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Reflection Date: January 7, 2018: The Epiphany of the Lord

Obey or Disobey?

This Sunday we are celebrating the [Epiphany of the Lord](#). The celebration has different meanings among Christians. The word 'epiphany' comes from the Greek word 'epiphaneia,' meaning 'manifestation or appearance.' In the Roman church it is generally considered the feast that celebrates the visit of the magi. It is often described as the revelation of the



incarnation of when God became man. In Eastern Christianity, it is associated with the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, a time to acclaim to the world that the Messiah has come. The feast of the Epiphany is one of the oldest Christian feast days we celebrate. The feast is filled with rituals, songs and pageants. We all remember the song "We three kings of Orient are bearing gifts, we travel afar." I remember when I was about 9 years old, I was selected to play one of the kings in the Christmas pageant. I was so excited I could not wait to run home and tell my mom.

Over the years, I have heard the story preached, I have read theological interpretations on its meaning, the significance of the gifts, and who the magi were. As I was reflecting on this Gospel something struck me. Verses 7 & 8 say: "Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." So, the Magi were given a direct order by the King. Herod told them to return and let him know where this child was. Later on, Matthew says: "And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way." I wonder what the magi were thinking? They had just been witness and part of a cosmic event. They may not have understood the significance but they knew something remarkable happened. They were ordered to return to Herod. Not to do so would be a violation of a direct decree by the governor; in effect they would be breaking the law. They were risking arrest and, in all probability, death.

In my work, I am often involved in nonviolent civil disobedience. I am often challenged by folks who say that we should obey the laws of our country. I wonder what would have happened if the Magi felt that way and returned to Herod instead of following their hearts?

Peace and All Good,
Patrick Carolan
FAN Executive Director

Suggested Action:

Contemplate the actions of the Magi in the Gospel and through their inspiration find ways to be more giving to our neighbors and even those whom we do not know.

Suggested Petitions:

May the star of your justice shine brightly in our hearts, we pray...

May the new year bring peace to the hearts of all, we pray...

Collect Prayer (from Mass during the day)

**O God, who on this day
revealed your Only Begotten Son to the nations
by the guidance of a star,
grant in your mercy
that we, who know you already by faith,
may be brought to behold the beauty of your sublime glory.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.**

Amen

Celebrate National Migration Week January 7 – 13

For nearly a half century, the Catholic Church in the United States has celebrated National Migration Week, which is an opportunity for the Church to reflect on the circumstances confronting migrants, including immigrants, refugees, children, and victims and survivors of human trafficking. This year's theme is [Many Journeys: One Family](#).

Each of our families have a migration story, some recent and others in the distant past. Regardless of where we are and where we came from, we remain part of the human family and are called to live in solidarity with one another. Unfortunately, in our contemporary culture we often fail to encounter migrants as persons, and instead look at them as unknown others, if we even notice them at all.

During this National Migration Week, let us all take the opportunity to engage migrants as community members, neighbors, and friends. Here is the [National Migration Week 2018 toolkit](#) chock full of facts, talking points, tips and so much more. There is a beautiful prayer in both English and Spanish at the end. We urge our members to use this in your meditations and services next week. Additionally, the [Migration and Refugee Services](#) office of the USCCB has homily helps, prayer cards, and petitions available on their [website](#).

National Migration Week 2018



Take Action: Temporary Protected Status Set to Expire for El Salvador on January 8th

Recently, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) terminated temporary protected status (TPS) for Nicaragua, Haiti, and Sudan, and it will be making the decision to extend or terminate TPS for El Salvador this month and for Honduras in May. Legislation has been proposed in Congress to protect TPS holders from being returned to unsafe situations in their home countries and separated from their loved ones. You can find an informative comparison of various [TPS bills here](#).

On January 8th, 2018 DHS must make the decision to extend, renew or cancel TPS for citizens of El Salvador. In response to the deadline, Catholic partners sent a request to the administration to extend TPS for 18 Months. You can [read the letter here](#). There are nearly 200,000 Salvadoran TPS recipients living in the United States currently according to the [National Immigration Forum](#). As discussed in this [USCCB/MRS trip report](#), El Salvador is currently in no position to safely accommodate their return.

There will be a day of action on January 4th, we urge our members to [continue to support](#) these people who are simply looking for a safe, secure place to call home.

What's Next for the Arctic National Refuge?

For 30 years, the Arctic Refuge has remained protected because of the support of the American people. The Gwich'in call the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge "the sacred place where life begins." Despite passage of the tax bill, where a provision to begin drilling in the Arctic was included in order to entice members to vote for the bill, FAN will stand with them, at every step, to protect their way of life.



The American people are [overwhelmingly opposed to this tax bill](#), and even more opposed to drilling in the Refuge. The more they learn about it, the less they like it. While passage of the tax bill was a setback, it has only heightened our resolve to defend America's last great wilderness. We will continue to keep our members informed of the latest updates.

January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month

Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery—a multi-billion dollar criminal industry that denies freedom to approximately 20.9 million people around the world. And no matter where you live, chances are it's happening nearby. From the girl forced into prostitution at a truck stop, to the man discovered in a restaurant kitchen, stripped of his passport and held against his will. All trafficking victims share one essential experience: the loss of freedom.



FAN invites you to research this important topic. We offer information about some of the organizations we work with and on behalf of survivors.

Polaris Project: <https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking>
Talitha Kum: <http://www.talithakum.info/>
Bakhita Initiative: <https://bakhitainitiative.com/>

We also remind you the USCCB's migration and refugee services committee has developed this National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month & Day of Prayer [Toolkit](#).

FAN takes the Polar Bear Plunge Again

St. Bonaventure tells us that to love God, we need to love all that God created. He teaches us that what we choose to do here on this earth will have an effect on it. As part of FAN's commitment to care for all of creation, we will again participate in the Polar Bear Plunge to [Keep Winter Cold](#). This annual event is organized by the [Chesapeake Climate Action Network](#) (CCAN) and helps raise funds for important local grassroots efforts on climate justice.

This year, FAN's executive director, [Patrick Carolan](#) will be jumping in to the icy waters of the Chesapeake with FAN board member, [Doug O'Brien](#). Please consider donating to help us reach our goal of \$2,000 raised to help fund climate efforts in the Chesapeake area. Just click on the links attached to each jumper's name to donate to that person.

Thank you so much for your prayers and support of our efforts to make a positive change in our world. Our team will be gearing up to run into the water the morning of January 27th and would love for anyone in the DC Metro area to come down to National Harbor and join the fun! There will be plenty of hot cocoa and treats for everyone!



