

Publication Date: October 5, 2020

Reflection Date: October 11, 2020 - 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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## Let Go and Let God: Prophetic Witness, Action, and Thomas Merton

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The responsorial psalm for [this Sunday's readings](#) is the extraordinary 23rd Psalm. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want..." The First Reading from Isaiah promises that "The Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face." And the Epistle from Philippians adds that "My God will fully supply whatever you need..."



Together, these readings are understandably a challenge for us at this historical moment for our nation and our church. What are we to make of readings that seem to counsel to "let go and let

God" in this year of crises, 2020? Amidst COVID, racial injustice, loss of the unborn, the restart of federal executions, wildfires and hurricanes driven by climate change, the immoral treatment of refugees and migrants, and the worrying fragility of our democracy, how can we justify what in these readings seems like inaction?

Does not this moment in history cry to heaven for the action of prophetic witness? Is not the imperative for Christians in our time to channel the fiery righteousness of John the Baptist, the fearless engagement of Joan of Arc, and the moral confrontation in the face of injustice so poignantly modeled by Oscar Romero? Aren't Christians in this critical hour called by their faith to rise up and act?

The Trappist mystic, Thomas Merton, may help us understand. Many of us have been reading his well-known prayer from *Thoughts in Solitude* in the face of the many crises of 2020. Notice how his prayer lifts up the words of the 23rd Psalm.

*My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.*

As the recently released encyclical from Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, makes clear, we too often forget that we do not belong to ourselves; we belong to the Creator. We do not own our strengths or our weaknesses. We do not really own our intelligence or our will. We hold them in trust for the Creator and, like all creation, such things will someday return to the Creator. Our

ability to act is the same. Proper action and engagement, even and maybe especially the action so needed from us at this moment in our nation, should flow from the hope, faith, and resoluteness that are so beautifully expressed by the 23rd psalm. The prophetic witness of saints like Oscar Romero – their action in public life – blossoms from the stillness of letting go and letting God.

*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;  
beside restful waters he leads me;  
he refreshes my soul.  
He guides me in right paths  
for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk in the dark valley  
I fear no evil; for you are at my side  
with your rod and your staff  
that give me courage.*

Merton's prayer similarly reminds us that overcoming the self and surrendering to the Good Shepherd does not mean despair about our mission in the world. It's not a retreat from action. Rather, it is the ultimate source and inspiration for right action. Amen.

Stephen Schneck, PhD  
FAN Executive Director

**Suggested Action:**

Sit in humble silence this week and reflect on the hardships you have faced and how you are supported through them.

**Suggested Petitions:**

May our hearts be open to God who is within every person and may we recognize and respect each other. We pray...

May we lovingly accept our circumstances, during both hardships and abundance, and praise God equally at all times. We pray...

**Collect Prayer:**

**May your grace, O Lord, we pray,  
at all times go before us and follow after  
and make us always determined  
to carry out good works.  
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**

## You're Invited: FAN Annual Benefit Celebration

The year 2020 has been a challenge for our nation. A year like no other. Its challenges call for Franciscan values. This is a Franciscan Moment. The staff and board of [Franciscan Action Network](#) are excited to unite our energies to lift up this moment and celebrate with all our members and friends the vital witness and work we have accomplished together!



We are excited to have as our **keynote speaker for the evening, Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF**. In addition to our keynote, the evening will feature a number of musical acts as well as short reflections on each of our [2020 Franciscan Moment videos](#) from a diverse group of Franciscans and Franciscan-hearted individuals. You can [read more about them here](#).

Additionally, for certain ticket levels, we will host a special pre-show room featuring **Fr. James Martin, SJ** and **Fr. Daniel P. Horan, OFM**. It promises to be a fun-filled evening. More importantly, join us to discern together how our Franciscan values speak to the nation's critical challenges.

[Click here to reserve your ticket today!](#)

## Take Action on Expansion of Immigrant Surveillance

The Trump administration has [proposed a rule](#) to dramatically expand its surveillance over immigrants as well as U.S. citizens sponsoring immigration cases. The proposal includes collecting DNA, voice prints, iris and face scans as well as other personal characteristics for virtually all immigration and citizenship applicants to be stored in government databases, potentially forever. Even survivors of trafficking and domestic violence, including children, would not be excluded.



Our friends at CLINIC Legal have developed this [simple way to submit your public comment](#). The Department of Homeland Security has given a 30-day period — instead of the standard 60 days — for the public to submit comments on the massive, 328-page rule. **Comments are due by Tuesday, Oct. 13th**. We urge our members and friends to [speak out against this dehumanizing proposal](#).

## Join Faithful Democracy in a Sacred Season of Voting

[Faithful Democracy](#) invites you to participate in a multi-faith voter action campaign from **Thursday, October 1st through the election**. Each week, the Faithful Democracy Campaign



will prepare a simple toolkit with strategic 'Get Out the Vote' messaging, social media, and reflections grounded in key religious markers to communicate the significance of this season of voting to people of faith.

Each week we will pull from themes of holy celebrations observed by our multi-faith partners, including Sukkot, the Feast of St. Francis and St. Luke, Mawlid al-Nabi al-Sharif, Navaratri, and the Feast of All Saints. Weekly reflections are combined with messaging around key election benchmarks, online resources, and helpful tips that can be shared on social media.

Join us in celebrating this [Sacred Season of Voting!](#)

## Stop Trafficking Newsletter and Resources

The U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking are dedicated to the eradication of modern day slavery. They publish a monthly newsletter we have made [mention](#) of in the past and we wanted to bring you up to date on resources they have recently developed.

In [August](#), the Stop Trafficking Newsletter focused on the 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report, its challenges and some of the heroes who have worked on the issue for the past 20 years the TIP has been published. In [September](#), at the start of a new school year, the focus of the newsletter is on human trafficking education in our schools, as it is the key to prevention of children becoming victims of trafficking.

Additionally, the U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking released a [2-page voter's guide](#) which helps voters to understand the work needed on human trafficking. The guide offers concrete statistics and tips on how to take action, from evaluation of candidates to sharing information with newly elected officials. We must take advantage of resources like these to continuously make our government aware of our passion on this issue.



## Join the Faithful Citizenship Webinar

FAN and the NYC Franciscan Solidarity Table are offering a webinar **TOMORROW, Tuesday, October 6th from 7:30-8:30pm ET**, [Faithful Citizenship: Voting to Ensure the Common Good for All Our Brothers and Sisters](#). **You do NOT have to be from New York, everyone is welcome to register.**

Attendees will be invited to explore our moral obligation, as people of faith, to vote and consider:

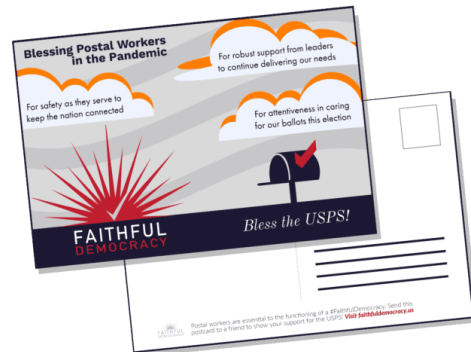
- Implications that policies enacted by those we elect into office have on society, especially on the most marginalized
- Vivid instances of voter suppression
- Franciscan call to action with steps we can take to make sure as many of us as possible are able to vote Franciscan values and assure our votes are counted for the November 2020 election.



You must [register in advance for this meeting by clicking this link](#). After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

## Take Action: #BlessTheUSPS

The United States Postal Service (USPS) has provided mail delivery as a public service in the United States since it was established in the U.S. Constitution. As people of faith, we have a duty to protect the USPS, which connects Americans to life-saving medicines, important products, and to each other across distant and sometimes remote locations--and in 2020 the USPS will connect millions of Americans to the ballot box. Our postal workers offer an essential service in this pandemic and support a faithful democracy that enables Americans to vote safely in COVID.



In this pandemic, the USPS needs emergency funding to maintain delivery services that meet the needs of the nation. The [Faithful Democracy](#) coalition has developed a [postcard campaign](#) to offer a blessing to our postal workers and show them how much care. [Click here](#) to download a single postcard or order a [FREE pack of 20](#). Send them to your Senators urging them to provide the \$25 Billion in emergency funding critical to maintain the USPS. Take a picture when you put your postcard in the mail to deliver your blessing over social media with the tags: #Faithful Democracy #BlessTheUSPS @Faith\_Democracy.