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Reflection Date: October 13, 2019 - 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Arrested for Christ

The [readings this week](#) have a great Psalm response; “The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.”

How has the Lord’s saving power been revealed? By me and you; by our evangelizing and living an authentic Gospel life. History is full of stories of evangelizers who have paid a price for speaking the truth of Jesus Christ. We celebrate the saints who have suffered for the sake of spreading the Good News. Think about that. The Good News. If this news is so good why are those who proclaim it so often persecuted?



Jesus said in John 15:20 that they persecuted him and so we too will be persecuted. St. Paul, in the reading from Second Timothy, is writing from prison. He is weighed down with chains. He is in prison for proclaiming the Lord’s saving power. He is rejoicing because he is suffering for Jesus. St. Paul knows well that Jesus, proclaiming the saving power of God, was arrested, tortured and executed. The saving power we proclaim often convicts those who possess worldly power. It challenges the conscience of the religious and political elite. Nothing has changed in 2,000 years.

I’m perplexed at times when the staff of the Franciscan Action Network is harshly criticized for taking part in civil disobedience actions which sometimes leads to a staff member being arrested for publicly proclaiming the saving power of the Lord. They are called out as being anti-Catholic, anti-Christian, anti-Franciscan, law breakers who have no business going to the public square to proclaim the Gospel message. These events are always planned in advance with the local authorities, with those who are the target of the protests; there are no flash mobs. Law enforcement and those being arrested know in advance that the arrest will happen. This is our constitutional right being exercised in the public square.

As a professed Secular Franciscan, I promised to live a rule of life which states in Article 15 “Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.” Franciscans are called to take action to promote a just society. Franciscans are called to let their faith inform their action in public life, not let politics inform their faith. This is challenging, especially in our polarized society where civil conversation is scarce. We live in a world where if you disagree with my point of view then I have no time for you.

Paul says, “such is my gospel, for which I am suffering, even to the point of chains, like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore, I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.”

We are fortunate that in the United States, civil disobedience only leads to a possible arrest, usually ending with paying a fine at the police station after being detained for a number of hours, although the risk of staying in jail overnight exists. We are not being tortured and executed for proclaiming the saving power of the Lord as are many of our sisters and brothers across the globe. Every morning I pray the Cantic of Zechariah during morning prayer. There is a line in the cantic that we should all cherish; “to set us free from the hands of our enemies, free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.” Free to worship without fear. Sisters and brothers, addressing social justice issues in the public square is how we will ensure that our children’s children will enjoy this same freedom. Next time you read about a FAN staff member being arrested for proclaiming the saving power of the Lord, instead of criticizing, why not thank them for “promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives.” (Article 15, Rule of life, Secular Franciscan Order)

David Seitz, OFS
FAN Board Member

Suggested Action:

This week, thank the Lord in prayer for not having to endure prison for your faith. Then take action by signing a petition or contacting Congress about an issue close to your heart.

Suggested Petitions:

For all those around the globe who suffer persecution for their faith. We pray...
For the courage, strength and guidance to stand in the public square promoting justice for all people. We pray...

Prayer from Morning Prayer, Monday Week II of Ordinary Time.

**Lord Jesus Christ,
true light of the world,
You guide all mankind to salvation.
Give us the courage, strength and grace
To build a world of justice and peace,
ready for the coming of that Kingdom,
You live and reign for ever and ever.**

Amen.

**St. Clare Pledge: Call on Congress to Encourage
Greater Refugee Resettlement**

Despite the fact that Cabinet-level



representatives of the President are required by law to consult in-person with Members of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees on the number of refugees that will be admitted to the country, last week the Trump Administration blatantly ignored these laws and [proclaimed](#) a new record-low refugee admissions goal for Fiscal Year 2020 of just 18,000. Considering there are over [70 million forcibly displaced persons around the world](#), to resettle only 18,000 people is immoral, especially since for nearly four decades, the annual goal has averaged 95,000 refugees.

Simultaneously, the President signed an [executive order](#) that permits state and local officials to block resettlement in their communities, despite the hundreds of elected officials, congregations, and business leaders who have been expressing their strong support for refugee resettlement across all fifty states.

A refugee admissions goal of 18,000 amounts to a refugee ban, as it would further starve the resettlement infrastructure in the United States, destroy the vital support services that it took decades to build, and have disastrous consequences for the refugee families we have already resettled and await reunification with loved ones overseas. [Justice for Immigrants hosted a webinar](#) last week that helps explain this process and offers ways we can work together to reverse these trends.

As people of faith who care about refugees, we can and must continue to make our voices heard. As your [St. Clare Pledge](#) this week, we urge all members and friends to continue to contact Congress and the White House and express your thoughts on this issue. [Find a call in number and a sample script here.](#)

Additionally, we urge you to join in the #BlackOut4Refugees digital campaign beginning today, Monday, October 7th at 8am ET. Get **more information and sign the petition here:** <https://www.blackout4refugees.org/>

This week: Catholics Take Action in El Paso for Immigrant Children

Images of immigrant children separated from family and detained in unsanitary, unhealthy conditions have outraged the nation. The faith community has decried this treatment of immigrant children and families not only as a violation of human dignity and rights, but also contrary to religious teachings and the sacred call to care for all people. In Washington, DC [Catholic Bishops](#) and in Newark, NJ [Catholic Bishops](#) said loudly and clearly [Stop the Inhumanity!](#) We next bring our message to a border state.

Catholic organizations have organized a nonviolent campaign to urge an end to the traumatizing abuse of immigrant children and their families by the U.S. government. **Phase three of our campaign will be to join a national teach-in and prayerful, risk-taking,**



public action at the border in El Paso, TX between 3-7pm on Saturday, Oct. 12. Anyone from around the country is invited, including those who are not Catholic. National organizations are following the lead of local groups in El Paso, such as Hope Border Institute and national Catholic leaders in the newly formed Latinx Catholic Leadership Coalition which initiated the Teach-In event. In solidarity, we will stand with them as they lift up their local concerns about the immigration system, access to asylum, and racism in El Paso. The event will include prayer, ritual, and a call to action by Catholic leaders. Click here to [RSVP to join us in El Paso](#).

For those unable to join the action in Texas, we urge you to invite Catholics from across your city or town to gather in prayer and public witness in solidarity with the action in El Paso. We offer this [Prayer Service](#), developed by our members for your use. Be sure to [list your local action here](#) so others can find it on our map.

Finally, we urge everyone to continue to **make calls to Congress (202-224-3121) and the White House (202-456-1111)** to say NO to President Trump's inhumane policies that separate families and harm children. Find a [sample script on our webpage](#).

Free Three-Part Eco-ministry Webinar Series Begins Tomorrow

Our friends at the [Climate Speakers Network](#) and the [Center for Earth Ethics](#) are excited once again to launch a three-part webinar series addressing climate and environmental action in faith communities. This free eco-ministry webinar series will begin **Tuesday, October 8th at 1pm ET / 10am PT** and will focus on ways to address food disparities in faith communities.



Join in to hear featured speaker Reverend Heber Brown, Pastor of [Pleasant Hope Baptist Church](#) in Baltimore, MD and founder of the Black Church Food Security Network, to explore these topics. [Click here to register](#).

Join Retreat on Psalms of Peace with Fr. John Dear

FAN friend [Fr. John Dear](#) let us know about a weekend retreat he is leading on the Psalms of Peace Oct. 11-13th, at the Kirkridge retreat center in Bangor, PA. Here is more information:



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Join longtime peace activist, author and retreat leader Rev. John Dear for a weekend of prayer, peace and meditation on the psalms, focusing on their call for peace, justice and celebration of creation. Together, we will read through many of the psalms, pray over them,

discuss them, and let them lead us closer to the God of peace, as we struggle with the divisions, hatreds and wars of the world, and our own brokenness and longings. We will have time for presentations, small group reflection, large group discussion, quiet time, journaling, a Saturday evening party and a Sunday closing liturgy. Bring your favorite psalms to share with the group, and together, let's spend the weekend with these ancient prayers and the God of peace. It will be a great weekend to help us stay focused on the God of peace in these turbulent times! [Click here for details and online registration.](#)

Bold Border Action Calls for Day of Action and Fasting

The [Interfaith Welcome Coalition](#) (IWC) of San Antonio is calling for a day of action and fasting to call attention to and demand an immediate end to the policies that impact people of color, immigrants and asylum seekers in the United States and at the US-Mexico border. Read the [Fast Declaration here.](#)

The Bold Border Action
for Justice & Compassion

We urge members and friends to join in the action. Click here to [RSVP to join the action in Laredo, TX.](#) If you're outside Texas, join the action by hosting a demonstration, rally, march, vigil or protest at a Tent Court, ICE Detention Facility, Immigration Court or other high profile site in your area. Here is a [Tool Kit](#) to help plan your event. Finally, [make a call to Congress](#) urging an end to the inhumane treatment of people of color.

Talitha Kum: International Network to End Human Trafficking

Last week, FAN friend Ann Scholz participated in [Talitha Kum's General Assembly](#) and was honored as [one of ten sisters honored](#) in Rome for their commitment to eradicating human trafficking in the world. The assembly saw 86 delegates from 48 countries, representing 52 Talitha Kum networks. Committing to work to end trafficking in persons, they gathered in thanksgiving and prayerful discernment to:



- * celebrate the 10th anniversary of Talitha Kum;
- * evaluate the work done together according to the priorities set in 2016; and
- * define the priorities for Talitha Kum International to support anti-trafficking efforts for the period of 2020-2025.

The delegation's [outcome documents](#) identify some of the root causes of human trafficking and call on governments, churches, and ourselves to address the systemic causes of human trafficking. Congratulations to Ann and all of Talitha Kum on your excellent work!

