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Reflection Date: April 5, 2020 - Palm Sunday of the Passion

No, God has not abandoned us

Image by [James Chan](#) from Pixabay

A month ago, we might all have imagined a very different [Palm Sunday](#). Here in Washington, the hosannas often rang out on an early, warm spring day. For my family a typical Palm Sunday saw us cleaning the rusty Weber, inviting a few friends, and marking the day by grilling the first steaks of the year – with local asparagus and buttery new potatoes.

We won't be celebrating around the table with friends this year. Steaks and asparagus are pretty rare in nearby groceries. The virus has changed our lives in ways large and small.



The philosopher Albert Camus in his 1947 novel, *The Plague*, noted how against the backdrop of disease everyday things and actions take on a luminous quality. We see around us now that luminosity. Friendships seem more intense. In a hug from someone you love you now perceive the glow of grace that you should always have known was there. We're utterly grateful this year for canned and frozen foods. Grateful for toilet paper. Grateful to see friends on a Zoom call. A hymn during a live streamed Mass from a nearby parish can bring us to tears.

Indeed, reading the Passion for this Palm Sunday seems overwhelmingly poignant.

"Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?"

No, God has not abandoned us. We see the presence of the divine more clearly than ever in the FaceTime faces of our grandchildren whom we cannot visit. We see it in the heroism of the grocery store clerks and the folks who pick up our trash and deliver our mail, in the cops, the nurses, and doctors. We see it in the social worker reaching out to the homeless to warn them of the danger. We see it in the neighbor who stands on her porch each evening and plays guitar for us. We see it down the street when another neighbor leaves a casserole on the stoop of an EMT who's been working long overtime shifts because so many of her colleagues have been quarantined for exposure.

Let's all of us realize this Holy Week that God is extraordinarily present for us in this moment. Let's say a quiet hosanna of praise that grace shines brightly in the little ways that we human beings are there for each other. Let's let that grace move us, too. Let grace move us to join in Franciscan solidarity to do our little things for the sick, the scared, the lonely, the sad, the impoverished and all those who are least able to fend for themselves and their loved ones in this time of crisis.

Stephen Schneck
FAN Executive Director

Suggested Actions:

This week, practice the example of humility in all you do.

Suggested Petitions:

For those on the front lines of this virus: the care-givers and essential workers. May they stay healthy and safe from illness. We pray...

For those who are ill and for their families and friends. May they recognize the God of mercy and healing in the eyes, hearts, and hands of those who care for them. We pray...

Collect Prayer (Solemn Entrance):

**Almighty ever-living God,
who as an example of humility for the human race to follow
caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross,
graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering
and so merit a share in his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.**

Amen

#Faith4DACA Webinar and Immigration Resources

In these uncertain times due to COVID-19, so many in our country still await the Supreme Court's announcement on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) program. While the most recent relief package passed was considerably better than previous versions, we must continue to remember the immigrants in subsequent legislation.



Last week, DACA plaintiffs filed a petition with the Supreme Court asking to delay any decision amidst the current pandemic crisis. FAN released a [statement](#) as part of the Home is Here coalition who also [affirmed the ask](#).

The Faith for DACA coalition is hosting a [webinar](#) this **Tuesday, March 31 at 4pm ET/ 1pm PT** which will highlight the unique role faith communities have to play in this critical moment, and as we share virtual actions you can join and take within 24- 48 hours of the SCOTUS announcement. [Register here](#).

The Interfaith Immigration Coalition developed this [action toolkit](#) which includes a sample letter to the editor, message guidance, and promotional materials.

Additionally, we offer as a resource the Bipartisan Policy center, which is posting very informative podcasts on "[This Week in Immigration](#)." Listen to these online to keep updated on the latest developments.

You're Invited: Join us for a Virtual Franciscan EAD Gathering

Together at EAD in 2019

Because we aren't able to have our in-person gathering at EAD, the staff at FAN has decided to have a virtual check-in with our Franciscan friends whom we typically see in Washington, DC as well as anyone who hasn't been able to make it before and is interested.

We are concerned about all of you and will miss the opportunity to be with you, but in these crazy times, a Zoom video conference call is the best we can do. We invite you to **join us at the time we would have been together in Washington** to gather as Franciscans and reflect on the vision of Saints Francis and Clare.



Our Zoom video call will be held **Friday, April 24th at 2pm ET / 11am PT**. [You must register to be on the call](#).

We will be inviting a guest speaker to connect us with the theme of EAD weekend, which was "Imagine, God's earth and people restored." We will celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and 5th anniversary of Laudato Si together!

Don't forget to [register in advance](#) for this meeting. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. Hope to see you all there!

Stop the Coronavirus Gun Surge Digital Toolkit

As followers of nonviolent Jesus and Francis of Assisi, FAN makes gun violence prevention one of our peacemaking priorities. Because of this, we are alarmed by [reports](#) of the spike in gun sales during the novel Coronavirus pandemic. While panic food buying is discouraged, we must also deplore panic gun purchasing.

We share a [digital toolkit](#) prepared by [Guns Down America](#) to educate the public about the dangers of

A red rectangular graphic with the words "GUNS DOWN" in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The word "GUNS" is on the top line and "DOWN" is on the bottom line. The letters are slightly shadowed, giving them a 3D appearance as if they are floating or attached to the red background.

stockpiling weapons. As Franciscans, we add our faith voice to that of Guns Down America in calling for Stop the Coronavirus Gun Surge.

Join the Good Friday Way of the Cross for Economic and Ecological Justice

Each year, the FAN staff make a point to join a procession through the streets of Washington, DC on Good Friday along with people from other faith advocacy organizations. These processions, called the "[Way of the Cross for Economic and Ecological Justice](#)" provide a prayerful way to walk the steps of Jesus in this time of financial and ecological crisis. FAN's own Sisters Marie and Maria were both involved in developing several stations.

This year, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the event will be virtual and we invite our members and friends to [read along](#) with us on video conference on **Friday, April 10th at 12pm ET / 9am PT**. [Click here to register to join us](#).

Each station symbolizes institutional roots of this suffering in government, in transnational corporations, in international financial institutions, in trade agreements, macroeconomic policies and financial transactions that give shape to economic activity around the world. Find more information and download the script [here](#).

Virtual Economic & Ecological Way of the Cross


When: Good Friday, April 10, 2020
Time: 12 PM
Where: Virtual meeting, open to the public
Go to bit.ly/VirtualWOTC to find the link for the meeting


For over 20 years, we have gathered on Good Friday to commemorate the passion of Christ through a Way of the Cross among D.C. institutions. This year, we will gather virtually. The observance of Christ's passion is an opportunity to reflect on the ways we have broken our covenant with God at the expense of other persons and creation. For each station we will focus on a different economic or ecological challenge or sign of hope for our times. Persons of all faiths are welcome.


Please join us for this virtual prayer gathering!
If you are unable to join the virtual meeting at 12 PM on Good Friday but would like to pray this Way of the Cross another time, you can find the script and visuals from the virtual meeting at bit.ly/VirtualWOTC


FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Email: ngp@marianology.org
Day of event, call: 202-680-0590


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Resources for Digital Spiritual Engagement

As more churches and dioceses are calling for cancellation of in-person Masses for Holy Week and Easter, we recognize the need for spiritual connection and engagement. The following is a brief list of some resources we have been made aware of and offer to you.

- Catholic Relief Services' Rice Bowl Lenten alms collecting program has [Virtual Stations of the Cross](#) and a [Families](#) page on their website.
- Fr. James Martin, SJ hosted a [virtual pilgrimage](#) in 2017 of the places where Jesus was born, ministered, died, and rose.
- PBS recently broadcast a documentary of [Dorothy Day's journey](#) as she followed her heart to better the lives of those on the margins. By clicking the link, you can watch it online.
- The mid-atlantic Coalition Against Modern Slavery put together this [Way of the Cross](#) which reflects on the suffering of Jesus and St. Josephine Bakhita and all who suffer slavery as victims of human trafficking.



How to Host Earth Day Actions Virtually

The Catholic Climate Covenant staff has adjusted plans for commemorating the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the 5th anniversary of Laudato Si' with this [REVISED version](#) of their 2020 program, designed for use by individuals, families, and online groups.

Even if you already downloaded the original Earth Day 2020 program, by [filling out the form](#) you will have access to the revised version. The new version offers prayers, readings, a short video, reflection questions, and suggested actions.



Additionally, the Earth Day organizers are busy reinventing plans for virtual 50th anniversary celebrations. Instead of having people mobilize in the streets, the [US Climate Strike Coalition](#) has plans to hold [Earth Day Live](#), a 72-hour, three consecutive day, livestream.

The national live stream will include a variety of programming to keep people engaged, informed, and inspired including opportunities for local organizers across the US to join us. Find more information and ideas in this [Earth Day Live organizer guide](#)