

Publication Date: October 12, 2020

Reflection Date: October 18, 2020 - 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

What Belongs to God?

Image by Anja from Pixabay

During Holy Week this strange, unpredictable year, I felt called by God to do something that would serve for me as adequate substitution for the annual ritual of the Triduum, which was being celebrated virtually, due to the pandemic. Knowing I had to embrace something completely different from the typical celebrations I would miss, I hosted a book club. Together with some friends, we read and discussed “The Last Week” by Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan.



This book is a day-by-day account of the week leading up to Easter using Mark’s Gospel as reference as it is the only one of the four which chronicles each day of Jesus’ last week. Tuesday is the day during which the temple authorities try several times to trick Jesus and one of those attempts is the story in [this week’s Gospel](#), where Jesus is asked if it is lawful to pay tax to Caesar.

Many Christians throughout history have read this passage and used it to argue one way or another about obeying laws and supporting government. However, the insight given in “The Last Week” is worth mentioning. Borg and Crossan discuss in detail the historical Jerusalem during the time in which Jesus lived, and they touch on the integration of Roman rule into the Jewish temple authorities, calling the relationship “a domination system legitimated in the name of God.” This important point helps the reader to understand the purpose behind the question in the Gospel, and the brilliance of Jesus’ non-answer.

During Jesus’ time, the Roman Empire required an annual tax from the Jewish people, collected through local authorities (the Pharisees in our Gospel). This was not only financially burdensome, but also served to accentuate the Jewish oppression by an alien lord. When the authorities set their skillful trap for Jesus, everyone who heard the exchange would have understood that either answer was going to get Jesus in trouble. If he were to answer negatively, he would be publicly denying Roman authority and charged with sedition. If he answered positively, he would have discredited himself with the crowd who resented Roman rule. This, say Borg and Crossan, was the likely purpose of posing that particular question to Jesus: to separate him from the crowd.

Jesus’ answer astutely turns the situation back on his opponents. In his asking for the coin that pays the tax, Jesus has forced his interrogators to disclose to the crowd that they have possession of such a coin. Most Jews of Jesus’ time did not carry the coins imprinted with Caesar’s image, as it was considered sinful to use these “graven images.” Rather, the Jewish people used an alternate coin with no images on it. At once, he exposes and discredits the temple authorities in front of the crowd. Following this, Jesus responds, “Repay to Caesar what

belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God”, a non-answer which raises the deeper question, “What belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God?”

We must ask ourselves the same question in our time. What is it that belongs to God? The short answer is: Everything. However, if we reflect on this answer, it naturally allows us to delve deeper into how everything which belongs to God ought to be treated. Think about how all of nature - birds and animals, trees and bushes, air and water - belongs to God. How should we treat God’s creation? Think about how every human - Jewish and Muslim, Christian and Agnostic, Franciscan and Jesuit - belongs to God. How should we treat God’s beautiful people? Think about how everything we have is bestowed by God. How should we treat the gifts we have been given?

This week, I implore you to think about what in your life belongs to God, and how you treat it. Have an honest conversation with God and gently open your heart to the Lord’s mercy, forgiveness, and healing grace. Vow to do better in your future treatment of God’s Creation.

Janine Walsh
FAN Communications Coordinator

Suggested Actions:

Take time this week to ponder what belongs to God and how it is treated.

Suggested Petitions:

May all people feel the loving warmth of God’s everlasting love and grace. We pray...
For hearts to be opened to treating God’s beautiful and bounteous Earth with respect and honor. We pray..

Collect Prayer:

**Almighty ever-living God,
grant that we may always conform our will to yours
and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart.
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

**Resources for the latest Pope Francis encyclical:
*Fratelli Tutti***

Image courtesy of the Vatican

The much anticipated pastoral letter [*Fratelli Tutti*](#) was released last week and from the very first line, Pope Francis sets the tone, calling us to go deep and fully embrace “a way of life marked by the flavor of the Gospel” in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, the “saint of fraternal love, simplicity and



joy” who inspired this encyclical. We want to share with you some resources for learning more.

- FAN’s executive director, Stephen Schneck penned this [blog post](#) offering a summation of several main themes.
- Georgetown University’s Office of Mission and Ministry, held an [online Dahlgren Dialogue](#) on *Fratelli Tutti* with over 3,600 viewers who joined in live.
- National Catholic Reporter published this [article](#) on three key themes by Fr. Daniel P. Horan, OFM who was also a featured speaker on this [Facebook Live conversation](#).
- The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns has created a [6-page study guide](#) offering key points and quotes from each chapter.

As we continue to study the encyclical, we look forward to developing new ways we can help our Franciscan members and communities use *Fratelli Tutti* to guide future actions.

Justice for Immigrants’ 15th Anniversary Webinar Series

On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the [Justice for Immigrants](#) campaign, USCCB President Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, and USCCB Migration Committee Chairman Bishop Dorsonville issued a statement, writing:



"We celebrate 15 years of the Justice for Immigrants initiative and the amazing accomplishments of Catholic organizations to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate immigrants and refugees coming to and living in the United States. While we are pleased to highlight the work that has been done by the Church and Justice for Immigrants to advance the humane treatment and legalization for immigrants, we note that the work is far from done."

In celebration, JFI has been hosting a special [webinar series](#), recordings of which can be found on their [webinar page](#). We call your attention to the first webinar of the series, [A Brief History of the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons: El Salvador as a Case Study](#).

Suppressed 2020: The Fight To Vote From Brave New Films

Our good friends at Brave New Films have released an updated version of the documentary [Suppressed 2020: The Fight to Vote](#), featuring Stacey Abrams and her fight against the calculated, racist and unconstitutional voter suppression in the Georgia midterms. This new film features timely new content which resonates with both the Covid-19 pandemic and BLM protests for systemic change.



From Brave New Films:

[Directed] by Robert Greenwald, Suppressed 2020 is a short, powerful documentary about the growing threat of voter suppression to our 2020 election. Deeply personal accounts from voters of color across the state of Georgia reveal deliberate, widespread voter suppression in the 2018 midterm election where Stacey Abrams fought to become the first Black female governor in the U.S. ... Now, amidst a global health crisis, the cruel weaponization of vote-by-mail restrictions has turned the constitutional right to vote into a choice between life and death. Suppressed 2020 is a call to action against the calculated, unconstitutional and racist attacks intended to suppress the right to vote in America.

Find out more and sign up to host your free virtual screening [here](#).

Additionally, our friends at the [Religious Action Center](#) will host a webinar of distinguished panelists to address election security issues. It will be held **October 15th at 11am ET / 8am PT and is especially geared for faith leaders.** [Register in advance by clicking here.](#)

Plan Now to Host 'Roses in December' Gathering

December 2nd marks the 40th anniversary of the martyrdom of the "Roses in December" martyrs (*pictured*), Dorothy Kazel, OSU, Maura Clarke, MM, Ita Ford, MM and Jean Donovan who were brutally murder by the U.S.-supported Salvadoran military



for their ministry and dedication to those living in poverty. They were called "subversives" because they accompanied refugee families who had fallen victim to the escalating violence and oppression that eventually led to civil war. [Read more about them here.](#)

[LCWR](#) and the [SHARE Foundation](#) invite women religious especially to celebrate the gift of these four women and remember all of those who dedicate their lives to working for justice in El Salvador and throughout the world. Please plan now to host a prayer vigil, evening of conversation and story-telling, retreat, or other gathering in your communities, parishes or educational institutions.

The hope is to commemorate the lives of the Roses in December martyrs by hosting 40 remembrances in 40 cities to mark the 40th anniversary. The SHARE Foundation is collecting brief descriptions of local events. Send details to jose@share-elsalvador.org to be counted among the 40.

This [Roses in December toolkit](#) is available to help with organizing your event. The toolkit includes the story of the four women; background on El Salvador; many ideas for celebrations, prayer services, action and advocacy; and a list of resources.

Have You Bought Your Ticket to FAN's Annual Benefit Celebration Yet?

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

FRANCISCAN ACTION NETWORK

Annual Benefit
Celebration

2020: A FRANCISCAN MOMENT

energies to lift up this moment and celebrate with all our members and friends the vital witness and work we have accomplished together! **We hope you will join our special night on October 28th at 7p ET / 4pm PT.**

We are thrilled 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 pre-show conversation 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!](#)

Tomorrow, Oct. 13th, Show Your Support of Immigrants

FAN has learned of several opportunities to show support for our immigrant brothers and sisters.

We have made you aware of the Trump administration's [proposed rule](#) to dramatically expand its surveillance over immigrants as well as U.S. citizens sponsoring immigration cases.



Comments against this proposal are due by TOMORROW, Tuesday, Oct. 13th. We urge our members and friends to [speak out against this dehumanizing proposal](#) using the easy [comment tool](#) developed by our friends at CLINIC Legal.

Also on Tuesday, October 13th, the [I Am An Immigrant](#) campaign will be hosting its 5th annual #IStandWithImmigrants Day of Action. This November, it's absolutely critical that we stand with immigrant families and communities when we vote. The campaign is urging supporters to use social media to spread pro-immigrant and pro-voting messages or publish an op-ed in your local newspaper. Get some message ideas in this [helpful toolkit](#).

October Issue of Stop Trafficking Newsletter

The [U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking](#) publish the Anti-Trafficking Newsletter, dedicated exclusively to fostering an exchange of information among USCSAHT members, organizations, and concerned persons collaborating to eliminate all forms of human trafficking.

The [October issue](#) of the Stop Trafficking newsletter focuses on the vulnerability of indigenous people to human trafficking.

You can find past issues of the newsletter on our website by [clicking here](#).



