. You are strong but you are not alone. You have the strength of a community of God to hold you on the bad days and celebrate your good ones; you are loved and have immense dignity that cannot be stolen. This community is a manifestation of Agape.*

Please challenge your faith communities to be more open about the reality of sexual harassment and violence. The invitation to God's table must acknowledge the burdens people carry with them and seek to lighten each other's loads. The Church often seems so many steps behind the national discourse - let's do our part to move it forward.

## 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>

Marianist Social Justice Collaborative  
[www.msjc.net](http://www.msjc.net)

Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, International JPIC Committee  
<http://saccvi.blogspot.com/>

San Antonio Peace Center  
<http://www.sanantoniopace.center>

Interfaith Radio, (*Interfaith Voices*)  
<http://www.interfaithradio.org/>

Texas Catholic Campaign to End the Death Penalty  
[www.txccedp.org](http://www.txccedp.org)