

Expectation or Exasperation?

“The people were filled with expectation...”
With this opening line from our [gospel](#) we may want to pause and ask ourselves, are we living today in expectation? What does expectation look like? What does our faith call forth from us? Are we truly immersed in Christ or are we simply holding membership in a religious faith tradition?



I remember, some years ago, seeing a co-worker's screen saver which said, "Jesus is coming, look busy!" It seemed funny to me at the time but now it makes me wonder if our 'busyness', our constant frenetic activity is really dulling our senses, diminishing our attentiveness and weakening our capacity for compassion and empathy. Do we live with a sense of hope and expectation of living Christ more deeply? Or do we live with deepening exasperation from the pressures of life? Many experience frustration with government, church leaders, and others who seem to be more interested in their own personal gain and status rather than the needs of the people and the common good of all.

We know that it was not until 313 AD and Constantine's Edict of Milan that Christianity was accepted and benevolently recognized within the Roman Empire. Prior to this dramatic Constantinian shift, Christians were persecuted. For the earlier persecuted Christian community adult baptism was the common practice because seeking baptism meant truly immersing one's life into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It meant putting one's life on the line in the belief that the teachings of Jesus and the fulfillment of the Reign of God was at hand. This anticipation and expectation spurred on the believers to totally embrace Christ in their witness and in service of the gospel.

The readings for this Sunday are truly a testimony to the witness and service of John the Baptist and of Jesus. Their witness emboldened the early Christians to live their baptism with determination and expectation of making the Reign of God visible and vibrant even in the midst of suffering persecution and injustice at the hands of the Roman government. So, what about us today?

We, sharing in the same baptism, are called to embrace the prophetic mission and witness of the gospel. We are called to proclaim and to prepare the way so that all people might come to know the Christ, who is our Justice, in those who, in fleeing persecution in their home countries, seek refuge for themselves and their children and are only greeted with suspicion, detainment and deportation. We are called to work for justice and healing in our church and our world where lives and families have suffered the pain and agony of abuse, racism, hatred, and violence.

As we gather to celebrate this feast, let us recall our own baptism, whether we were infants, young children or adults. The baptism we received is a dying to self and a rising in Christ. Our

baptism calls us to be immersed in Christ and made one with all our sisters and brothers in the Body of Christ.

May our baptism reflect the expectation and anticipation that drives out the darkness of anxiety, fear and hatred. Let us immerse ourselves in the Spirit and live our baptismal call and work to establish justice, peace and goodness for all people!

Sr. Margaret Magee, OSF
FAN President

Suggested Action:

This week, take time to recall your baptism. Pull out photos if you have them. Pray and meditate on what it means to live out our baptismal call to be the light of Christ in our world.

Suggested Petitions:

May all Christians feel the pull of the Holy Spirit and be drawn to work for social justice, we pray...

For all those who live with anxiety. May they be comforted by the gentle spirit of our Heavenly Father, 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.

FAN to Host Gallery-Style Art Show to Celebrate our 10th Anniversary

As part of the celebration of our [10th Anniversary](#), the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) was inspired to host an art contest last month. We reached out to Franciscan High Schools and Universities to offer an opportunity for the students to learn more about Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi, to



showcase their artwork, and perhaps to win a prize.

We received 56 beautiful pieces in a range of medium, including photography, stained glass, sculpture, and mixed media. We are so impressed with all the pieces! The pieces were judged anonymously by FAN staff and board with assistance from Christopher Dwyer, Custody Representative from the Monastery, whose background as a gallery curator was valuable.

We are proud to announce our winners:

First prize of \$500 went to Brianne M. from Oldenburg Academy (*Pictured, top, left*)

Second prize of \$250 went to Lauren S. from Neumann University (*Pictured, top, right*)

Third prize of \$100 went to Erin K. from St. Francis High School (*Pictured, bottom*)

We also added special commendations which went to Allan J. from Silver Lake College and Siera R. from Villa Maria College who will each receive \$50 for their pieces.

We want to showcase these talented artists and so, in a spirit of Franciscan cooperation, the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land heartily agreed to co-host all the entries in a [gallery-style art show](#) to help us share this engaging work. If you are in the DC Metro area, we invite you to join us this **Friday, January 11th, 2019 at 6:30pm ET** at the visitors' entrance to the Monastery. [Email us](#) to let us know if you will be able to attend.

FAN Will be at the March for Life, Will you Join us?

Many people of faith in the U.S. are currently preparing for the [March for Life](#) on Friday, January 18th in Washington, DC. FAN staff have attended for the last 7 years as we consider upholding the dignity of all life one of the core beliefs of our faith.

In their statement "[A Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities](#)," the U.S. Catholic bishops share that being pro-life requires that we adopt "a consistent ethic of life" of caring for human life "from 'womb to tomb.'"



From the unborn child to the aging parent, the man on death row to the refugee all life is sacred. The health of the most vulnerable, especially children and the poor, is being damaged by our "throwaway culture", our disconnection from our fellow humans, and a lack of care for our common home. Pope Francis insists that "it cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected" (Laudato Si, no. 138).

Please [let us know](#) if you are planning to make a trip to our nation's capital this year and would like to join us. We will be marching with our banner calling for a consistent ethic of life. (*Pictured, from 2018's March*)

Corrected Link: Pope Francis' Message for World

Day of Peace: “Good Politics is at the Service of Peace”

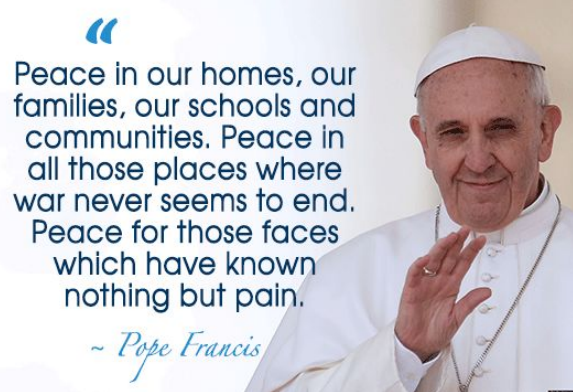
We were sorry to discover the link in last week's newsletter to the Pope's 2019 [World Day of Peace message](#) was incorrect. We have corrected it below.

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.

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.



As a new Congress Begins, Assure that your Elected Officials are Working for the Common Good

Throughout 2018, FAN and other people of faith have consistently urged Congress to focus on limiting and reducing funding for deportation, detention, border militarization, and walls. The 116th Congress will be the most diverse Congress to have ever taken office. Now, we must [hold them accountable](#) and urge them to work together to reopen the government while protecting the rights and dignity of immigrants, refugees, migrants, and border communities.



The death of two children in Customs and Border Patrol custody in the past month highlights the urgent need for a shift in policy. Border and immigration policy that repeatedly ends in death is not security. A responsible spending bill will limit enforcement spending in favor of increased oversight, accountability, and emphasis on restoring integrity to the immigration process. Congress can mitigate the harm of existing funding via report language, additional oversight, accountability, and requirements for spending.

The [Southern Border](#) region being one of the most diverse, economically vibrant, and safest

areas of the country, has created this [petition](#) to tell Congress: Don't give into Trump's shutdown. We urge our network and friends to [sign the petition](#) and contact your newly elected or re-elected officials to demand they work to prioritize programs that address poverty and hunger rather than increased expenditures on militarizing the border and detaining immigrant families.

NYC Franciscan Solidarity Table Victory Leads to Expanded Work

In October of 2017, advocates in New York City scored a major victory for the health and well-being of youth when the board of directors of New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) [voted unanimously to remove alcohol advertising](#) from the vehicles of the transportation system. Exposure to alcohol advertising [has been shown](#) to increase the risk that youth will start drinking underage, or drink more if they've already started. Furthermore, research undertaken in the Bronx determined that [transit alcohol advertisements were targeting people of color](#) and other vulnerable populations.



People of faith played an important role in the Building Alcohol Ad-Free Transit (BAAFT) coalition, which led the grassroots effort to change the MTA's advertising policy to exclude alcohol ads. When the BAAFT campaign was presented at a Franciscan Solidarity Table meeting in NYC, Brother Abraham Joseph of the [Church of the Holy Name of Jesus](#) (pictured) added a distinctly Franciscan voice to the coalition, speaking at a press conference and then offering powerful public comment at a key MTA board meeting in September 2017.

This victory is a testimony to achieving positive change for public health and social justice through the power of faith organizing and the [Franciscan Solidarity Tables](#). Now, a year after the BAAFT campaign victory, leaders of the BAAFT campaign and NYC Franciscan Solidarity Table are embarking on a new effort to involve members of faith communities in understanding and engaging broader public health issues through an Interfaith Public Health Network (IPHN).

Food, environmental contaminants, firearms, addiction, and immigration policy are all examples of determinants of health which people of faith can impact through policy, systems, and environmental change. IPHN seeks to mobilize faith communities to improve population health by catalyzing engagement in addressing the core determinants of health (social, commercial, environmental, and political) through a model that cultivates interfaith action, embraces social justice, relies on science, and rejects systemic greed.

Determinants of health are concrete issues for FAN members to address through Franciscan Solidarity Tables. FAN and IPHN are looking to identify members of faith communities who are interested in learning more about determinants of health and getting involved with policy, systems and environmental changes to improve population health. If you are interested in getting involved in New York or by starting a Franciscan Solidarity Table near you, please [contact Br. Ed Falsey](#) or [Jason Miller](#).

Celebrate National Migration Week this week with these Resources

For nearly a half century, the Catholic Church in the United States has celebrated [National Migration Week](#), as an opportunity for the Church to reflect on the circumstances confronting migrants, including immigrants, refugees, children, and survivors of human trafficking. This year's theme for National Migration Week 2019, "[Building Communities of Welcome](#)," draws attention to the fact that each and every family has a migration story. Regardless of where they are or where they came from, all people are part of the human family and are called to live in solidarity with one another.

[Justice for Immigrants](#), a campaign from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), has created this [NMW 2019 Toolkit](#). It includes migration facts and talking points, as well as a sample letter to the editor and social media posts. The toolkit also contains community engagement ideas, prayer resources, and homily suggestions. We urge our members and friends to [download it](#) and use it to engage with migrants in your community.

National Migration Week 2019
January 6th – 12th, 2019



Building Communities of Welcome