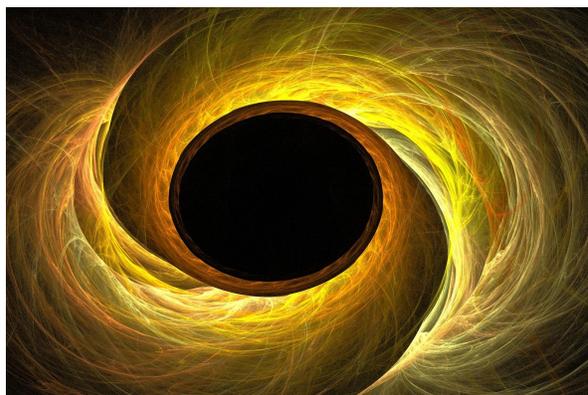


Published December 31, 2018:

Reflection for: January 6, 2019 - The Epiphany of the Lord

When the 'Word Became Flesh'

Last week we celebrated the Incarnation, the moment when the "Word Became Flesh." Through our rituals, prayers and festivals, our sharing of gifts, and enjoying family, friends, and food we honor the joyous occasion. I remember the anticipation I felt as a child waking up with my brothers on Christmas morning and waiting for my parents to wake so we could open our presents. My wife is Italian every Christmas Eve we would celebrate with a dinner of seven fishes. We would cook all day and in the



evening have 25-30 folks over to feast. For many, the celebration of the Incarnation could and should be the most joyous time of the year. The incarnation changed everything. Even in our [Gospel reading](#) in the story of the Magi traveling to see the baby, we hear about the joy they experienced when first encountering the baby Jesus. It says: "They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage."

During this time of joy and celebration do we stop and ask why? Why did the incarnation happen? As a child I was taught that Jesus came to save us from our sins. Most of this theology this comes from the 11th century bishop and theologian, St Anselm. In his book *Cur Deus Homo* (Why God Became a Man), Anselm argued that the crucifixion of Jesus was necessary to atone for man's fall or original sin. He said that it was necessary for the atonement to take place in order to satisfy the justice of God. This argument would suggest that the incarnation happened only so that Jesus could be crucified so as to pay our debt. As Anselm puts it: "Divine justice demands restitution for sin but human beings are incapable of providing it, as all the actions of men are already obligated to the furtherance of God's glory." This is sometimes referred to as the 'satisfaction theory of atonement.' A theory that Jesus suffered and died on the cross as a substitute for human sin satisfying God's justifiable wrath against humankind's transgression.

A few hundred years later, St. Bonaventure argued that Jesus' arrival can't be limited to his role in saving creation from sin because God's decision to become incarnate precedes creation itself. Another Franciscan theologian, Blessed John Duns Scotus said, "The Incarnation of the Son of God is the *very reason for the whole Creation*. To think that God would have given up such a task had Adam not sinned would be quite unreasonable! I say, therefore, that the fall was not the cause of Christ's predestination and that if no one had fallen, neither the angel nor man in this hypothesis Christ would still have been predestined in the same way."

During this time we often hear about the true meaning of Christmas. Religious leaders will talk about how we have lost the true meaning of Christmas. Maybe we should take some time and reflect on what truly is the Incarnation. What changed the moment the "Word became Flesh?"

Peace and All Good.

Patrick Carolan
FAN Executive Director

Suggested Action:

Reminded by the gifts the magi brought to the infant Jesus, this week, consider what type of gift you could give without expectation of return.

Suggested Petitions:

In the new year, may Christians and all people of goodwill be moved by the nativity narrative to reflect on how we are responding to vulnerable people. We pray...

For all elected officials, may they be open to work collaboratively across political divides for the common good. We pray...

Collect Prayer (from Mass During the Day)

**Oh 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

**Pope Francis' Message for World Day of Peace:
"Good Politics is at the Service of Peace"**

Tomorrow, January 1st is the 52nd World Day of Peace and Pope Francis, in his [message](#), says, "Good politics is at the service of peace."

Those who hold political office, he says, must exercise their office in service to others, basing their work on the foundation of charity and human virtues. Pope Francis also warns of the vices that can afflict politics, including corruption, xenophobia, racism, lack of concern for the environment, and contempt for exiles.

“
Peace in our homes, our
families, our schools and
communities. Peace in
all those places where
war never seems to end.
Peace for those faces
which have known
nothing but pain.

~ Pope Francis



In conclusion, he says peace is "the fruit of a great political project grounded in the mutual responsibility and interdependence of human beings." But, he continues, "it is also a challenge that demands to be taken up ever anew" - a challenge that "entails a conversion of heart and soul."

Happy World Day of Peace from all of us at FAN.

Register for the Value our Families Webinar Next Week

#ValueOurFamilies is the national coalition working to reunite and keep families together, defend family immigration, and protect family unity. As immigrants and families continue to be attacked by this administration, we invite our partners and allies to join this webinar to learn more about how we can work together.



In the last two years, we've seen various policy proposals to slash our family-based immigration system as well as limit the ability of immigrants to come to the United States. Help us uplift the importance of our current family-based immigration system by joining the campaign.

What: [#ValueOurFamilies Campaign Webinar](#)

Purpose: To orient new members and recruit interested organizations to join the campaign. Information that will be covered includes membership requirements and responsibilities, campaign structure, goals, and plans for 2019. This will also serve as our very first 2019 field call where we will cover the current landscape and provide resources that your organization can use to uplift the importance of the family-based immigration system.

When: Tuesday, January 8, 2019

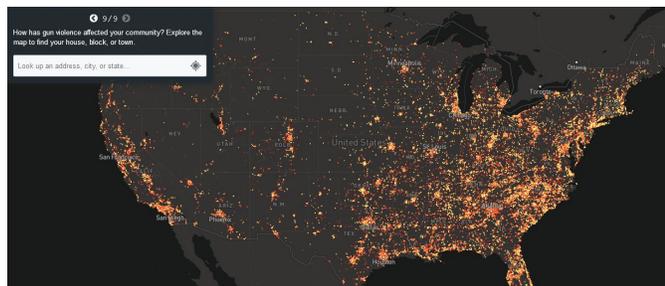
Time: 11am PST/1pm CST/2pm EST

RSVP: Please [RSVP using this link](#) no later than 12pm ET on Monday, January 7th.

Hope to see you there!

Gun Violence Update: Five Years - 150,000 Shootings - Have you Been Affected by Violence?

[The Trace](#) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit newsroom dedicated to shining a light on America's gun violence crisis. Believing that the shortage of knowledge about the issue compounds the problem of gun violence in our country, The Trace dedicates itself to in-depth reporting that doesn't let up after the latest high-profile shooting leaves the front pages.



Their latest report comes from data collected by [Gun Violence Archive](#), a nonprofit organization that gathers and verifies information about incidents of gun violence in the United States from media, law enforcement, and other sources. We encourage those interested to take a look at the [interactive map here](#).

For five years the Gun Violence Archive has collected information on more than 150,000 incidents and compiled it in this [interactive map](#). The numbers are alarming, and while the map shows what half a decade of gun violence in America looks like, it's an incomplete picture as firearms suicides aren't included. This is an amazing resource.

FAN's Patrick Carolan in *The Cord*: "Franciscan Spirituality and Environmental Justice"

In April 2018, the Franciscan Friars Conventual from Our Lady of the Angels Province invited the Franciscan Action Network and the DC/MD/VA chapter of Interfaith Power and Light to join in a [Forum and Symposium on Environmental Justice and Service to Vulnerable Populations](#). The gathering (*pictured*) was held at the Shrine of St. Anthony in Ellicott City, MD.



The goal for the gathering was to bring together peoples of various faiths, government officials, and other interested parties to discuss issues elevated by Pope Francis' encyclical "Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home," which touched on many issues pertinent to the protection of the environment, public health and other quality of life concerns of vulnerable communities. FAN's executive director, Patrick Carolan was among the presenters and his essay was recently published in the Franciscan publishing, [The Cord](#). We invite you to read and share this inspirational [essay](#) (beginning on page 33) on integral ecology and environmental justice.