

Publication Date: December 16, 2019

Reflection Date: December 22, 2019 - Fourth Sunday of Advent

Prepare for a New Heaven

We continue our journey through the Advent season [this week](#), hearing the story of how the birth of Jesus came about. Advent is a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Incarnation. It is a time of renewal. Or as it says in the musical Gospel, “prepare ye the way of the Lord.” In today’s world it is hard to imagine what we have spent 2000 years preparing for. With all the hatred and violence around us it is difficult to believe that we are preparing for the “Prince of Peace.” In the second reading from Romans:



1: 1-7 we are told: “Through him we have received the grace of apostleship.” We have some political and religious leaders who promote a gospel of fear and hatred, a gospel of racism and sexism, a gospel of separation. Is this the apostleship we have received as a result of the Incarnation? These same people will stand up and scream about how we have lost the true meaning of Christmas. I guess they are fine with separating children from their parents, not welcoming the strangers, not feeding the hungry or destroying God’s awesome creation as long as we wish each other a Merry Christmas.

What really is the meaning of Christmas? As a child I was taught that the birth of Jesus was part of an elaborate plan created by God whereby the Son of God would be born and later crucified because of original sin committed by Adam and Eve. Or as it is sometimes described, ‘substitutionary atonement’, that Jesus had to be crucified so we can go to Heaven. This theology is completely dependent on the concept of Original Sin and Adam and Eve. This was our belief for most of Christianity. A hundred years or so ago the Jesuit Theologian and scientist Teilhard de Chardin argued that traditional teachings about the fall of Adam and Eve into sin were difficult to reconcile with science. By examining fossils scientists now know that the human species emerged out of several different evolutionary branches, not from a single pair of ancestors. Teilhard was certainly not the first to argue this. The 13th century Franciscan theologian Blessed John Duns Scotus said “The Incarnation of the Son of God is the very reason for the whole Creation. To think that God would have given up such a task had Adam not sinned would be quite unreasonable! I say, therefore, that the fall was not the cause of Christ’s predestination and that if no one had fallen, neither the angel nor man in this hypothesis, Christ would still have been predestined in the same way.”

Maybe, when we think about “prepare ye the way of the Lord” this Advent, we should spend less time preparing ourselves to go somewhere else and more time preparing our Earth for the return of the new Heaven.

Peace and All Good,
Patrick Carolan

FAN Executive Director

Suggested Action:

This week, think about what you can do in your family, community, or church to prepare it to be Heaven on Earth

Suggested Petitions:

May the birth of our Savior, Jesus, open our hearts to receive the Lord's everlasting love and mercy. We pray...

May we take all opportunities to share the love of the Lord with everyone we meet. We pray...

Collect Prayer:

**Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,
your grace into our hearts,
that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son,
was made known by the message of an Angel,
may by his Passion and Cross
by brought to the glory of his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.**

Amen

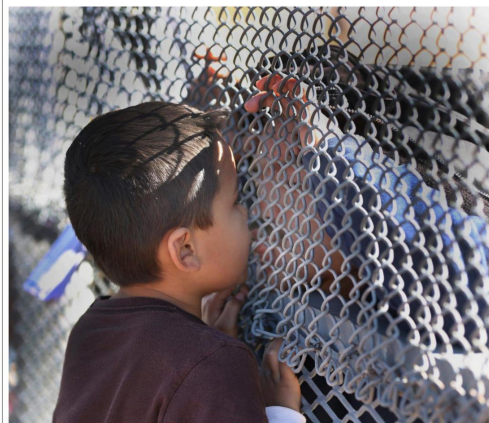
Get Ready for National Migration Week: January 5-11th, 2020

January 5-11, 2020, the Catholic Church will celebrate [National Migration Week](#). The theme for this year's celebration is "Promoting a Church and a World for All," which reflects the need for Catholics to be inclusive and welcoming to all our brothers and sisters.

National Migration Week 2020 provides us an opportunity to focus on the most vulnerable of migrants, including DACA and TPS holders, who remain in precarious and uncertain situations. It is also a time to reflect on threats to migrant and refugee children, the littlest ones among us, particularly children who are detained or otherwise separated from their parents, unaccompanied migrant children, and those who are stuck waiting in Mexico for asylum in the United States.

The United State Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has produced a toolkit of resources to promote participation in National Migration Week - [download it for free here](#). You'll find

National Migration Week 2020
January 5th – 11th, 2020



Credit: CNS/Bob Rolter

Promoting a Church and a World for All

suggestions for prayer, community action ideas, sample letters to the editor and social media posts.

Report Detailing GOP Tax Cuts Failing Workers and the Economy

It's been two years since the Trump administration passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) of 2017. The Americans for Tax Fairness have released this detailed [report](#) showing the eight principal promises made about the benefits of the tax overhaul and how they have failed to come true. Here are just a few examples:

PROMISE: IT WILL BE A MIDDLE-CLASS TAX CUT.

REALITY: The richest 1% are getting an average tax cut that's 75 times more than the average tax cut of the bottom 80%—\$50,000 vs. \$645.

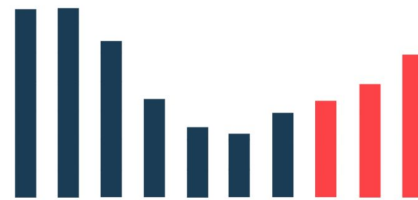
PROMISE: WORKING FAMILIES WILL QUICKLY GET A \$4,000 TO \$9,000 RAISE.

REALITY: Median family income rose just \$514 in 2018 and the annual growth rate in workers' wages has increased just 0.4% since the tax plan became law. Both of these are well below the increases that occurred during President Obama's last two years in office.

There is a [petition to Congress](#) to repeal the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) of 2017 and instead implement a fair share tax system that works for everyone. We [urge you to sign](#).

CHARTBOOK:

Trump-GOP Tax Cuts Failing Workers & The Economy



AMERICANS FOR
TaxFairness

TODAY: Virtual Workshop - The Call of Assisi: Towards a New Economy

A group of U.S. – based practitioners and students of new economic models that are the fruit of a culture of communion and solidarity are hosting a [Virtual Workshop / Video call](#) to foster learning and collaboration to transform our economy. FAN Board Member, Mr. Doug O'Brien is a Co-Convener.

The gathering, on **Monday, December 16, from 12 to 2pm ET**, was organized in anticipation of the [Economy of Francesco](#), a global gathering [convened by Pope Francis](#) in Assisi, Italy March 26 – 28, 2020 to inspire a new economy rooted in solidarity and care for our common home. We hope you have signed up to attend.



Don't Let Scrooge (USCIS) Steal Christmas from Immigrants

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services



CATHOLIC LEGAL
IMMIGRATION

(USCIS) has made a [proposal](#) to raise fees to apply for naturalization and vital immigration benefits while slashing the availability of fee waivers and also transferring \$20 million to ICE for enforcement. For example: Application for Naturalization would increase from \$640 to \$1,140 and eliminate all fee waivers; DACA fees from \$495 to \$765; Asylum, \$50 fee making the U.S. only the 4th country in the world to charge for seeking asylum.

JFI-CLINIC offered an excellent webinar on Dec. 4th which is available now at [this link](#). Public comments protesting these fee increases are strongly encouraged by organizations and by individuals. Last week efforts were successful in getting USCIS to extend the comment period. **Please post comments by December 30th.** CLINIC offers very helpful resources [here](#). Individuals are asked to tailor comments, making them your own.

State and local responses are also needed and encouraged. Resources are [available here](#). Please encourage your state and local officials to submit comments. A webinar for these officials will be provided on Friday, Dec. 6, 1:00 to 2:30 eastern and we will share it with you as soon as it's made available.

Please take action to prevent this contemporary Scrooge from enacting this cruel anti-immigrant proposal.

We have Committed to Living the Change. Join us

The Franciscan Action Network has committed ourselves to [Living the Change](#). This means, to change the world, we're starting with ourselves. We will come together in locally-organized activities to work on transforming our own lives as one impactful response to the climate emergency.



We invite our members and friends to consider taking part by making a personal commitment and engaging in this meaningful conversation by signing up for a [local event on the World Map](#). You'll meet others who are willing or striving to change their own behaviors, learn how your friends and neighbors are seeking to make changes in their own lives, and have the opportunity to engage in a truly interesting and empowering conversation.

These types of meaningful, engaging community conversations are key to shifting our lifestyles. Our lifestyles shape our social and cultural norms, which, in turn, shape our economic and political systems. This is the transformative nature of making a personal change. Make your [personal commitment here](#) and download our [conversation guide](#) to help you engage with others.

Call your Governor and Urge Welcome to Refugees

As you may recall, in September President Trump issued an [Executive Order](#) (EO 13888) that threatens to end the resettlement of refugees in your



community. Governors and local officials must provide written consent to allow refugee resettlement to continue in their states and communities.

As people of faith who care about our refugee sisters and brothers, **we urge all members living in the listed states to contact your Governors urging they provide written consent to resettle refugees** - and share publicly why they are providing consent. If consent is not provided by January, resettlement could grind to a halt in your state and community.

Call your governor if you live in one of these states:

CALIFORNIA—DELAWARE—HAWAII—ILLINOIS—LOUISIANA—MAINE—MINNESOTA—NEVADA—NEW YORK—RHODE ISLAND— WISCONSIN. Our Friends at [Church World Service](#) have a sample script and the proper phone numbers to call listed [here](#).

[Click here](#) for a list of governors who have already issued public statements of welcome.

Please note: If your state is not listed, do not call your governor – instead, please contact Elissa Diaz at ediaz@cwsglobal.org to learn how to help. There are contextualized strategies for each state that you need to be aware of.