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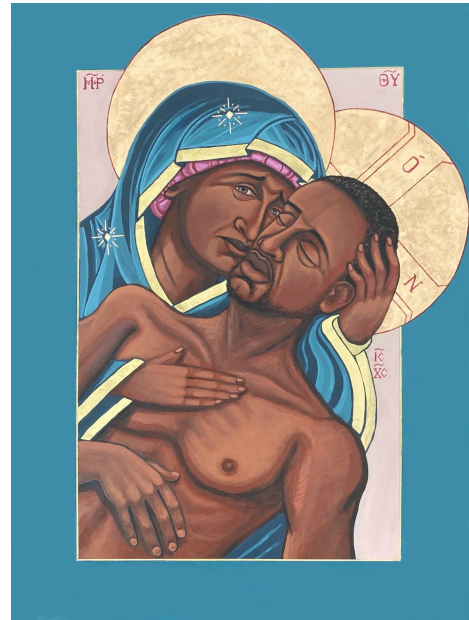
Reflection Date: July 19, 2020 - 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Whoever has ears ought to hear

"Mama" by Kelly Latimore

This [Sunday's Gospel](#) is a familiar one: several parables including that of the mustard seed. We are told that Jesus spoke often in parables. We are also told that when he did so, the apostles did not really understand his message despite Jesus' words at the end of the Gospel: "Whoever has ears ought to hear." (Matthew 13:43) The apostles heard Jesus, but perhaps the problem was not that they didn't understand his message. Perhaps they did not want to hear it because it would cause them to change their minds or behaviors.

Today we are inundated with messages. A 24-hour news cycle on TV. Social media at our fingertips. How do we know what messages we ought to hear? Are those messages causing us to reflect and change our behavior even if it is a message we do not like?



Our nation is at a crossroads: a pandemic, protests for racial justice, and an economic crisis are all happening at once. What messages ought we to hear about these crises? When we are told to "Wear a mask" or that "Black Lives Matter" do we really hear those messages? What emotions do those messages convey? What feelings do we have about the messenger? Are we really using our ears to hear those messages?

Jesus was laughed out of his hometown of Nazareth when he preached. Public opinion polls from the 1960s show that Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. was not universally liked when he was alive. The prophet Jeremiah thought that he was too young to speak for God. Despite that, did God not speak through all of them?

We may hear the messages of today but we may discount the messenger or misunderstand what the message is really trying to tell us because it makes us uncomfortable. Are we praying about those messages? Do we need to ask ourselves if we really want to live out the values and messages of God?

The second reading from Romans says that the Holy Spirit comes to our aid when we pray. When George Floyd had a police officer's knee on his neck for 8 minutes and forty-six seconds, he called out for his mother. His mother has been dead for a few years and yet he cried out for her, just as Jesus cried out for his mother on the cross. George was not Jesus, but he was a human being deserving of dignity and respect that he did not receive. No one deserves to die the way George did. In that moment when he took his last breath, did the Holy Spirit "intercede with inexpressible groanings?" (Romans 8:26) Perhaps not in the way that we might think. Can we even imagine the Holy Spirit groaning? But just as George struggled to breathe, as he cried out for his mother in prayer, the Holy Spirit was at work. The mustard seed has been planted.

As Christians, do we hear the Spirit groan and cry out? Do we hear George? Do we hear the messages that we ought to hear? Do we hear those who say that “Black Lives Matter?” Or to “Wear a mask?” (Even if we do not want to?) Are we praying and reflecting on these messages? Are they causing us to change the way we act? Do we realize as Christians the moral obligations these messages come with: a duty to protect those around us and uphold equal treatment for all?

Jason Miller
FAN Director of Campaigns and Development

Suggested Action:

Spend time this week contemplating the icon image we included with the Gospel reflection. What do you see in each face? Open your heart to the Holy Spirit groaning and crying out to you. What do you hear?

Suggested Petitions:

May all those in positions of power recognize that it is an opportunity from God to work for equity and justice. We pray..

May we come to rely on the Holy Spirit and trust in the Spirit’s intercession on our behalf. We pray...

Collect Prayer:

**Show favor, O Lord, to your servants
and mercifully increase the gifts of your grace,
that, made fervent in hope, faith and charity,
they may be ever watchful in keeping your commands.
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

**Last Chance to Take Action: Public Comment
Needed on Proposed Asylum Rule**

After years of chipping away at the asylum system and the rights of those in need of protection, the Trump administration is [proposing a rule](#) that would effectively end asylum once and for all. Watch this [brief video](#) for more information. This is a crisis moment and historic low point with literal life or death consequences for some of the most vulnerable people in the world.



In the proposed rule, the administration would allow judges to decide cases before people have had the chance to present their full case in court and deny asylum for reasons that have nothing to do with the need for protection. As a member of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, FAN is urging our members and friends to **take action now, during the public comment period.**

If you haven't yet, we urge you to use this easy [click-to-comment campaign](#) tool from [Clinic Legal](#) to learn more and submit your comment. To leave a comment, one does not have to be an expert. **What is needed now is volume to slow down the process.** We do urge personalization of comments, and if someone has a connection with a refugee family, all the better, however speaking from our faith and Franciscan beliefs and values is also helpful. We encourage each person who writes a comment to ask 3 others to do so.

The click-to-comment campaign will close **1 p.m. ET this Wednesday, July 15.**

Join FAN in Creating the Peace Ribbon 2020

As followers of St. Francis, a peacemaker in his time, FAN is using the 75th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a call to [recommit ourselves](#) to advocate for a world free of the threat and tyranny of nuclear weapons.



We partner with Pax Christi USA and a coalition of other organizations in raising awareness of the imminent threat of nuclear weapons in our world today. We will call on our members and friends to reflect on what befalls us if nuclear weapons were to ever rain down on the Earth again. The [Peace Ribbon 2020](#) project aims to spur the imagination of all that would be lost if we succumb again to the use of a nuclear weapon. We urge everyone to check out the [new website](#) for Peace Ribbon 2020 and commit to educating yourself and others, and participate by creating a panel for the [Peace Ribbon 2020](#).

July 14th Virtual Rally for a Faithful Recovery

Later this month, the Senate is due to work on its next covid-19 stimulus package. In addition to making sure that people's immediate needs are met, this is an opportunity to call for a [Faithful Recovery](#) that addresses historic environmental injustices, invests in clean energy jobs to get people back to work, builds resilience for future crises, and assists poor countries struggling with the disease and the economic fallout. The Energy and Environment Working Group of WISC (of which FAN is a member), the Catholic Climate Covenant and the Global Catholic Climate Movement are now promoting a



virtual rally July 14th to engage individuals in amplifying this message.

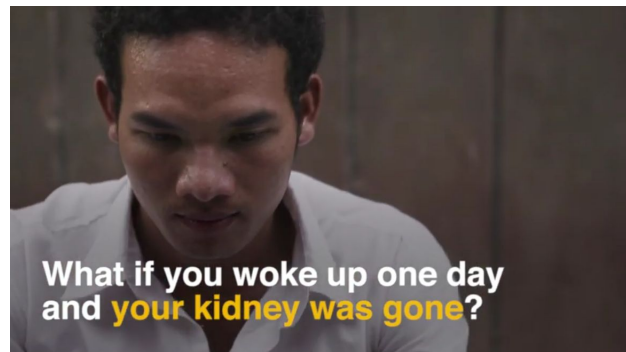
- This [Social Media Toolkit](#) has instructions for participating in the virtual rally. It includes sample social media posts, directions for tagging your senators in social media posts, and much more.
- The Catholic Climate Covenant has set up [this action alert](#) to make it easy for you to email your senators tomorrow in addition to participating in the virtual rally online.

You can read more about this effort [here](#). We urge our members and friends to participate in the virtual rally tomorrow, **July 14th all day on social media**.

Human Trafficking Updates from Felician Sisters

We are grateful to FAN Members, the Felician Sisters who are also members of the [U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking](#) and keep us updated on new developments within the issue of Human Trafficking.

The United Nations designated [July 30 as the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons](#) in 2013 to raise awareness and gain support for the prevention of human trafficking, implement protocols to protect victims, and to penalize traffickers.



As we commemorate the 7th World Day Against Trafficking in Persons amidst the COVID-19 pandemic we are **especially concerned about how children are more vulnerable today to online exploitation**. Globally, school closures have impeded not only children's access to education but also to a safe environment. The increased percentage of reports of suspected child sexual exploitation over the last few months, compared with the same amount of time in previous years, is terrifyingly high as is the increase in online traffic searches for this sort of content.

In this short [video](#), some members of the U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking declare "education is the key to awareness and prevention." Alongside them, we denounce this horrific crime against children and join in their effort to [call upon Attorney General Barr](#) to exercise his responsibilities under the Protect Our Children Act of 2008. Since online predators are among the most technologically adept of all criminals, it is urgent that we equip our law enforcement agencies with what they need to identify child predators and bring them to justice. We urge you to [add your name](#).

To aid in further education, we encourage you to look into the [Stop Trafficking Newsletter](#). What if you woke up one day and your kidney was gone? Human trafficking is not just about forced labor and sexual exploitation. With the increased demand for organ transplantation many people throughout the world are trafficked for the removal of their organs. Please click here to view the [July issue of the Stop Trafficking Newsletter](#). Previous issues of this newsletter can be found by [clicking here](#).

Requiem for Black Children of God Held in Cincinnati

FAN friend and convener of the Tri-State Franciscan Solidarity Table, Jim Myers, OFS let us know about a [prayer service](#) held recently in Cincinnati in response to the racial tensions and violence highlighted by the death of George Floyd. The event was co-hosted by the Franciscan Friars of Saint John the Baptist Province, St. Clement Parish and St. Michael Fraternity on behalf of Holy Trinity Region of the Secular Franciscan Order.



Titled *Requiem for the Black Children of God*, the service saw about 50 participants gather on a steamy 93-degree evening to pray for peace in their community, an end to racial injustice and most especially, to memorialize Black men and women who died as a result of police or police-related violence in their community and around the country. The event was live-streamed on the [St. Clement Parish Facebook page](#), for anyone who would like to watch.

If you host an event or program in your community that others may draw inspiration from, please [let us know about it](#). We welcome news of these Franciscan Moments in our society.

CLINIC Immigrant Integration Prayer Booklet

Successful Immigrant integration results from an equal partnership between newcomers and the receiving community who work together to make their community more inclusive.

If your community is seeking ways to incorporate integration into church-based celebrations, we invite you to check out [resources from CLINIC Legal here](#). You will find real-life examples of parish-based work in local communities along with a Holiday Prayers for Immigrant Integration booklet, which includes prayers for Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. The prayer booklet is available for download in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

