

Gospel Endurance

My parents live in the Diocese of Gaylord, Michigan. It is a sparsely populated diocese and they have many priests from foreign countries. Their parish priest is from Zimbabwe. Recently, he took a trip back home and shared with the parish that when he travels there, he will not wear his roman collar; if he did, there is a good chance he would be killed for being a priest. He shared that the local bishop requires the priests in Zimbabwe to wear the collar, regardless. He knows many who have been killed.

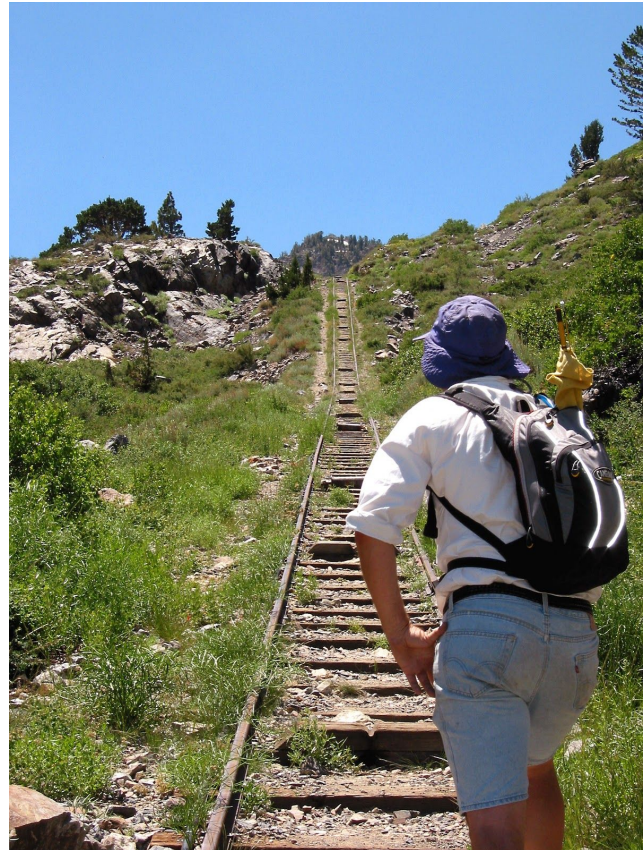
I know a Franciscan friar who can't be named because every few years, he goes to Saudi Arabia to minister to Catholics. Very secretive; if he is caught he will be executed along with those he is there to serve.

I know a Chaldean Catholic priest from Iraq who serves a local community here in my home state of Michigan. He told me the story of his sister who was shot and killed when she exited her Church in Iraq; Killed because she is Christian. He also knows of Christians who have been crucified in Iraq by ISIS.

When I was taking classes at Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit, I met a Chinese seminarian named Joseph. His bishop sent him to the United States for his seminary education because he could receive the formation and education without being harassed. He shared with us that it was almost certain that when he went back to China, he will be arrested as soon as he lands.

Sisters and brothers, the [readings this Sunday](#) from 2 Maccabees 7:1-14 are pretty gruesome. It is a detailed and graphic description of a mother and her sons being tortured to death for refusing to give up their faith and continue to adore the one true God. This story can be told today in our times and in many places in the world. Christians are being tortured and killed because of the name of Jesus. "You are depriving us of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever...It is my choice to die at the hands of men with the hope God gives of being raised up by him." The story says that even the king and his attendants marveled at the young men's courage.

The Gospel story from Luke 20:27-38 tells of a challenge by the Sadducees regarding the resurrection of the dead at the end of times. The Sadducees only considered the books of Moses to be scripture and so would not give any weight to the story from Maccabees which



teaches about the hope of the resurrection, or from the prophet Ezekiel who had a vision of flesh wrapping around bones with new life and taught that God would make us rise up from our graves. Jesus affirms the resurrection and offers his followers the hope of eternal life. (It is easy to remember the party at the time of Jesus that did not believe in resurrection, the Sadducees...it is Sad, you see, that they did not believe.)

There is a line from Psalm 17, "Hide me in the shadow of your wings." Don't we all feel like hiding at times when the world ridicules us for professing our Christian faith; when the world mocks us for speaking the Gospel message? Many of us live our lives as Christians hiding in the shadow of God's wings. We go to Church and leave our faith at the door when we leave on Sunday. We buy into the culture's refrain that it is OK to practice your religion inside the walls of your Church, but don't bring it out to the public square.

We are fortunate that for now, we can take the Gospel to the public square. You may be ridiculed but you will not be executed. I say 'for now' because history has shown that when the faithful are silent and complacent, rights and freedoms are taken away. We have to stop being a pious group of Christians who sit inside the walls of our Churches and meet with our pious prayer groups in the Church basement and instead, go out and be the "Visible Face of the Church." When I made my profession as a Secular Franciscan I promised to "give witness to the Kingdom of God...to be a visible sign of the Church...to be the light of Christ in the world...a faithful witness and instrument of the Church's mission among all people." (taken from the Rite of Profession, Permanent Commitment to the Gospel Life, Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order)

Preaching the Gospel is always controversial. It has been for 2000 years. The Franciscan Action Network is often criticized for taking a stance in defense of the individual rights of persons created in the image of God. The dignity of the human person as an individual is the cornerstone and foundation for Catholic Social Teaching. Caring for the individual person transcends the social and political order. This is not just me talking; it comes from the Catechism of the Catholic Church that was promulgated during St. John Paul II's pontificate.

Paragraph 1930: Respect for the human person entails respect for the rights that flow from his dignity as a creature. These rights are prior to society and must be recognized by it. They are the basis of the moral legitimacy of every authority...It is the Church's role to remind men of good will of these rights.

I'd like to end this reflection with the prayer in the 2nd reading this Sunday from 2 Thes 3: 3-5:

*"But the Lord is faithful;
he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.
We are confident of you in the Lord that what we instruct you,
you are doing and will continue to do.
May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God
and to the endurance of Christ."*

David Seitz, OFS
FAN Board Member

Suggested Action:

Begin each day this week in prayer using the prayer above from [2 Thessalonians chapter 3](#), versus 3-5.

Suggested Petitions:

May we have the courage and fortitude to confidently preach the Gospel in the public sphere.
We pray...

Through the intercession of the communion of saints, may we continue to advocate for the poor and marginalized. We pray...

Collect Prayer:

**Almighty and merciful God,
graciously keep from us all adversity,
so that, unhindered in mind and body alike,
we may pursue in freedom of heart
the things that are yours.
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

With Thanks and Hope from the DC Catholic Coalition

In June of 2019, members of the DC Catholic Coalition experienced a call to respond to the immediate crisis of children at the US Border separated from their families and detained in unacceptable conditions. Representing religious congregations and Catholic justice organizations, we recognized a call to mobilize the collective power of our various constituencies for the sake of the children.



The DC Catholic Coalition made a [three-month commitment](#) to participate and invite others to join three actions to educate, create a community of commitment, and to act on behalf of immigrant children and families. These actions took place in Washington, DC, Newark, NJ and El Paso, TX. We thank each one of you who participated, sponsored, supported and prayed with us. More than 1,000 individuals and groups have been part of this collective witness. We give thanks for each one.

As we draw the collective action to a close during this season of harvest and bountiful thanks we invite you to join us in recalling what has happened in our three witnesses. Click here for a [wrap up](#) and look for the available [resources](#) for continued prayer and on-going action

opportunities.

Border Mass Celebrated on Rio Grande Canal

On Saturday, the bishops of El Paso, Ciudad Juárez, and Las Cruces celebrated the 22nd Annual [Border Mass](#) on the Rio Grande canal, literally right on the US/MX border line.

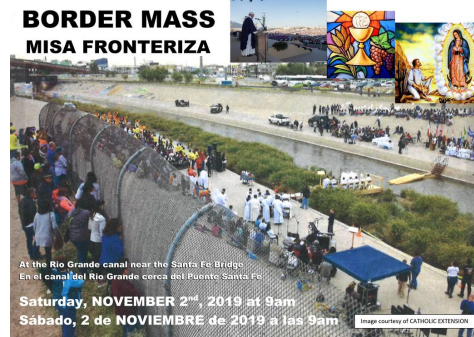
From the media release:

In this time of high polarization around the immigration debate, discrimination, militarization of the border, and a wide spread spirit of exclusion in our nation, the Border Mass continues to remind us that we are called to live in communion. There is no “us and them,” but one family of God.

The celebration of a mass on the US/MX border by the three border dioceses of El Paso, Las Cruces, and Ciudad Juárez started in 1998 and was conducted at US/MX border fence in Anapra for 18 years. In 2016, the mass was moved to the Rio Grande canal near the Santa Fe Bridge.

The mass signifies our unity in diversity, our communion and mutual support, our ongoing encounter and accompaniment, as we seek to respond to our refugee and migrant brothers and sisters at our door.

The Mass was [live streamed here](#).



Take Action: Make a Comment to Advocate for SNAP

Last week, we received the following alert from the Justice, Peace and Human Development of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. We urge our members and friends to [make a comment](#) urging the USDA protect children directly certified to receive free school meals.

Last month, the USCCB spoke out against a [proposed rule](#) that limited eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), our nation's foremost anti-hunger program. While it was initially believed that up to 500,000 children would lose direct certification for free school meals as a result of this proposed rule, The Department of Agriculture recently released [information](#) that up to 982,000 children would no longer be directly certified for school meals. Because this data was left out of the Department's initial impact analysis of the proposed rule, the public comment period is once again open to allow input on this new information.



Direct certification for school meals reduces paperwork for both parents and school

systems and saves families from paying for school meals, which can be difficult for many, even at a reduced rate. Taking away this vital resource puts children's growth, development, and ability to learn at risk.

Read the joint comment of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Charities USA, the Society of St. Vincent De Paul, the Catholic Health Association, and Catholic Rural Life [here](#). [Take Action Now](#).

Home is Here March Continues to Washington, DC

The core marchers of the "[Home is Here](#)" march continue making their way to Washington, D.C. They are on track to arrive by November 12th, when the Supreme Court will hear the case on DACA and begin proceedings to determine the fate of the program.



Most DACA recipients arrived in the U.S. when they were 7 years old and have been living here for more than 20 years. They make significant contributions to the U.S. and local economies. They are home owners and entrepreneurs. The [Home is Here core marchers](#) are a mix of impacted young people, undocumented immigrants, community leaders, allies, and supporters.

We encourage you to [watch their progress](#) on the website.

Take Action: Help Rodney Reed and End the Death Penalty

FAN friend Art Lafflin contacted us last week to ask for help.

Rodney Reed has been on death row in Texas for over 20 years for a crime he did not commit. His execution date is set for November 20, 2019. New evidence shows Reed's innocence and there is new sworn testimony which further implicates the victim's fiancé in the murder. Art told us he has met members of Rodney's family and they are all working tirelessly to save his life.

By clicking on the links below you can learn more about the case and what you can do to help.



[Read about Rodney's case here](#)

[Find several ways to take action here](#)

[More Facts from Rodney's case](#)

Dr. Phil featured Rodney's case on [two episodes Oct. 10-11](#).

We urge our members and friends to help Rodney's case and join in the call for an end to the death penalty.

Election Security Day of Action Nov. 13th

We are at a pivotal moment for the security of our elections, and we have faced unprecedented attacks on our democracy.

Earlier this year, democracy advocates organized dozens of events, and made thousands of phone calls, calling on Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and the Senate to fund election security efforts. They responded with an announcement of \$250 million in funding - which election security experts warn is barely a drop in the bucket compared to the number of vulnerable voting machines in our country that are in urgent need of being replaced.



Local leaders are needed to join the national day of action on November 13th by hosting an event in your community. [Sign up to host an event here](#). Organizers have developed this [Host Guide](#) to help you plan an event.

We need to ensure that election security funding is passed in this upcoming appropriations, to ensure states receive the funds before their primaries. Our democracy depends on the public's faith in our elections. Let's work together to restore integrity in our democracy. We urge all our members and friends to [join in the day of action Nov. 13th](#).

Start Planning One Today: Vigil to End Gun Violence

It's no longer *if* someone we know will be directly impacted by an act of gun violence, but *when*. Urban violence, domestic events, suicides, mass murder and accidents cause more than 100 gun deaths every day. Houses of worship must prepare for the potential of violence within their walls, respond compassionately to trauma in our communities and reclaim our communities as places of safety and sanctuary for all God's children.

In October the FAN staff participated in a [multi-faceted discussion](#) with survivors of gun violence at the Washington National Cathedral. We left this discussion challenged, inspired and moved to act. We will also join in the National Vigil to End Gun Violence in December, which serves to anchor all the vigils and events across the nation.



We urge all our members and friends to [register to host a vigil or an event](#) in your town or city. To facilitate your planning, download the [2019 National Vigil Toolkit](#). There is [more](#)

[information here.](#)

Take Action: Sign Petition Demanding Dignity for Detained Migrants

More than one million immigrants [arrive at U.S. borders every year](#), many escaping violent or threatening situations in their home countries. These people of God arrive to U.S. detention centers that are just as damaging as the violence-prone countries many are fleeing. Currently, many detention centers are housed in privately owned prisons, which means that the first view of the U.S. granted to immigrants is from behind bars.



As people of faith we are called to advocate for humane treatment of all people, especially those who are being persecuted. For this reason, FAN has partnered with other allies in a petition urging Congress to enact humane treatment for asylum seekers and immigrants. We urge you to [sign on by clicking here.](#)

This legislation would implement a shift from detention to alternative housing arrangements for immigrants awaiting court decisions. Community-based supervision programs allow immigrants to live independently, and outside of detention centers. Please take a moment and [sign the petition demanding dignity for detained migrants.](#)