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Reflection Date: March 24, 2019 - Third Sunday of Lent

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## God is in the Journey

In the [first reading this week](#), Moses was shocked at the sight of a Burning Bush in the distance. His curiosity brought him nearer to the bush. But God warned him not to come any closer. Then God told him that he was to lead the Israelites out of slavery. As you read on in Exodus, Moses did what God told him and confronts the ruler of Egypt and leads them away from the city. During the journey there is much grumbling from the Israelites even though they are being saved. As I read about this movement out of Israel, I thought of those fleeing from Honduras,



Guatemala, and El Salvador with hope of safety. I ask myself these questions: Did they leave at the inspiration of God to flee gangs, drugs, corruption, and poverty? Is this God's way of saving them? Do they grumble? Of course they do – think of their journey especially if they have children. Remember, these people are fleeing, they are not just migrating. They are not coming on vacation. Even though it is very difficult, many send their children alone to help them escape the horrors of their lives. Does God inspire those who help them along the way? Those who meet them at the border? Intercede for them when they get across the border? It is my belief that God is in all of this! People who help them have heard the cry of the poor, have heard the cry of those who are made in the image and likeness of God which makes them worthy of respect.

In the Gospel we hear about the fig tree and the owner asking the gardener to cut it down because it is not producing. But the gardener asks him to leave it for one more year, some more time to produce. I believe that those who are standing in the way of the wall, who are advocates for those fleeing is God's way of telling us that it is wrong for us to persecute and make allegations against those who are looking for safety. Perhaps like giving the fig tree more time, God is giving those who are fleeing more time for us to come up with a better solution. Perhaps the fig tree will grow next year! The nature of a fig tree is to grow healthy and strong and bear sweet fruit. Perhaps our brothers and sisters who are fleeing to us for help will grow healthy and strong and be assets to our country. We do not want to miss this opportunity!

Sr. Marge Wissman, OSF  
FAN Board Member

### **Suggested Action:**

Listen to what God is inspiring you to do in relation to those who are fleeing not just migrating-always remembering that all people are our brothers and sisters.

### **Suggested Petitions:**

For all those who are fleeing, that they are met with respect and safety. We pray...

For those undocumented citizens who live in fear that they will be deported from this country.  
We pray...

**Prayer over the people:**

**Direct, O God, we pray the hearts of your faithful, and in your kindness grant your servants this grace: that, abiding in the love of you and their neighbor they may fulfill the whole of your commands. Through Christ Our Lord.**

**Amen.**

## Volunteers Still in Need at the U.S.-Mexico Border

A [volunteer portal](#) has been put together to help field out-of-town volunteer placements at Annunciation House in El Paso, TX and at FM4 Paso Libre shelter in Guadalajara, Mexico. Jackie McVicar is a journalist who has been following the caravan up close. Her article in American Magazine explains [Why are so many people fleeing Honduras?](#)



[Annunciation House](#) is a volunteer, non-profit organization providing accompaniment and basic emergency services to asylum seekers at the border. With the current number of people arriving from Central America and the coming caravan from Honduras, they are in need of volunteers to help with intakes, transportation, travel arrangements, the clothing bank, and providing meals. Asylum seekers being released now have no “post-release plan” the way they used to – they are being dumped at the bus stations without tickets, some not knowing where they are or even having anywhere to go. A small group of current volunteers and local congregations are doing their best to support over 1,000 people a week who are just arriving to the U.S.

[FM4 Paso Libre](#) is a non-profit organization that defends and promotes the human rights of migrants and refugees in the west part of Mexico, through short-term shelter, comprehensive support (such as legal aid and medical screening), advocacy, and research. Volunteers from Guadalajara as well as from countries beyond Mexico support the staff, contributing their experience and skills so that the journey of migrants and refugees is more dignified and just. General volunteers are needed for a month or more at a time; specialist volunteers such as doctors, nurses, and immigration lawyers can volunteer for as little as a week at a time.

[Please use this link to sign up to volunteer.](#)

## There is Still Time to Register for Ecumenical Advocacy Days

[Ecumenical Advocacy Days](#) (EAD) for Global Peace with Justice will gather in Washington, D.C., April 5-8, 2019 for its 17th Annual Conference and [there is still time to register](#).

We urge all our members and friends to [register to attend](#) this year's EAD gathering. **FAN will again be hosting a meeting on Friday afternoon of all Franciscans in attendance. Please [let us know](#) if you will be coming.**



This year's theme is "Troubling the Waters for the Healing of the World -- #GoodTrouble." The history of engaging in #GoodTrouble is embedded in our faith tradition and this year's World Day of Peace Message from Pope Francis, which said, "Good politics is at the service of peace." The significance of our upcoming gathering cannot be understated. We gather at a time in which people of faith and conscience are again called to stand in the prophetic stream of those who have come before us, those who were not afraid to stir up #GoodTrouble for the sake of God's kingdom.

## Take Action: Contact DHS and Congress in Support of our Immigrant Sisters and Brothers

In January 2019, the Department of Homeland Security issued new policy guidance for "Migrant Protection Protocols." Referred to as the "Remain in Mexico" policy, these protocols require certain asylum seekers, including families, to be sent back to Mexico to wait throughout the duration of their immigration court proceedings in the U.S. On March 4, 2019, the Texas and Mexico Border bishops issued a [statement](#) voicing disagreement with the "Remain in Mexico" policy.



As Franciscans, we believe in the inherent dignity of every person and the ability of families to seek security and safety for themselves and their family members. We urge our members to take action. [Click here to contact the Department of Homeland Security](#) and urge them to rescind the 'Remain in Mexico' policy and support asylum seekers.

Right now, it is more important than ever for Members of Congress to hear that the faith community supports the **family-based immigration system** and wants to see Congress preserve and strengthen family immigration and the diversity visa program. [Click here to sign on to an interfaith letter](#) urging Congress to preserve and strengthen the family immigration and diversity visas - without undermining immigrant or border communities. **Signatures due by close of business March 22nd.**

## Help Stop Human Trafficking: Labeling for Lent

The fishing and aquaculture industry is among the most important economic sectors in the world. It employs a high number of migrant workers vulnerable to trafficking and forced labor, which occurs at all stages of the seafood supply chain. In 2016, FAN joined the [Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking](#) (CCOAH) in their [Labeling for Lent](#) campaign where postcards were signed, collected and sent to fishing giant Starkist to urge them to examine their supply chains and commit to a product free of slave labor.

CCOAH is currently collecting more resources and reminding networks of the need to be vigilant about seafood company supply chains. The virtually unregulated fishing industry in many countries, coupled with the global demand for cheap seafood, create the lawless conditions under which trafficking at sea flourishes.

FAN will continue to report on new resources and actions you can take this Lenten season and all year round to ensure our seafood is sourced responsibly and free of slave labor. To learn more about maritime trafficking, head to the [anti-trafficking page](#) of the USCCB website.



## Take Action: Urge Congress to Pass Voting Rights Advancement Act

In 2013, the Supreme Court ruled on a provision under the Voting Rights Act that permits states to change their election laws without advance federal approval. Since then, abuses and restrictions to voting rights have been widespread throughout the country.

Last month, Congressional Democrats [introduced](#) legislation to restore that provision of the Voting Rights Act, called [The Voting Rights Advancement Act Of 2019](#). We need to build grassroots support to help pass this crucial legislation.



It is imperative that for a fully functioning and representative government of all Americans that we institute reforms in voting rights. Equal access to vote is essential in a democracy. [Add your name to demand Congress pass The Voting Rights Advancement Act Of 2019](#) and ensure equal access for every American to vote.

## Take Action: Sign and Share the Petition to Stop

## Plastic Pollution

Plastic production is directly connected to climate change as 99% of plastics are derived from fossil fuels. U.S. shorelines are littered with millions of tons of single-use plastic. We must cut down our reliance on single-use plastics. While this can seem like a daunting task, we invite you to take a simple action as part of your commitment to [Living the Change](#).



Start with something small, like [plastic straws](#). It's estimated that 1 billion plastic straws are used daily worldwide. Single-use plastic straws are not recycled. They are used for minutes and become instant plastic pollution, many times ending up in our oceans. However, several major U.S. cities, including Seattle and Washington, D.C., have limited single-use plastic straws. [Let's build on this momentum](#).

[Sign the petition](#) to call on your local elected officials to limit plastic straws and make straws available only upon request. When possible, you will be connected to local organizers working on a campaign near you.

## DC: Join Us for an Interfaith Book Talk on March 24th

FAN is proud to co-sponsor an author visit and book signing in Washington, DC on March 24th. The three authors of the book, [Strangers, Neighbors, and Friends](#) will be on hand and discuss how Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have the resources to motivate respect and love for those of very different faith traditions.



From the book: *From 9/11 to Israel-Palestine to ISIS, the fear of the religious stranger is palpable. Conservative talk show hosts and liberal public intellectuals are united in blaming religion, usually Islam, for the world's instability. If religion is part of the problem, it can and should be part of the solution. Strangers, Neighbors, Friends—co-authored by a Muslim, a Christian, and a Jew—aims to inform and inspire Abraham's children that God calls us to extend our love beyond family and fellow believer to the stranger.*

For more information, [contact us](#).

## Lenten Resource from Interfaith Immigration Coalition

Recently, we made you aware that the [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#) (IIC) was developing a Lenten resource focused on the impacts of border walls and fences on



immigrant communities. We are pleased to announce that the 8-part set of Lenten devotions, titled "*Turning Walls into Welcome*" is now posted on the [IIC website](#). You can [download it directly here](#).

Ash Wednesday: Walls Break Relationships

Week One: Walls Separate Families

Week Two: Walls-An Ineffective and Immoral use of Public Funds

Week Three: Walls Do Not Deter Immigration

Week Four: Walls Hurt Border Communities

Week Five: Walls Cause Environmental Harms

Palm Sunday: Walls Infringe on Indigenous Communities

Easter: Breaking Down Walls

We hope this resource allows some reflection on how the paschal mystery is reflected in those forced to migrate.