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Reflection Date: June 28, 2020 - 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Can you love Jesus more than all else?

The [readings for the 13th Sunday](#) this year are especially challenging. The Gospel beginning in Matthew Chapter 10:37 is, I believe, one of the most difficult teachings of Jesus.

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.”



Wow! Jesus has called out some of the most important human relationships, our intimate, immediate family; father, mother, son, daughter. As a parent I know the love I have for my daughters. I know the love and respect I have for my parents. It is hard to imagine, other than perhaps our spouses, a bond of love greater than these. Yet Jesus tells us unless we love him with a greater love we are not worthy of him.

This is one of those sayings of Jesus that let us know being His true follower is not easy. It is not all roses and sunshine. To be a true follower and to be worthy of Jesus could actually result in straining or even breaking our human relationships. This got me thinking. What are some of the relationships that I put over and above Jesus in my life? If the standard is the love I have for my family, what other “loves” do I have in my life that must be, not abandoned, but put under and subject to my love of Jesus?

How about my own ego? That self-love, the part of me that whispers in my ear and helps me rationalize my behavior or ideologies that might conflict with the Gospel? That part of me that I love so much that I’m not willing to love Jesus by keeping His commands. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” (JN 14:15) “Whoever receives you receives me” (Mt 10:40), Jesus told his disciples, “What you bind on earth is bound in heaven and what you loose on earth is loosed in heaven.” (Mt 16:19)

I learned a new word not long ago, Anthropocentric. This means putting the human person at the center, the end all be all, of what we do. This is loving humankind over and above God, it is not God centered. We live in a highly individualistic culture. Our culture has an anthropocentric worldview. We do not like being subject to authority, civil or religious. If I am asked to do something that goes against my ego, I rebel. “You can’t tell me what to do!” Often overlooking the common good as an infringement on my personal desires, we have lapsed into a mindset that if anything is suggested that goes against my personal desires, I have been offended and the one who has a different idea is hateful and intolerant. Sadly, tolerance itself often manifests the greatest degree of intolerance, as it proclaims you must agree with me, respect my ideology and beliefs, yet I am not obligated to respect yours. And so we love almost anything over and above Jesus.

This is a hard message to hear. I know that I, like many, read my own bias into the Gospel. I read my own bias into blog posts and messages people send me. We love our bias, and let's be honest, they are often so ingrained in our subconscious that we deploy them without thought or reflection. This is where we need to pray for the grace of enlightenment and conversion. The Rule of Life for the Secular Franciscan tells me that "motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls "conversion." Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily." (Article 7)

Our conversion is not a one-time event. It is a daily struggle, and as our Gospel passage tells us, "whoever does not take up his cross is not worthy of me." How do we discover our bias and that which needs conversion in our life? We carry the cross of our passions. We carry the cross of those people who sometimes irritate us and do not agree with us. Can we carry that cross to meaningful dialog so that I can learn about the other, gain an understanding, begin to build a bridge? Can we pray for the grace each day to be open to the Holy Spirit and the willingness to recognize our bias and if necessary, carry the cross of the daily struggle to change what needs to be changed?

We are living in a moment of history that is asking all of us to examine our hidden bias. What is it that I love more than Jesus, that is an obstacle for me being his true follower? What is it in my life that is making me "not worthy" of Jesus and His gospel? We all love the compassionate, loving, kind and forgiving Jesus. We often tend to ignore the demanding "you're either all in or you're out" Jesus. "So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth." (Rev 3:16) Jesus admonished the Church of Laodicea. Looking back at the Gospel passage we can honestly lament, "This saying is hard; who can accept it?" (Jn 6:5) Thankfully, Jesus also has an answer to that question so we will not lose hope because of our fallen human nature. "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God." (Mk 10:27)

David Seitz, OFS
FAN Board Member

Suggested Action:

Sit in silence this week, combing your heart for your personal biases which prevent your being a true follower of Jesus.

Suggested Petitions:

May we sincerely repent our personal bias and become open to dialogue and conversion. We pray...

May we trust implicitly that all things are possible for God. We pray...

Collect Prayer:

**O God, who through the grace of adoption
chose us to be children of light,
grant, we pray,**

that we may not be wrapped in darkness of error
but always be seen to stand in the bright light of truth.
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

Supreme Court Overturns Trump DACA Decision

While we celebrate last week's Supreme Court ruling as a victory for DACA recipients, allowing their continued ability to safely live and work in the U.S. for now, the risk of future deportation of Dreamers depends on what actions the Administration takes. We remember that the DACA program was never intended to be a permanent solution and we therefore need to keep working for a permanent pathway to citizenship for Dreamers.



We invite you to **take a moment today at Noon in your time zone to celebrate and lift up this decision by ringing bells outdoors.** [Find more information here.](#) Then join in the **Home Is Here rally today, Monday, June 22nd at 1 pm ET!** [RSVP here!](#)

FAN staff was overjoyed upon hearing the positive decision last week, releasing this [statement](#). We applaud the efforts of all immigrants, their families, and advocates in the hard work it took to get to this moment. We also understand the need to continue to work for the opportunity to live, work, and care for our families in safety.

The House successfully passed the American Dream and Promise Act (H.R.6) more than a year ago, but neither H.R.6 nor the Dream Act (S.874) have received a Senate vote yet. **Call on the Senate to pass protections for Dreamers.** To assist in this effort, we have developed this [action alert](#), an easy way to engage your Senators urging they provide Dreamers with a path to citizenship.

We also continue to pray. Justice for Immigrants has this [Rosary for Vulnerable Populations](#).

Learn and Reflect: Just Faith Racial Justice Program

We are living in a time ripe with opportunity for significant social change. Since the senseless murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, many people of faith are speaking out for change, [writing statements](#) and [taking action](#) in the streets.



[JustFaith](#), an ally of FAN, has a mission to form, inform, and transform "people of faith by offering programs and resources that sustain them in their compassionate commitment to build a more just and peaceful world." Since 2001, over 50,000 people have completed a JustFaith Ministries program allowing small faith communities to explore critical current issues.

As we seek to transform ourselves and deepen the conversations we are having with our sisters and brothers of color, we encourage you to explore JustFaith's [Racial Justice Series](#) of programs. Connecting faith and racial equity, these programs have topics including Exploring Power and Privilege, Embracing Truth, Justice and Restoration, and Changing Systems and Structures. [Click here for more information.](#)

The Challenges Facing America's Election Systems

If you enter the words "voting, elections, primaries" into a search engine, the news story results number in the millions. The COVID-19 outbreak has presented the world with terrible new challenges to public health and the basic operations of government. The news about [Georgia's primaries](#) was not good and the proof of voter suppression is validated each election year when tactics such as purged voter lists and voter ID laws deny thousands of people of color their right to vote.



Past elections were accomplished during a Civil War and two World Wars, and during other crises, both big and small. Our fundamental right to vote is part of what defines us as Americans. As people of faith, we are reminded of the need to continuously make our voices heard about this challenge to America's election systems. We urge you to **call the Senate via the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask that the \$3.6 billion for safe and secure elections be included in the Heroes Act.**

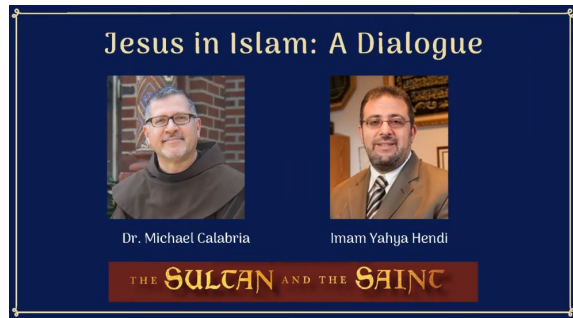
Here are some resources to assist in educating yourself on this topic:

- Recently, FAN's own Jason Miller joined the Texas Impact podcast to talk about the importance of vote by mail and the need for election funding. [Listen here.](#)
- [We Can Vote](#) is a nonpartisan 50-State online resource that provides regularly updated information and opportunities for each of us to do our part in making the 2020 elections safe, secure, and successful.
- Additionally, The [National Vote at Home Institute](#) is dedicated to ensuring the security of our elections and putting voters' needs first. Vote at home is a growing trend across red, blue and purple states because it is a time-tested and proven way to bolster the security of elections, improve voter engagement, and reduce election-related costs.

At a time when governments are responding rapidly to the pandemic, we urge our members and friends to be aware of your state's voting options and work toward advancement for the good of all voters.

Unity Productions Foundation Hosts dialogue on Jesus in Islam

Our partners and good friends at Unity Productions Foundation (UPF) who produced the docu-drama, *The Sultan and the Saint*, recently hosted an online discussion inspired by the short film "[Jesus in Islam](#)."



Jesus appears numerous times in the Quran and in various Islamic literature. He is viewed as a worker of miracles, a champion for those who are weak and oppressed. In Muslim tradition, Jesus does not come to save humanity, but to preach as other prophets do also, to worship the one true God. With Islam weighing in more about Jesus than any religion other than Christianity, it makes sense to learn how Muslims view Jesus, his mother Mary and other aspects, in an effort to open dialogue.

We invite you to take an hour to [watch this dynamic discussion](#) about who the Muslim Jesus is, what he means to Muslims, how the Muslim vision of Jesus is similar and different than the Christian tradition. Moderated by UPF Executive Director, Alex Kronemer, Franciscan Friar, Dr. Michael Calabria, Scholar of Islam at St. Bonaventure University and Imam Yahya Hendi, Muslim Chaplain at Georgetown University engage in dialogue beginning with their own personal interests in both Christian and Islamic faith traditions. We encourage you to [watch and share this interesting conversation](#).

An Invitation: Pray for God's Mercy on our Country

FAN Board Member, David Seitz, OFS is a Secular Franciscan and author who has served his local fraternity as minister and director of formation, Divine Mercy regional minister, and as a member of the national Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) commission. In this trying time in our society, David has [sent out a call to be Jonah](#).



From David's invitation:

The Lord has put it on my heart to launch a community of intercessors, like Jonah. Satan, the great divider, is creating discord in our communities, our churches, our government institutions and our families. Taking after the prophet Jonah, who preached a message of repentance to Nineveh, the capital city of his enemy, resulting in God sparing Nineveh from destruction, I am asking for you to commit to praying for and repenting for the sins of our nation and ask for God's mercy, protection and deliverance from Satan's influence. I'm asking that this community of Jonahs pray not only for themselves, but pray for those who do not pray.

If you would like to take part, [click here to download](#) this series of 10 intentions prayed using the chaplet of Divine Mercy. All the necessary prayers and intentions are included and written clearly. We urge you to take part in this mission of mercy as part of your daily devotion.