

PAX CHRISTI USA

Statement of Principles

Elections 2020



A Liberating Vision

Our commitment to follow in the footsteps and example of Jesus —born to a people suffering oppression, forced to cross borders as a refugee, devoted to supporting the struggles of marginalized peoples, persecuted and violently killed by the ruling Empire— guides our discernment of the current signs of the times, and leads us to affirm the following.

Land Acknowledgment

Pax Christi USA wishes to acknowledge and honor with gratitude the land and waterways and the Indigenous Peoples, past and present, who have stewarded Turtle Island, a territory that includes what is currently known as the United States of America. We recognize and uplift the understanding that much of this land continues to be unceded and that many Indigenous Peoples Nations currently lack federal recognition.

Acknowledgment of the Legacy of Slavery

Pax Christi USA wishes to acknowledge the despicable actions of the transatlantic slave trade that paved the way for current anti-Black racism. The labor of enslaved African people built the physical structures and generated the wealth still enjoyed by many of this country's institutions and families. We recognize that while many Catholics were abolitionists, still others profited from this shameful practice, and white people continue to benefit from its legacies to this day.

Acknowledgment of the Role of the Catholic Church

Pax Christi USA wishes to acknowledge and repent for the role of the institution of the Catholic Church in the process of colonization and its complicity in the sins of anti-Black racism, enslavement, and segregation. We commit ourselves to follow the leadership of Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color, including those within the church, and to support them with intention, time, and money in the struggle for collective liberation.

On Racial Justice

Racism penetrates every aspect of life in the United States, seeding the terror that continually threatens and kills people of color while perpetuating white supremacy, and leaving all of humanity disfigured. The historical reality—readily apparent in policing, the prison system, education, and highlighted in the racial inequities heightened during the pandemic—indicts our society as one in which Black lives have not mattered. We assert that Black lives matter and that the violence inherent in systemic racism is an affront to the God who creates, redeems, and sanctifies all, and calls us together as one family. **As a community of conscience, we stand together and fully support the divestment of resources away from policing and toward education, healthcare, and community investment designed to serve people. We support reparations for the suffering inflicted on Black people because of slavery, Jim Crow laws, and targeted mass incarceration.**

On (Im)migration

Across the world, migrants and refugees are fleeing poverty, violence, and environmental devastation due to climate change and resource extraction, to seek a safe place for their families. We recognize the role that the government of the United States of America and U.S.-based corporations have played and continue to play in creating the conditions that millions of people in the Americas and around the world are forced to escape. The racist fear-mongering and “blaming the victims,” as well as the cruel policies to detain immigrant children, separate families, and dismantle the asylum system are stains on our nation’s soul. **As a community of conscience, we stand together and fully support the right of people to migrate and seek refuge, citizenship, and justice, as well as the right of people not to migrate and live in safe conditions in their communities of origin.**

On Climate Change

Our world is in a climate crisis. As Pope Francis stated in *Laudato Si'*, we cannot ignore the Earth and her people’s desperate and urgent cries for environmental justice. As heat waves, wildfires, famines, melting glaciers, and rising sea levels sprawl across the globe, the poorest and most vulnerable are being disproportionately affected. Climate change not only forces people in poor and struggling countries to migrate, but fuels poverty, food insecurity, displacement and violence in communities around the United States. **As a community of conscience, we stand together and call on the United States to declare the climate crisis a national emergency by recommitting to the Paris Agreement, reinforcing the Clean Air Act, investing in clean energy sources, and pursuing a comprehensive justice approach as expressed in the U.S. Green New Deal.**

On Militarism

During this election cycle we must resist identifying strength as military might, marshal our resources and summon our moral courage to say “no” to a bloated military budget which robs people of the education, healthcare, housing, and jobs that they deserve. The human needs of communities in the U.S. and the world are held hostage to the greed of the Pentagon and a war economy that makes the entire world increasingly more insecure. Excluding Social Security benefits, almost half of our federal budget goes to military-related spending, including debt payments for prior wars. **As a community of conscience, we stand together and call for the abolition of nuclear weapons, a federal budget which prioritizes the promotion and funding of nonviolent solutions to conflict, the transformation of the war economy, and the radical transformation of U.S. foreign policy, as well as an immediate halt of U.S. interventionism in other countries. In addition, we call for an end of the militarized repression of social justice demonstrators in the U.S. and the militarization of the southern border.**



On Nuclear Disarmament

Seventy-five years after the appalling atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States, the whole earth remains under the threat of nuclear weapons. Weapons of mass destruction do not make the world safer; they create a climate of fear, distrust and hostility. Yet, signs of a growing nuclear arms race receive a fraction of attention from politicians, policymakers, and the public. Military spending to develop weapons that are lighter and more destructive siphons precious resources that could be used to meet basic human needs around the world. As Pope Francis declared during his visit to Hiroshima in 2019, “even the possession of nuclear weapons is immoral.” The presence of even one nuclear weapon is a crime against the dignity of human beings and the future for our common home, and it threatens us with the unimaginable destruction of everything we hold dear. **As a community of conscience, we stand together with the hibakusha (survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) in calling on the United States to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and fully support the extension of the New START Treaty.**

On Palestine

The United States of America continues to provide financial and political support to the government of Israel in its occupation of Palestinian land, an occupation illegal under international law. Meanwhile, the Israeli military continues displacing, killing, and terrorizing Palestinians, denying residents of the West Bank and Gaza their human rights to medical care, to clean water, to electricity, and to mobility. **As a community of conscience, we stand together and fully support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement to pressure the leaders of Israel towards a just peace in this conflict, and we join in solidarity with the Palestinian population.**

On COVID-19

COVID-19 is wreaking havoc around the world, threatening livelihoods and lives, and more drastically exposing the inequities in the healthcare system. The pandemic has unmasked structural racism, along with health and economic disparities that have long remained unaddressed in our society. In the United States alone, the administration’s lack of leadership to put in place a nationwide plan to contain the virus has claimed more than 190,000 lives (as of 9/8/20). Tragically, Indigenous Peoples and other communities of color have been particularly impacted and traumatized. **As a community of conscience, we stand together with those who have been hard hit by COVID-19, and we urgently support a nationwide plan to ensure that the rights of people of color and other vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, low-income communities, and persons with pre-existing health conditions, are guaranteed.**

On Healthcare

Social determinants remain a leading cause of health disparities in the United States. Inequities within healthcare services highlight the racist and classist ideals that were woven into the creation of this system and remain present today. Individuals from all backgrounds are deserving of quality preventative and reactive care. Illnesses do not discriminate and neither should our healthcare system in order for all people to live healthy lives. **As a community of conscience, we stand together and call for the establishment of a universal healthcare system in the United States that is guided by the principle of its recognition as a basic human right. This system must provide quality healthcare to all people, regardless of their race, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic status, and/or immigration status.**



On LGBTQ+ Equality

The LGBTQ community, especially transgender people, remains one of society's most marginalized populations, a vulnerability which intersecting issues of race, class, residency status, and ability only intensifies. Discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity remains all too common for LGBTQ people in the United States, who still lack federal non-discrimination protections in areas like housing, social services, and healthcare. LGBTQ people face high levels of violence and experience homelessness at higher rates, in large part due to their exclusion by religious family members. **As a community of conscience, we affirm the right of LGBTQ people to equality, which includes an end to criminalization laws, passage of non-discrimination protections and other laws necessary for legal equality to be realized, and a culture and religious transformation to celebrate every person's sexual orientation and gender identity as being made imago Dei.**

On Mass Incarceration and the Death Penalty

The United States has the highest per-capita incarceration rate in the world, clear evidence of a "throwaway culture," as Pope Francis describes it in his first Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. The U.S. criminal justice system upholds and perpetuates a racial caste and economic disparities by criminalizing poverty, addiction, and mental illness. Jim Crow laws morphed into the targeted mass incarceration of Black people and other people of color, while racialized migrants fleeing violence and oppression fed by U.S. foreign policy are caged in prisons ('detention centers') at the U.S. Southern border and other prisons around the country. **As a community of conscience, we stand together to support the creation and implementation of restorative justice practices rooted in respect for human dignity, healing, accountability, repair, and restoration; we call for an end to immigration incarceration and for the abolition of the death penalty.**

On Education

Since its initial formation, the framework for the education system in the United States has been established under a structure that promotes a euro-centric understanding of the purpose of life, rendering invisible cosmologies of Indigenous Peoples of this land and the peoples of the Global South which emphasize humans' interdependency and the centrality of Mother Earth. In addition, there has been an intentional erasure of key historical facts that have impeded the advancement of the journey towards reparations, atonement, and ultimate unity. This must change. There is an urgent need for a recommitment to public education, one that accurately and transparently teaches students about historical events in the United States and various cultural perspectives, as well as the history of the global world. **As a community of conscience, we stand together and call for the establishment of an educational system that provides students with historically accurate curricula, individualized attention, a safe environment free from violence and the presence of police in schools, and access to technology and opportunities that will allow them to be respected and acknowledged when performing the role they choose in their communities.**



On Homelessness and Housing

Affordable housing has been an ongoing crisis in the United States, exemplified for instance by discriminatory laws like redlining. This has resulted in growing rates of homelessness and wealth inequality. There must be systemic solutions to the primary issues leading to homelessness, including the transformation of the current “sick economic model,” as Pope Francis calls it, one that “disregards fundamental human values,” as well as addressing domestic violence, mental illness, addiction, and the need of universal healthcare. Long-term, permanent solutions are necessary in responding to this growing injustice. **As a community of conscience, we support the call by Pope Francis for all people to be ensured land, housing, and work, and we stand together and call for the enactment of policies that ensure affordable and accessible housing, assistance programs, and liveable wages while ending the criminalization of homelessness.**

On Gun Violence

On average in the United States, 100 people are killed every day due to gun violence, resulting in over 36,000 lives sacrificed annually and millions more forever traumatized in deference to the gun lobby. The disproportionality of gun violence is evidenced by Black people being ten times more likely to be murdered with a gun than their white counterparts, and women five times more likely to die if they are a victim of domestic violence when their abuser has access to a firearm. Individual and community trauma resulting from gun violence is devastating. **As a community of conscience, we stand together to call for common sense legislation that reflects how much we love our children and each other; this includes such reasonable measures such as universal background checks, a ban on assault weapons, and the recognition that gun violence is a national public health emergency.**

On Labor

Central to Catholic Social Teaching are the ideas that there’s dignity in all work and that workers have a right to fair wages and the ability to join unions. This is particularly important as inequality grows in our society and so many are unable to support their families on one job. The pandemic has highlighted the need for workers to have a collective voice on the job, whether it be to fight for personal protective equipment (PPE) and sick time, or to ensure safe conditions to return to work. **As a community of conscience, we stand together and support the passage of the first increase to the federal minimum wage since 2009, a federal paid sick leave law, and a reduction in the barriers that exist to forming unions, all of which are rooted in respect for human dignity and work.**



“We were put in this world to love him and our neighbours. Everything else passes away, only this remains. The tragedy we are experiencing at this time summons us to take seriously the things that are serious, and not to be caught up in those that matter less; to rediscover that *life is of no use if not used to serve others*. For life is measured by love.”

POPE FRANCIS

