

Welcome All Strangers as Family

I have to admit, at first, I had a little difficulty tying the three [readings for this Sunday](#) together. First we hear the story of God's promise to Abraham to make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. That is followed by Philippians where St. Paul teaches about wrong conduct. The Gospel from Luke Chapter 9 is the story of the transfiguration; seemingly three different themes. What could they possibly have in common?



Let's consider the promise to Abraham. The fulfillment of that promise is the preaching of the Gospel to all nations. All people from all nations are to be included and reckoned as children of Abraham. Jesus, as our brother, unites everyone together in the Family of God, regardless of which earthly nation one resides. The genealogy of Jesus in Luke's Gospel does not come until the end of the third chapter. This genealogy traces Jesus back to our original parents....Jesus, the son of Joseph....the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. Tracing Jesus' ancestry back to Adam, the first man, drives home the fact that we are all members of the same family.

We all know the story of the transfiguration. What struck me was Peter and John's reaction in vs. 9:34. "While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud." That made me think about the shadow that has been cast over our world today. St. Paul describes some of what we might find in the shadow that may cause some of us to fear. In the reading from Philippians, Paul describes those whose "God is their stomach; their glory is in their shame. Their minds are occupied with earthly things." (Phil 3:19) Paul tells us that these are "enemies of the cross." I think that should cause us to have a little bit of fear. The cross is our salvation. The enemy of the cross, then, is the enemy of our salvation. Paul also reminds us that our citizenship is in heaven. Now for the really challenging part, the final word from God in the story of the transfiguration. "This is my chosen son; listen to him." (Lk 9:35)

There you have it. Right from the mouth of God. Listen to Jesus. Easier said than done. Jesus challenges the status quo. That is as true today as in first century Palestine. Read Matthew's Gospel, chapter 25, the judgement of the nations. "When did we see you a stranger and welcome you?...whatever you did for the least of my brothers of mine, you did for me." And he will say to those on his left "depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...for I was a stranger and you gave me no welcome."

Will you refuse to welcome a stranger, your brother in Christ, a member of the kingdom of God which has no earthly borders? I had a thought too, after the March for Life. Many Christians criticized the march for being too focused on the issue of Abortion. They say that a true pro-life

march would include all life issues including welcoming the immigrant and caring for the planet. All are important issues. As I reflected on those criticisms the thought occurred to me. What about the child in the womb trying to immigrate to life outside the womb? Why do we tolerate the building of walls to prevent those immigrants from entering into life? Why do we tolerate the building of walls that keep these future stewards of the Earth from entering into the kingdom of God, stewards who may be the ones who are born with the purpose to solve our climate issues?

Sisters and brothers, we must welcome all strangers, those not yet born and those already born seeking the basic necessities of life. Let us all strive to be good stewards of creation and protectors of life. Let us lift the cross of our salvation high. Let us preach the Gospel without fearing what lies hidden in the cloud, for Jesus has won the great victory and we will be partakers of the Kingdom of Heaven manifested first here on Earth.

Mr. David Seitz, OFS
FAN Board Member

Suggested Action:

Consider how you can listen to God in deeper ways and through different means; such as through an immigrants' story or through nature.

Suggested Petitions:

May we be spiritually nourished by God's Word and have the courage to translate those words to action on behalf of the underserved. We pray...

May our minds and hearts be focused on Jesus and the Gospel as we work toward creating heaven on Earth. We pray...

Prayer: By David Seitz, OFS

Heavenly Father, creator of all that is, I owe all that I have and all that I am to You loving me into existence. You loved me into existence, and you loved the world in which I live into existence. All that you created are my brothers and sisters because I too am created. Grant me the wisdom, as you did St. Francis, to recognize your goodness in all that is, in all human life, all animal life, all plant life, and in all the inanimate creatures you have made to provide the necessities of life. You have given me a voice to praise you, may I use that voice also to praise you on behalf of your creation that cannot speak your praise.

Amen

Sr. Margaret Magee Steps Down as President of FAN Board

After serving as President of the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) for 6 years, it is with tremendous gratitude that we thank Sr. Margaret Magee for all the time, talent, and energy



she put in to leading FAN.

A Franciscan Sister of Allegany, Sr. Margaret has been an integral part of FAN since our founding, having served as a board member since 2010 and as President since 2014. As her leadership role in her community has greatly expanded her workload, Sr. Margaret announced her intention to step back from the duties of President, though she will still serve as a regular board member going forward.

Sr. Margaret's vision along with her deep understanding and belief in the work of FAN has helped to grow this organization. We are deeply thankful for her leadership, her focus, and her endless encouragement in all that we do.

Fr. Mike Lasky, OFM Conv. has stepped up to fill the role of President of the Board of FAN.

Lenten Resource from Interfaith Immigration Coalition

Last week, we made you aware that the [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#) (IIC) was developing a Lenten resource focused on the impacts of border walls and fences on immigrant communities. We are pleased to announce that the 8-part set of Lenten devotions, titled "*Turning Walls into Welcome*" is now posted on the [IIC website](#). You can [download it directly here](#).

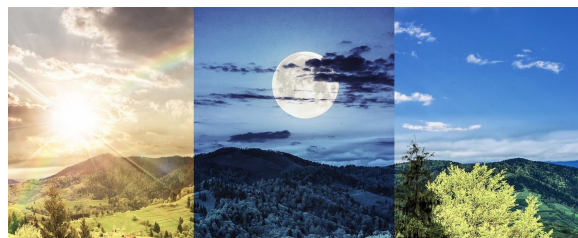


Ash Wednesday: Walls Break Relationships
Week One: Walls Separate Families
Week Two: Walls-An Ineffective and Immoral use of Public Funds
Week Three: Walls Do Not Deter Immigration
Week Four: Walls Hurt Border Communities
Week Five: Walls Cause Environmental Harms
Palm Sunday: Walls Infringe on Indigenous Communities
Easter: Breaking Down Walls

We hope this resource allows some reflection on how the paschal mystery is reflected in those forced to migrate.

During Lent Pray and Take Action for Our Common Home

Could [plastics be the new coal in Appalachia](#)?
With little notice nationally, a new petrochemical and plastics manufacturing hub is taking shape. It could stretch for 300 miles of the upper reaches of the Ohio River, from outside Pittsburgh southwest to Ohio, West



Virginia, and Kentucky. This plastics belt promises to bring jobs and economic growth to a hurting region, but at a steep cost, given the environmental and climate risks involved. We urge our members to [sign and share the petition to stop plastic pollution](#).

The Environmental Protection Agency is issuing a new regulation regarding waterways, which could have negative effects on drinking water, waterways, and wetlands. The National Religious Partnership for the Environment, (NRPE) is [collecting prayers](#) to be sent to the EPA during the comment period. We invite our members to join senior religious leaders, clergy and lay leaders as we pray that the EPA uphold its mission to protect human health and clean water. Longer prayers can be sent to cassandra@nrpe.org.

Each year the Catholic Climate Covenant produces a free one-hour educational program for Earth Day, April 22nd. Right now, the finishing touches are being put on this year's program, "All Creation Gives God Praise: Protecting Biodiversity in a Time of Climate Crisis." [Click here](#) to pre-register to receive the program as soon as it is published.

Catholic Climate Covenant and Creighton University are co-sponsoring a conference to be held June 27-29, 2019 in Omaha, Nebraska. Attendees of the event, "Laudato Si' and the U.S. Catholic Church: A Conference Series on Our Common Home" will together discern how to incorporate the encyclical more durably into eight ministerial areas or "tracks" of U.S. Catholic life. [Click here to apply](#).

Webinar this week - The Trump Budget: What you Need to Know

Each year, the President is mandated by law to submit a proposed federal budget to Congress. The budget states the President's priorities. This year, the proposed budget is expected to be released this week. Our friends at the [Coalition on Human Needs](#) are hosting a webinar to tell you what you need to know about the Trump budget and the work ahead for better alternatives in Congress.



What: The Trump Budget: What you Need to Know

When: Thursday, March 14, 2019

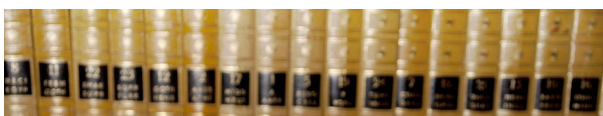
Time: 2pm ET / 11am PT

[Register here](#)

Attendees will find out more about the spending caps and how the President's proposals will affect low- and moderate-income people as well as opportunities to protect and expand human needs programs. Even if you aren't able to attend, you are encouraged to [register](#) in order to get access to the webinar recording with captions, slides, and follow-up information.

Supreme Court to hold Hearing on Citizenship Question

The Supreme Court has agreed to hold a hearing on adding the citizenship question to



the 2020 census on April 23rd. Two [federal judges](#) have issued a court order to block the administration's plan to add the question. Census Bureau officials have recommended against adding the question which would alarm non-citizens and some citizens enough to keep them from participation in the constitutionally mandated head count of every person living in the U.S.

Many states and cities have sued the administration over the question, concerned that it will result in an undercount of Latinos and other communities of color. Census counts play a role in determining the number of congressional seats and Electoral College votes, as well as the amount of federal funding each state receives. The consensus is clear: The addition of the citizenship question to the 2020 census was unlawful and the Supreme Court should uphold lower court rulings to remove the question.

Take Action: Sign a Letter to Support Family-Based Immigration

In his speech declaring a national emergency, President Trump criticized the family-based immigration and diversity visa programs and continues to advocate for their elimination. Right now, it's more important than ever to demonstrate a unified front among community-based, labor, national, and faith-based organizations to ensure that immigrant and border communities are not pitted against each other.



The [Value Our Families Coalition](#) has drafted a letter that calls on Congress to protect the diversity visa program and preserve and strengthen the family-based immigration system by passing the Reuniting Families Act.

There are three versions of the letter: one for [Organizations](#), one for [Faith Leaders](#), and one for [Faith Organizations](#). **Please sign the one that applies to you.**

We urge all members to join FAN and sign these letters in support of family-based immigration and the diversity visa programs.

Victory: JP Morgan Chase Will No Longer Fund Private Prisons

Photo credit: REUTERS/Mike Segar

Some good news came out last week, when JPMorgan Chase & Company [announced](#) it would no longer finance private operators of prisons and detention centers.



Andrew Gray, spokesman for JPMorgan Chase & Company, said in a statement, the decision came out of their "process to evaluate the sectors that we serve."

Advocates from all over the country have worked hard to get big banks to understand that families belong together and urged them to stop financing Geo Group and CoreCivic, two large for-profit prison corporations that are profiting from the pain and separation of immigrant families. We are proud of this victory and will continue to work urging other banks to take the same steps as JP Morgan Chase.