

Publication Date: January 6, 2020

Reflection Date: January 12, 2020 - The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

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## An End and A Beginning

Image courtesy of [Gerd Altman](#) from [Pixabay](#)

On the liturgical calendar, the [Baptism of Jesus](#) marks the end of the Christmas Season, time to move on, perhaps reluctantly, from the manger, angels, shepherds, Magi guided by a star, the young holy family. In biblical times, this is the beginning of Jesus' public ministry as he is baptized with water by John and by "the Spirit of God," the "beloved Son," prophesied by Isaiah to "establish justice on the earth." In our personal lives, what endings and beginnings will the year 2020 hold for us? How will each of us live our baptismal commitment?



We, too, are God's beloved. Conscious of our weaknesses, failures, and sins, or because we realize the challenges that being God's beloved holds, we may be slow to accept this reality, to put boundaries on God's extravagant love. But we, too, have been baptized with water and the Spirit of God. Like it or not, we are called to live our baptismal commitment each day, to work for "the victory of justice," to go about "doing good and healing all those oppressed. . ."

On some days, we will feel overwhelmed or fatigued or discouraged in our efforts to live as baptized people. It is on those days especially that I must remind myself that I am God's beloved. God's love is so much larger than my limitations, failures, and vulnerabilities, that with me, too, God "is well pleased." Believe it, baptized child of God!

Sr. Marie Lucey, OSF  
FAN Associate Director

### **Suggested Action:**

This week, at the beginning of each day, say to God, "I believe that I am your beloved. Help me to please You today." At the end of the day, name one thing you did or said that was pleasing to God, and say "I thank You that I am your beloved."

### **Suggested Petitions:**

That each of us may renew our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus. We pray...  
That we welcome this new year, with all its challenges and blessings, as a continued opportunity to work for the "victory of justice." We pray...

### **Collect Prayer**

**Almighty, ever-living God,  
who, when Christ had been baptized in the River Jordan  
and as the Holy Spirit descended upon him,  
solemnly declared him your beloved Son,  
grant that your children by adoption, reborn of water and the Holy Spirit,  
may always be well pleasing to you.  
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.**

## **Celebration of the 53rd Day of World Peace**

*Image courtesy of [Vatican Media](#)*

As we start off a new year and a new decade, we are grateful for the hope that Pope Francis' [World Day of Peace message](#) gives us.



The Holy Father speaks of Peace as a Journey of Hope and delves into specific aspects of this journey including Dialogue, Reconciliation, and Ecological Conversion. He starts by describing the value of peace as the "virtue that inspires us and keeps us moving forward, even when obstacles seem insurmountable."

Using as an example the survivors of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he challenges us to a journey of listening. The Pope emphasizes the need to "keep alive the flame of collective conscience" thereby enabling "memory, as the fruit of experience, to serve as the basis and inspiration for present and future decisions to promote peace."

Next, our journey toward peace requires reconciliation in fraternal communion and choosing the path of respect. Referencing Matthew's Gospel where we are taught by Jesus to forgive "seventy times seven", we are offered the chance to discover the power of forgiveness and thus "grow in our capacity to become men and women of peace."

Finally, the Holy Father prompts us to a journey of ecological conversion, calling for "listening and contemplation of the world God has given us as a gift..." He concludes, "We need to change the way we think and see things, and to become more open to encountering others and accepting the gift of creation, which reflects the beauty and wisdom of its Creator."

We consider this message of peace as a beautiful reflection of our deep Franciscan values and invite our members and friends to [read and pray](#) on it this year. Peace and All Good.

**Take Action: Call the Capitol and Urge No War with Iran**

Last week it was [reported](#) that Qassem Soleimani, who leads Iran's elite Quds force, was killed by the U.S. in what the Pentagon termed a "defensive action." This move by the Trump Administration happened without Congressional approval and risks major escalation of an already volatile situation in Iran as they are bound to retaliate.

This week, as your [St. Clare Pledge](#), we urge all our members and friends to make a **call to the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and urge your elected officials to do their best to halt any escalation of these actions as we want [No War With Iran](#).**



If, as Mr. Trump says, he doesn't want to engage in a new war in the Middle East, the "maximum pressure" campaign he has been running needs to stop. Take 5 minutes today and urge Congress to work for peace.

## FAN's Patrick Carolan Says Goodbye

Friday January 3rd was my last day as executive director of FAN. Nine years ago I was invited to become part of the Franciscan family as ED of FAN. In my first few weeks I received many emails and calls from Sisters, Friars, Seculars and others welcoming me. I also received a few who weren't as excited about my new job. At the time I didn't really have a good understanding of what it meant to be part of the Franciscan family. With the tutelage of Sisters like Margaret Mary Kimmins, Margaret Magee and Marie Lucey I soon learned. Our nation looked very



different in 2010. The affordable health care act had recently passed, there were discussions on a bipartisan immigration bill and people were starting to finally take seriously the destruction of our climate. A lot has changed in those nine years. Today our nation is divided, racism is considered the norm, children are being separated from their parents and kept in cages. People are more interested in individual gain than the common good. More than ever we need the Franciscans to help transform our nation and our church.

I am so very grateful for all the relationships I developed in my time at FAN. Together the Franciscan family can make a difference. St. Francis believed living with an attitude of indifference was morally, socially, and spiritually destructive. Or as Dietrich Bonhoeffer a German pastor, theologian, anti-Nazi dissident [said](#): "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless." Now is not the time to be silent bystanders living in our comfortable spaces. Now is the time, as Pope Francis said, to get our hands dirty. To Wake up, Speak up, and Stand up.

While I felt a sense of sadness in stepping down as ED of FAN, God called me for a new

ministry. I am confident FAN will continue to be a strong voice for justice and peace. My successor, Steve Schneck, is a friend and someone I have worked with for the past 10 years. He has a strong commitment to both his Catholic faith and to Franciscan spirituality. He was, after all, taught by the Clinton Iowa Franciscans. Please take a few moments to welcome Steve as you did me nine years ago: [sschneck@franciscanaction.org](mailto:sschneck@franciscanaction.org).

No matter where my life journey takes me I will always be a part of the Franciscan family and for that I will forever be grateful. Peace, Patrick.

## Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness

Fact: Human trafficking is frequently confused with human smuggling, which involves illegal border crossings. In [reality](#), this heinous crime does not require any movement at all. Women, men, and children can be recruited and trafficked in their own home towns and even their own homes.

National Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness Day is recognized each year on January 11th. The patron saint is St. Josephine Bakhita, who was from South Sudan. Born in 1869, Bakhita was kidnapped and sold into slavery at the age of 7 and spent much of her life in captivity.



The Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange have put together a reflection and prayer calendar which extends from January 11th to St. Bakhita's feast day on February 8th. There are versions in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#). We invite our members and friends to download and print a calendar and spend a few minutes each day in prayer to end human trafficking.

## This Week is National Migration Week

We hope you and your community have taken advantage of the USCCB's [toolkit of resources](#) and that you are celebrating National Migration Week this week. National Migration Week 2020 provides us an opportunity to focus on the most vulnerable of migrants, including DACA and TPS holders, who remain in precarious and uncertain situations. It is also a time to reflect on threats to migrant and refugee children, the littlest ones among us, particularly children who are detained or otherwise separated from their parents, unaccompanied migrant children, and those who are stuck waiting in Mexico for asylum in the United States.

The theme for this year's celebration is "Promoting a Church and a World for All," which reflects the need for Catholics to be inclusive and welcoming to all our brothers and sisters. Please [let us know](#) how you

participated in National Migration Week.

## Report Detailing GOP Tax Cuts Failing Workers and the Economy

It's been two years since the Trump administration passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) of 2017. The Americans for Tax Fairness have released this detailed [report](#) showing the eight principal promises made about the benefits of the tax overhaul and how they have failed to come true. Here are just a few examples:

**PROMISE:** IT WILL BE A MIDDLE-CLASS TAX CUT.

**REALITY:** The richest 1% are getting an average tax cut that's 75 times more than the average tax cut of the bottom 80%—\$50,000 vs. \$645.

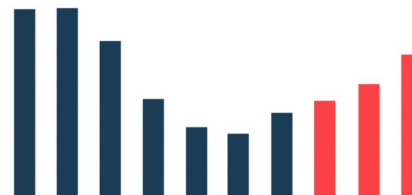
**PROMISE:** WORKING FAMILIES WILL QUICKLY GET A \$4,000 TO \$9,000 RAISE.

**REALITY:** Median family income rose just \$514 in 2018 and the annual growth rate in workers' wages has increased just 0.4% since the tax plan became law. Both of these are well below the increases that occurred during President Obama's last two years in office.

There is a [petition to Congress](#) to repeal the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) of 2017 and instead implement a fair share tax system that works for everyone. We [urge you to sign](#).

### CHARTBOOK:

#### Trump-GOP Tax Cuts Failing Workers & The Economy



AMERICANS FOR  
TaxFairness

## We are Getting Ready for the Polar Bear Plunge

It's that time of year again and the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) has once again teamed up with the [Chesapeake Climate Action Network](#) (CCAN) to take part in the Polar Bear Plunge happening at National Harbor just outside of Washington, D.C. on Saturday January 25th.



15th annual "Keep Winter Cold"  
**POLAR BEAR  
PLUNGE**  
January 25, 2020

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 a member of our staff or board has participated in this annual event to #KeepWinterCold. Five years ago, it was our executive director Patrick Carolan and board member Fr. Jacek Orzechowski along with a group from St. Camillus Parish in Silver Spring, MD. Watch a [video of their plunge here](#).

This year, FAN's Director of Campaigns and Development, Jason Miller will brave the icy waters and #TakeThePlunge! **Will you join him?** You can plunge in your community or support Jason's plunge by donating.

**Donating to the plunge is easy.** [Click here to make a donation](#) to our team or if you prefer not to donate online, you can donate directly to FAN via check::

Franciscan Action Network  
P.O. Box 29106  
Washington, DC 20017

**Be sure to write “Polar Bear Plunge” in the memo line.**

Thank you so much for your support and prayers as we advocate for the entirety of creation. If you happen to be in the D.C. metro area and want to watch Jason take the plunge, you can join us at 10am on Saturday January 25th. [Send us an email](#) to let us know that you'll be joining us--we will save you some hot chocolate!