

## The Word and the Body

The [readings for this Sunday](#) have what may seem at first an odd relationship. In the first reading, Ezra the priest assembles the people of God after they return to Jerusalem from exile and reads to them from morning until night the scroll of the commandments of the Lord, interpreting it for the people's understanding. He ends by proclaiming "Do not be sad, and do not weep for today is holy to the Lord your God...for rejoicing in the Lord must be your strength."



Psalms 19 is a hymn proclaiming that the law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing, trustworthy, full of wisdom, right, clear, enlightening, enduring forever, true, and just.

The passage from Luke in the Gospel tells the story of Jesus, returning to his home in Nazareth, opening the scroll and reads from the prophet Isaiah. "The Spirit of the Lord has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." Then Jesus tells those assembled, "Today, this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." If you continue to read in Luke, this story ends with the people being convicted for their hardness of heart and in vs. 29 "Rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong."

So far, our readings have focused on the Word of God being read and taught to the people and show how powerful that Word can be as evidenced by the reaction of those who rose up in fury after being convicted in their hearts by the power of the Word.

The Church seems to have thrown a curve ball at us in the 2nd reading from Corinthians. In chapter 12, St. Paul gives us the great teaching on the Body of Christ. "As a body has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." He goes on to teach that the body is incomplete if any of the parts are missing and he teaches "but that the parts may have the same concern for one another..."

How do we reconcile these two seemingly different themes in the readings? The Word and the Body. Let's look to the prologue of the Gospel of John for an answer. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Jesus is the Word; the Word that was proclaimed by Ezra the priest; the Word that is exalted in Psalm 19; the Word that was fulfilled in their hearing as Jesus read from the scroll. Jesus, being the Word of God made flesh, comes with the power of the Word as we see

by the effect on the people he encounters throughout his ministry. He comes with power and conviction. He brings healing, conversion, hardness of heart and controversy.

When we reflect on St. Paul's teaching on the body of Christ, of which we are "individually parts of it", can we even imagine that we, by nature of being joined to the body of Christ, our head, come with power and conviction? Can we comprehend that WE, You and I, as the body of Christ, can claim to be, in a sense, the Word of God made flesh? Do we bring healing, conversion, hardness of heart and controversy? Are we a Word that is perfect, refreshing, trustworthy, full of wisdom, right, clear, enlightening, enduring forever, true, and just, as in Psalm 19?

This is our calling as Christians. We are commanded by Jesus to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (MT 25:19-20)

This is what the Franciscan Action Network strives to do each day. We bring the Word to our nation's leaders through advocacy, through public presentation, and while reaching across both sides of the aisle on Capitol Hill, even partnering with other religious denominations and secular organizations to advocate on our core issues that we can agree are important to help proclaim "liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord". We bring the Word with power, because by our action and advocacy, we cause people to react and be convicted of heart, either towards conversion or at times hardness of heart. That is what Jesus encountered in his ministry. Can we expect those proclaiming the Word today to experience anything different? Sisters and Brothers, we are one body, living in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not of this world, as Jesus told Pilate at his trial. Our Kingdom knows no Earthly borders. We are the Body of Christ, in the Kingdom of God striving to bring justice to all who are "individually parts of it" regardless of the Earthly borders that may be in place. Won't you please help FAN proclaim the Word?

David Seitz, OFS  
FAN Board Member

**Suggested Action:**

This week, contemplate your actions as a part of the Body of Christ and ask yourself if each thing you do is reflective of Jesus, the Word of God.

**Suggested Petitions:**

For all those oppressed, physically, spiritually, mentally; may they find comfort and solace in the Word of God. We pray...

For all those whose foundation of faith is unstable; may the "certainty of the teachings" (LK 1:4) of the Gospel solidify their belief. We pray....

**Prayer: (From liturgy of the hours)**

**You proclaimed the poor to be blessed, Lord Jesus,  
for the kingdom of heaven is given them.**

**Fill us generously with your gifts.**

**Teach us to put our trust in the Father**

and to seek his kingdom first of all rather than imitate the powerful and envy the rich.

Amen

## Catholic Coalition Releases Statement in Advance of MLK day

FAN, as part of a coalition of national Catholic advocacy organizations, helped to develop a joint statement entitled "[Facing the Crisis: A Catholic Offer of Wisdom and Courage to Congress](#)" which was delivered Friday to all Members of Congress. The statement calls on Members to courageously take the first steps to end the political polarization that the group says is eroding democracy in the United States.



"Inspired by Dr. King, we declare that this is a moment of moral crisis in the United States," the statement reads. "The habit of inflicting suffering on some for the supposed benefit of others is all too common in both our political discourse and policies today." The full statement can be found online at <https://tinyurl.com/FacingtheCrisis>.

Regina King, the great niece of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, is currently co-starring in the film, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, a story of a couple's unbreakable bond in an unforgiving and racially biased world. Ms. King won a Golden Globe for her performance. What better way to honor the day than a screening of this film.

## Help FAN Advocate for the Environment in 2019

It's that time of the year again! 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 26th.

We're committed to increasing our efforts to advocate for and promote universal care for creation in 2019. **Right now, we have raised \$1,150 and have only 5 more days to reach our goal of \$5,500.** [Can you help support our work as we take the plunge? Donate here.](#)



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, members of FAN's staff and board as well as other FAN friends have teamed up to participate and raise funds for the Polar Bear Plunge. This year, the FAN team is made up of our executive director, [Patrick Carolan](#) and FAN friend and food justice advocate, [Patrilie Hernandez](#). If you would rather not have to pick between our two brave jumpers, [donate to the team as a whole](#).

**Supporting the plunge is as easy as a one-two click.** Simply pull out your credit card and click team member's name above to visit their fundraising page and make a donation. How's that for easy?! You also have the option of sending in a personal check. This can be made out to "CCAN" and sent to P.O. Box 11138, Takoma Park, MD 20913. Just make sure to write "**FAN's PLUNGE**" on the memo line so that the gift is processed to sponsor FAN's team.

Thank you so much for your support and prayers as we advocate for the entirety of creation.

## Take Action: Show Your Support for HR1: For the People Act

Today, we celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a man whose living example represented democracy at its finest -- organizing people together to fight for equity and justice.

Today is also the nine-year anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* ruling -- one of our democracy's lowest points that put our elections up for sale to corporations and special interests.



We The People overwhelmingly demanded change through our votes this fall. We want a government that works for all of us -- that gives us all a say and puts our needs ahead of special interests. That is why FAN has joined a coalition of public service and good governance organizations in [demanding that Congress makes a bold show of support for our democracy](#) -- and supports the strongest possible version of the For The People Act.

This legislation ensures a democracy where voters are protected from discrimination and can make themselves heard at the ballot box. A democracy where electoral districts are drawn fairly, so that every voter's ballot is worth the same. A democracy that isn't bought and paid for by the highest corporate bidder. And a democracy where ordinary Americans -- more women, people of color, and working people -- can run for office without relying on special interest Big Money.

We encourage our members and friends [add your name to urge your representative to support HR1](#).

## Registration is Open for Ecumenical Advocacy Days

[Ecumenical Advocacy Days](#) for Global Peace with Justice will gather in Washington, D.C., April 5-8, 2019 for its 17th Annual Conference and we are happy to report that [registration is now open](#).

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.

We urge all our members and friends to [register to attend](#) this year's EAD gathering. We will see you there!



## New Report Details the Dangers of Oil and Gas Expansion

Last week, Oil Change International released a new report called [Drilling towards Disaster](#) which details the dangers posed by U.S. oil and gas expansion. The report outlines a set of recommendations for climate leaders, and principles for winding down oil and gas drilling in the U.S. with a just transition for workers and communities.

It explains why we need to start a rapid and just phase-out of fossil fuel extraction in the US if we're going to meet climate goals. Some findings from the report include:

- Between now and 2030, the U.S. is on track to account for 60% of the world's projected growth in oil and gas production.
- Nearly 60% of the carbon emissions enabled by new U.S. drilling would come from the epicenters of fracking – the Permian Basin of TX and NM and the Appalachian Basin across PA, WV, and OH. The Permian alone would exhaust some 10% of the entire world's carbon budget for 1.5°C.
- At least 70% of coal in existing U.S. mines must stay in the ground if the world is to



equitably achieve the Paris Agreement goals.

We encourage you to [read the report](#) and share it widely with your networks.

## Root Causes of Migration Resources and Immigration Commentaries

The Office of the General Assembly along with the Office of Immigration Issues of the Presbyterian Church (USA) created and shared with us some [resources](#) illustrating the root causes of migration from Central America. The [Genesis of Exodus](#) offers statistics, personal stories, and a faith reflection guide, illustrating why people from this part of the world are on the move. Use of the film, storymap, reflection guide, and cited resources is encouraged to bring communities together, to educate one another to a place of compassion, inspire one another to reach out in friendship to our new neighbors, and to challenge one another to organize and advocate for reform. [Find everything you need here.](#)

Additionally, we encourage you to check out this [commentary](#) by Doris Meissner and Sarah Pierce of the [Migration Policy Institute](#) which offers a common sense approach to the migration and border security issues in addition to faith and humanitarian considerations.

Here is another well-researched [column by Tony Magliano](#), an internationally syndicated social justice and peace columnist, written after President Trump's Jan. 8 national television address on immigration. FAN posted a link to this column on our [blog page](#).



## FAN Encouraged by Human Trafficking Prevention Legislation

We are encouraged by recent legislation to protect victims and abolish modern day slavery. Congress has passed and the President has recently signed into law four bills to prevent human trafficking and to protect victims. They are:



- The **Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2018 (H.R. 2200)** authorizes programs to educate children on the dangers of trafficking. It also authorizes airlines that contract with the federal government to provide training on the signs of trafficking to their personnel. This bill also ensures anti-trafficking training for U.S. Customs and Border Protection airport and airline personnel.
- The **Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2017 (S. 1862)** monitors how countries are working to eliminate human trafficking, sets forth child soldier protection provisions and authorizes the USAID to incorporate child and anti-trafficking protection into their development efforts.
- The **Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2017 (S.1312)** addresses training on recognizing the signs of trafficking, victim services and assessments of the prevalence of human trafficking in the United States. This bill also amends the Violence Against Women Act to increase accountability by the judicial system. The law includes a provision that any contractor of goods or services must ensure that no worker pays fees to obtain a job which will have a huge impact on labor trafficking.
- The **Abolish Human Trafficking Act of 2017 (S.1311)** sets forth a variety of measures to address the prevention of human trafficking and to assist trafficking victims. It includes provisions for restitution for victims, training of health and federal law enforcement personnel, and penalties for slavery offenses, sex trafficking of children, and travel for the purpose of engaging in any illicit sexual conduct.

Additionally, last week the Vatican released a [set of guidelines](#) to help the worldwide Catholic community eradicate human trafficking. The publication, [Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking](#), offers an in-depth reading and comprehension of modern day slavery to serve as much needed encouragement to anti-trafficking ministries.

## NAFTA 2.0 Will Not Pay for Border Wall

The administration is currently renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico. The outcome of these negotiations is far from certain, and the time to influence Members of Congress is short.

The President has [made claims](#) that the revised NAFTA will fund the border wall. To be clear, the text does not include border wall funding directly nor would it generate new government revenue indirectly given it cuts the very few remaining tariffs, not raises them. We encourage you to get the facts on NAFTA 2.0 here: <http://replacenafta.org>

**N**orth  
**A**merican  
**F**ree  
**T**rade  
**A**greement



There is a Congressional sign-on letter being coordinated and we encourage you to **call your Congressperson to urge their support of a NAFTA renegotiation that supports jobs, wages, and the environment.** You can reach US representatives by calling **202-225-3121**, and US senators by calling **202-224-3121**. Ask the operator to connect you to the individual

office of your Member of Congress.