

Beatitudes: A Road Map for Christian Life

Having lived for years in the Southwest of the United States, I can certainly resonate with the image of a barren bush in the desert and lifeless waste that the prophet Jeremiah wanted to convey in [this week's first reading](#) about someone whose heart turns away from the Lord. Indeed Jeremiah wants to stress that there is no life away from the Lord, period!



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For this reason the image of a tree planted beside the water is so refreshing: what is better than being next to a stream when you are hot and tired? The one whose hope is the Lord is like a tree planted besides the waters: in the year of drought it shows no distress, it fears not the heat when it comes.

So, who am I, a barren bush or a green tree? As a disciple of Jesus and follower of Francis and Clare, how do I make sure that I keep near to a stream? How do I keep alive in Christ? Lucky for us we do not have to guess or search far for the answer. The Gospel this week is our road map, the way we have to make sure that we are following Jesus's teaching, that is, the way of The Beatitudes. They are really the only way we have as Christians to be sure we are bearers of that name. A recent homily given by Pope Francis in the morning liturgy at Casa Santa Marta may help our reflection. These are his thoughts reflecting on the newness of the message of Jesus.

Pope Francis tells us that we may believe we are good Catholics, but in fact we may not be behaving as good Christians. The real way of life of the Christian is the one shown by the Beatitudes. To be good Christians we need to assume a new behavior, a new style of life, the Christian style that can only be found in the Beatitudes. To understand what is the Christian style of life, it may be useful to understand first which are the attitudes that ARE NOT Christian. He mentions three: being accusers, being of the world, being selfish or indifferent.

The accuser is the believer who always looks for ways to accuse someone. Nothing that others do is good enough. Accusers think they are promoters of justice, but in fact just always look at something to complain about in the other, not realizing that this is also the style of the devil whom the Bible calls "the great accuser". This way of being in relation to others is not new; it was also present in the time of Jesus who reprimanded: Instead of looking at the straw in someone else's eye, why don't you look at the plank in yours! And again: those who have no sin, throw the first stone. Living constantly accusing others, looking only for weaknesses in the other, is not the way of a Christian, is not living in the spirit of the Beatitudes.

So it is for those who live with a worldly attitude: those who live in vanity, pride, attached to money, and believing themselves to be self-sufficient. This attitude ruins many people, especially in today's world, and is contrary to the way of life shown in the Beatitudes. Humility is the Christian way of life.

The third attitude is the one of egoism, of indifference. Pope Francis admonishes that while I may believe I am a good Catholic, I do my thing and do not worry about others problems. I do not worry about wars, sicknesses, people who suffer, even my neighbor. It is the hypocrisy that Jesus points out to the doctors of the law.

The style of the Christian, of the Beatitudes, is meekness, humility, patience in suffering, love of justice, strength in bearing persecutions, non-judgment of others. If you want to know the Christian style, it is all spelled out in the Beatitudes, concludes Pope Francis.

SO, let us look deep in our hearts: do I live the Beatitudes or do I live as an accuser, or being of the world, or indifferent to what is around me?

Sr. Maria Orlandini, OSF
FAN Director of Advocacy

Suggested Action:

Spend few minutes reflecting as you [listen to this song](#). Ask yourself: Does my life reflect a beautiful green tree or a barren bush?

Suggested petitions:

For the people of God, that they may show the values of the Beatitudes in their lives. We pray...
For Pope Francis, that he may have wisdom and peace in guiding the people of God in the Spirit of the Beatitudes in this challenging time. We pray...

Prayer from Norwich Cathedral in England

O God, whose Son, Jesus Christ, cared for the welfare of everyone and went about doing good to all: grant us the imagination and the resolution to create throughout the world a just social order for the human family. Make us agents of your compassion to the suffering, the persecuted, and the oppressed, through the Spirit of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen

Pope Francis Releases Joint Document After Historic Trip to the Middle East

Recently, Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al Azhar together launched the [Human Fraternity Document](#) calling on people across the globe to unite to bring



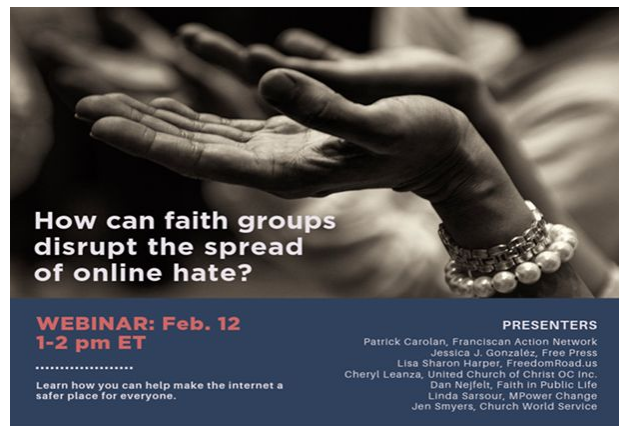
about inter-faith harmony and spread a vital message of peace. The [document](#) was unveiled as the two leaders of the Catholic and Muslim faiths met at the Global Conference of Human Fraternity in Abu Dhabi last week.

The document is described as a blueprint to guide future generations to advance a culture of mutual respect spanning all nationalities, backgrounds, and beliefs. This action for peace resonates deeply with Franciscans all over the world as we celebrate the 800th anniversary of the meeting between Francis of Assisi and the Sultan Malik Al-Kamel of Egypt in the midst of the 5th crusades, which the Holy Father mentioned in his [address](#) to the conference.

This Tuesday: Join the Faith Beyond Hate Webinar to Disrupt the Spread of Online Hate

During the past year, [Change the Terms](#), a coalition of more than 40 faith-based and civil rights organizations worked to develop a set of policies and terms of service to make sure that internet companies reduce hateful activities on their platforms.

As nativism grows and hate crimes are on the rise, the need to end hateful activities online is all the more urgent. We invite you to join us for [Faith Beyond Hate](#) to learn how faith groups can help disrupt the spread of hate online.



When: Tuesday, February 12 1-2pm ET/ 10-11a PT; **RSVP is required.**

RSVP: bit.ly/faithbeyondhate

Presenters:

Linda Sarsour, MPower Change
Lisa Sharon Harper, FreedomRoad.us
Jen Smyers, Church World Service.
Dan Neifelt, Faith in Public Life
Patrick Carolan, Franciscan Action Network
Cheryl Leanza, United Church of Christ OC Inc.
Jessica Gonzalez, Free Press

Join us on this webinar to learn more about Change the Terms and how you can help make the internet a safer place for everyone.

Take Action: Sign Petition Demanding Back Pay for Federal Contractors

For many American workers, the recent government shutdown meant not knowing when the next paycheck will come. This reality is especially devastating for low-wage federal



contractors, such as cooks who serve at the Pentagon and tour guides in our National Parks. These workers earn so little that they struggle to survive even when they are getting paid regularly. It was recently [reported](#) they would not receive any back pay for the 35 days of the shutdown.

As Franciscans, we are called to read the Signs of the Times, critique abuses of power, and follow an ethic based on the inviolable dignity of all people. We invite you to join us in taking action to [stop the exploitation of America's low-wage contract workers](#).

[Sign this petition](#) and demand that Congress immediately pass a bill to backpay federal contractors.

Don't allow low-wage federal contract workers to be the hidden victims in a government power play. [Sign the petition today](#).

D.C. Save the Date: Peace Vigil Saturday March 9th

The increasingly ominous news we are seeing these days--from the recent [collapse](#) of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty to the Trump administration's pursuing new "low-yield" nuclear weapons--sadly makes our witness more necessary than ever. FAN friends at Pax Christi USA released this [statement](#) after it was announced that the U.S. and, one day later, Russia both withdrew from the INF treaty.



We invite you to join us at a **Peace Vigil in Washington, D.C. on Saturday, March 9th, from 10 am to 11:30 am**. Together with other faith leaders, we will continue our prayer for a world free from violence and tyranny. Please [let us know](#) if you plan to attend the rally. We are hoping to have a strong faith presence.

Registration is Open 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 we are happy to report that [registration is now open](#).

We urge all our members and friends to [register to attend](#) this year's EAD gathering. **We 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.

Applications Open for GCCM Animators Training

Our good friends at [Global Catholic Climate Movement](#) (GCCM) have made us aware there are still openings for applications to become a Laudato Si’ Animator. See their message below:



With progress on climate change moving slowly at the international level, community leadership is more important than ever. **You have a place in the Laudato Si’ Animators program, leading change in your community.** [Apply Now](#)

Laudato Si’ Animators receive in-depth online training to learn about Catholic teaching, climate science, and community engagement. **There is an urgent need to find solutions to the ecological crisis—Laudato Si’ Animators are leading the charge.**

Animators join a worldwide community of leaders. Rich conversations, new relationships, and ongoing support bring new perspective to Animators’ faith practice.

The deadline to apply ends soon. Send your application now, and we’ll be in touch with next steps. [Apply Now](#)