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Reflection Date: February 18, 2018: The 1st Sunday of Lent

Rainbows and Deserts

“I set my bow in the clouds to serve as the covenant between me and the earth,” proclaimed God to Noah after the great flood. Who doesn’t love a rainbow, sign of hope and promise? But without rain there is no rainbow. On this [First Sunday of Lent](#), this translates into no resurrection without crucifixion and death. It is worth noting that God’s covenant is with Earth, not only two-legged humans. God’s creative and sustaining love is with ALL creation. We humans need this reminder as we continue to exploit, damage and kill other life forms, and harm air, water, and soil which try to sustain and energize our bodies and spirits.



The Gospel this week moves us from a rainbow to desert sand where Jesus struggles with wild beasts of temptation as he fasts and prays for 40 days. Exhausted, hungry, but victorious, he is ministered to by angels. Confirmed in his mission, he sets out to proclaim “the gospel of God... Repent and believe in the gospel.” In order to hear the gospel of love, mercy, forgiveness and faith we must repent of all that closes our ears and hardens our hearts to Jesus’ message.

As we embark on the Lenten journey, we ask ourselves what in our lives calls for repentance. What sins have we committed against our neighbors both close to us and, by negligence or indifference, those around the world? For what abuses of Earth do we need to repent and make amends? These readings of skyscape and landscape are intended to focus each of us on our soulscape. Rainbows offer hope. Angels in many forms provide comfort and strength as we face life’s challenges. Repentance sets our spirits free and offers joy.

Sr. Marie Lucey, OSF
FAN Associate Director

Suggested Action:

Fast one day this week and repent for one way in which you have been complicit in racism or in harm to Earth.

Suggested Petitions:

God, we thank you for rainbows and pray for rain to water areas of Earth suffering from drought, we pray....

God, send ministering angels to us when we struggle in our deserts of anxiety, doubt, fatigue or fear, we pray....

Prayer – St. Augustine

Lord, our God, we are in the shadow of your wings.

Protect us and bear us up.

When you are our strength, we are strong;

but when we are our own strength, we are weak.

Our good always lives in your presence, and we suffer
when we turn our faces away from you.

We now return to you, O Lord,
that we may never turn away again.

Amen.

Fixed: Correct Link for Honduras Blog Post

In last week's newsletter, some people had trouble with the link to [Sr. Maria's blog post](#) where she reported on her time as part of the Interfaith Delegation which travelled down to stand in solidarity with the Honduran people amid the abuses they are enduring from the militarized government. We offer the [corrected link to her report here](#) and apologize for the inconvenience.

Please continue to pray for the people of Honduras.



Facts Don't Lie: We Must End Gun Violence in the US

Every year in our country, a firearm is used in nearly 500,000 crimes, resulting in the deaths and injuries of more than 110,000 people. Shootings devastate families and communities and drain billions of dollars from local, state, and federal governments. Meanwhile, the problem of gun violence has been compounded by another: the shortage of knowledge about the issue.

[The Trace](#) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit newsroom dedicated to shining a light on America's gun violence crisis. Adapted from this website are [eleven facts that are shaping gun violence in the United States](#). We invite you to look through this article on our [website](#) to further educate yourself on this issue. Be sure to check out [The Trace online](#).



Take Action: Gabby Giffords' campaign has a [petition](#) urging Congress to vote NO on the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act. This dangerous bill would allow almost anyone to carry a loaded, concealed gun nearly anywhere in the United States. Every day, the gun lobby is encouraging their supporters to contact their Senators. That's why it's as important as ever for the faith community to be just as diligent. Last night, [CBS 60 Minutes](#) had a segment on the

concealed carry reciprocity bill, explaining how it would work. We urge members to [sign the petition](#) and contact your Senators urging they reject this legislation.

Latest on the DREAM Act Legislation; Catholics Pray in Solidarity

The March 5th deadline set by President Trump for Congress to act on legislation to protect Dreamers is fast approaching. Faith groups and others are in emergency mode to get legislation passed, but not just any legislation. Additionally, FAN participated in a prayer service on Capitol Hill last week (*pictured here*) in solidarity with Dreamers.



The [Dream Act](#) is still supported by the faith community. The [Uniting and Securing America Act of 2018](#) (USA Act), while bipartisan and providing a pathway to citizenship, has positive components but we do not agree that increased border enforcement or collaboration between local, tribal, and state law enforcement with Border Patrol will make our border safe. The [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#) (IIC) has written a [letter](#) to this effect, signed by national faith organizations including FAN, to be sent to all senators on Monday, February 12th. We totally oppose the White House proposal which is contrary to our faith values by separating families, undermining asylum access, drastically cutting legal immigration, and intensifying the suffering of border communities and migrants.

During the week of February 12th, Senator McConnell will bring up an empty "shell" bill with an open amendment strategy. Amendments will need 60 votes to pass. Members of the IIC are working with key senators to offer assistance for bringing up positive amendments.

Please be alert to potential messages urging immediate calls to legislators. Also, please make sure that you are following the IIC on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#), since these channels will also be used to communicate what is happening.

Webinar: The Trump Budget: What You Need to Know

Last year, in his first budget proposal to Congress, President Trump proposed massive cuts to Medicaid, SNAP, housing, help for people with disabilities, education and job training, social services, and public and environmental health programs.

Today the President will release his budget for the next fiscal year. What will he propose, how might it affect low- and moderate-income people and communities, and how can we, as human needs advocates, fight back?



The Coalition on Human Needs is offering a webinar this **Wednesday, Feb. 14th at 12:30p ET/ 9:30a PT** on "[The Trump Budget: What you Need to Know](#)" The webinar will feature:

1. Sharon Parrott, Senior Fellow and Senior Counselor, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
2. Deborah Weinstein, Executive Director, Coalition on Human Needs
3. Ellen Teller, Director of Government Affairs, Food Research & Action Center
4. John Halpin, Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress, who will present the latest polling information to help guide us as we defend human needs programs

[Click here to register for the webinar](#)

Love Resists Through Partnership: A Webinar

How can an individual congregation—and the interfaith community, more broadly—approach new relationships with grassroots community organizations? How do we build trust, accountability, and a long-term commitment? What role is ours to play within a movement much larger than ourselves?

LOVE
RESISTS

On **Tuesday, February 20, 2018 at 8pm**

ET/5pm PT the Minnesota UU Social Justice Alliance and their partners will share what they've learned through developing MARCH (Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change, and Healing) a coalition aimed at resisting white supremacy, and will also discuss what kind of awareness and skills are essential to develop strong community partnerships.

[Click here](#) to see the list of speakers and [register for the webinar](#).

Take Action: Religious Sign On Letter Opposing Offshore Drilling

The National Religious Partnership for the Environment is coordinating several state specific [sign on letters](#) to the Trump Administration, opposing offshore drilling.

Offshore drilling would have negative impacts not only on marine life but on the health and economic wellbeing of coastal communities. Please join other religious leaders in opposing the expansion of offshore oil exploration and drilling by [signing this religious leader letter](#).



Sign on is for clergy or religious leaders and the specific states include: FL, VA, NC, SC, and ME. If you are a lay person, please [urge your religious leader to sign the letter](#) and protect God's oceans and coasts.

Haiti Braces for Mass Return of Migrants from U.S.

In November 2017, the Trump administration announced it would end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) which allowed tens of thousands of Haitians to live and work in the US since a devastating earthquake hit their country eight years ago. Haiti is now bracing for a mass return of its citizens. The country is currently in the midst of its own migration crisis, with Haitians systematically expelled from the neighbouring Dominican Republic.

[Click here for a video report](#) which includes many personal stories of people being sent back to Haiti and the conditions into which they are forced.