

THE NATION IN CRISIS: NOW is the TIME for *CONFESSIO*N and *REPENTANCE*

by Tarcísio Beal, *Professor Emeritus of the University of the Incarnate Word*

The Lenten season has just ended in the USA, but the widespread pain and anguish caused by the Coronavirus-19 pandemic are still plaguing the nation. Unbelievably, as of 9:00 pm, April 25, the infection had already hit 2,893,729 people across the world, with 202,668 deaths. In the United States, which contains about 6% of the world's population, the infected stood at 936,616 and the deaths at 53, 694, and still to rise further. The world at large numbers could still be much higher because countries such as China and Iran might not be reporting them accurately. Except for the casualties of the medieval Black Death epidemic, this Corona virus now stands as the worst tragedy and crisis of history, and might even surpass it.

Now, this was not supposed to happen to the wealthiest and most sophisticated nation on earth, to the “good, old United States. Yet, we have been caught unprepared, despite the warnings given already this past January. Glaring economic disparities and the social injustices have been compounded recently by a federal government which caters to the wealthiest members of our society who recently cashed in another 33% tax cut. How can we call the US the “free-est, most democratic, and richest nation of the world” when 1% of Americans control more than 65% of the national wealth. According to the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization, the USA consumes almost two thirds of the world's resources while more than 1 billion people survive in subhuman conditions (cf. J. Hacker & Paul Pierson, *Winner Take-All Politics*, Simon & Schuster, 2011).

How can we call this a free, democratic country when the wealthy lobbies control the Senate and the Presidency and the Chief Executive behaves like a dictator, doing everything to win his reelection?!? If we do not acknowledge and confess our sins of haughtiness and disregard for human life, we will continue to defy reality, will fail to repent the shortcomings of our history, and will not correct our mistakes. We must be sure that the nation be taught its true history and how it needs repentance and amendment. Our history is usually written and taught in a way that disguises the horrors of the national, territorial expansion into the Center and the West that killed millions of the aborigines and enslaved millions of Africans to the white Europeans and their descendants. Jim Wallis, the true Christian patriarch of the *Sojourners Community* of the nation's capital, stated it this way:

“The original sin of the United States was to carry out the genocide of one race and the enslavement of another.” In fact, this sin is still quite visible as the aboriginal population has shrunk to about 5% of its original number and most Black Americans

still find themselves at the bottom of society and are often ostracized.

The first thing to do is to acknowledge the tragic reality of present-day America:

- Close to 50 million Americans have no health insurance, including 13 million children, and millions are homeless. As of now, more than 22 million Americans filed for unemployment help.

- the widespread poverty of almost 50 million of the population, with tens of millions unemployed or surviving homelessness or

with insufficient wages; this in the richest of nations, where many of the wealthy class live in luxury and waste;

- the inexcusable lack of medical preparedness for a pandemic which was forecasted at least two months before it began;
- the constant boasting about the greatness and singularity of the nation by its President;
- the worship of the kind of violence which is defended as a citizen's right to carry guns, justified with a totally out of context quote of the 2nd Amendment, as if the Founding Fathers would support the bearing of arms as it is allowed today in many States. As a matter of fact, already in early 20th century, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, noted that **the tenets of the Constitution must be interpreted within the context and needs of the time**; this means that if the Founding Fathers were here today, they would absolutely not agree with the NRA and the gun worshippers; and
- the rise of violence, with hate groups multiplying in California and in most of the Southeast, Northeast, and East of the country. According to the **Southern Poverty Law Center**, there are now more than 940 hate groups across the United States., led by the *Black Separatists* with 255, the



Millions of Americans are showing that there is great hope for a better future for this nation: they are risking their lives and their safety by placing the life and wellness of their fellow human beings first and foremost. Photo: Health workers wearing face masks by www.pexels.com/

Bexar Co. Green Party Contact
210.440.1195 | www.bexargreens.org

Celebration Circle FB Live on Sun. 11am
Meditation FB Live @ 7:30pm on Wed. |
celebrationcircle.org

DIGNITY SA Contact 210.340.2230 |
www.dignitysan antonio.com

Energía Mía Contact 512.838-3351

Fuerza Unida Contact 210.927.2294 |
www.fuerzaunida.org

Habitat for Humanity Volunteer Mtgs on
Hold. www.habitatsa.org

Interfaith Welcome Coalition Zoom
meetings | sanantoniowelcome@gmail.com

LULAC Orgullo LGBTQ Council | info@
lulac22198.org

NOW SA Contact 210.802.9068 |

newsaaeachapter@gmail.com

Pax Christi, SA Sat. Mtg via Zoom |
210.460.8448 | www.paxchristisa.org

Metropolitan Community Church Check
FB for updates | 210.472.3597

Overeaters Anonymous news@
oesanantonio.org

PFLAG Contact 210.848.7407.

Parents of Murdered Children |www.
pomcsanantonio.org

PRIDE Center: Contact 210.370. 7743 |
www.pridecentersa.org

Rape Crisis Center Hotline:210.349. 7273 |
210.521.7273 sschwab@rapecrisis.com

The Religious Society of Friends Mtgs on
Zoom, 10am., Sun. | 210.945.8456 | www.
saquakers.org

S.A. Gender Assoc. Ck for zoom
meetings on website: sagender.net

SA AIDS Fdn Contact 210.225.4715 |
www.txsaaf.org

SA Women Will March Contact
830.488.7493 | www.sawomenwillmarch.org

SGI-USA LGBT Buddhists Contact
210.653.7755

**S.N.A.P. | Survivors Network of those
Abused by Priests**, 2nd Tues., Virtual Mtg.
6-8 Contact Patti Koo @ 956-648-7385 |
snappkoo@gmail.com

Voice for Animals Contact 210.737. 3138
or www.voiceforanimals.org

SA's LGBTQA Youth Contact 210.
303.0550. Check www.fiesta-youth.org for
virtual meetings

Notas Y Más

May 2020

Brief news items on upcoming community events.

Send items for Notas y Más to: lavoz@esperanzacenter.org
or mail to: 922 San Pedro, San Antonio, TX 78212.

The deadline is the 8th of each month.

Community meetings and art events are currently on hold due to COVID-19. Check websites, FB or call for virtual meetings and arts programming in May. • www.esperanzacenter.org

The Nation in Crisis

Continued from Page 10

White Supremacists with 155, the *Anti-Muslim* with 84, the *Anti-LGBTQ* with 70, the *Neo-Nazis* with 59, and the *Ku Klux Klan* with 47; other 165 groups devote themselves to a “*General Hate*” of anyone they dislike or with whom they disagree.

Furthermore, the present tragedy caused by the pandemic has been compounded by

- the widespread poverty of tens of millions unemployed or homeless so that the virus has been killing them in disproportionate numbers; the high rate of infection and of death of blacks in Chicago attest to that;
- the constant boasting about the greatness and the uniqueness of the USA, notably by its President and some of his associates; and
- **the twisting of the central meaning of Christianity** into a credo that glorifies power and exclusiveness and that shreds its essential (“Love thy neighbor”) into a reading of the Bible that totally overlooks the historical example of Jesus. The Swedish theologian Soren Kierkegaard put this way: **“In Christianity, the Master is more important than the doctrine. Jesus is the existential communication of God.”**

Time is long overdue for acknowledging our sins as a nation and ceasing the hollow boasting that characterizes the official version of our history.

Our democracy has often been corrupted by a conservatism which worships power and money so as to control the government.

In Western European nations, such as Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, true democracy is much more a reality than in the USA, even if conservative politicians call it “Socialism.” Pope Francis himself has called Catholics to embrace a true form of “Christian democratic Socialism,” not to be confused with Marxism or Maoism.

The first thing we must do, as a nation, is to confess our collective sins, past and present.

We have already been forced into penance by the ongoing pandemic. There is great hope, however! Millions of Americans are showing that there is great hope for a better future for this nation: they are risking their lives and their safety by placing the life and wellness of their fellow human beings first and foremost. How fortunate that we have now many true heroes and saints in our midst, people from all walks of life and from all professions: doctors, nurses, and all medical personnel; policemen and policewomen, transportation workers, food store distributors and workers, restaurateurs and their personnel, and many others. Thus, legions of Americans make our country proud and show that, yes, there is a much better future for the good, old USA. With God’s blessing, America can truly fulfill its true mission and be a beacon for the rest of the world.

BIO: Tarcisio Beal, STL, PHD, Professor Emeritus of the University of the Incarnate Word, where he taught for 41 years was also co-founder of the old Archdiocesan Justice & Peace Commission headed by Rev. Bill Davis, then Pastor of St. Mary’s Parish.

NOTE: Opinions expressed here are solely the author’s own.