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Reflection Date: November 15, 2020 - 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Using our Gifts: Reward or Burden?

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On this mid-November Sunday, we are approaching the end of the Liturgical Year, and in another month the end of a calendar year. In this part of the world, falling leaves note the end of a season, inviting us to reflect on endings—not only of a season, of a year, but also one’s earthly life. Our consciousness of dying is heightened this year by the daily deaths resulting from COVID 19; tens of thousands in the United States, and millions world-wide. Rising statistics are sobering and alarming. Most of us know at least one person who has died from COVID.



But endings are also a beginning. When this reflection is read, we may know or not know the results of U.S. elections. What we do know is that we are deeply divided as a country, and a specter of violence hangs over elections and their outcomes. On a national level, it may be the continuation of an administration or the beginning of a new one. Whatever the results, we are called upon to use our God-given gifts, our talents, to contribute to the reign of God on Earth and the common good of our country. All of us have gifts, and in God’s wisdom, they differ, all contributing to a common goal. How can my gifts help with healing of deep divisions?

The fault is to bury one’s gifts. In [Matthew’s gospel](#) parable, one servant buries his talent out of fear of the master. Could his fear also have been that of assuming responsibility? As a reward, the servants who use their talents are given more responsibility. Perhaps this seems more like a burden than a reward. There are times I do not welcome opportunities to use my gifts. Doing one more thing seems too much. I’m tired, or I’m old, or I’ve experienced more failure than success. I’m tempted to say, “Let someone else do it.” Jesus understands my reluctance, my weakness, yet he reminds me—and us—that every gift, no matter how small, is given to be used for promotion of the Gospel and for the common good. May we be grateful for our God-given gifts and not bury them, even when the reward for using them is greater responsibility.

Sr. Marie Lucey, OSF
FAN Associate Director

Suggested Action:

Reflect on these words of St. Augustine of Hippo, which resonate across centuries:
“The times are bad! The times are troublesome!” This is what humans say. But we are our times. Let us live well and our times will be good. Such as we are, such are our times.”

Suggested Petitions:

May we acknowledge our God-given gifts and show our gratitude by using them. We pray...
May we all take responsibility for helping to reduce the impacts of the coronavirus. We pray...

Prayer by Dr. Roger Hurding

Jesus, I thank you for your love so strong. May that love flow through me to others.
May I be patient when change comes slowly.

May I be kind when life seems harsh. May I be gentle when others feel bruised.

May I be humble when things go well. May I be peaceful when anger rises within.

May I rejoice when the truth is discovered.

Love never fails, but I do.

May I hope when things seem hopeless.

May I persevere when the way is hard.

Amen.

Deeply Grateful to All Our Supporters for Successful Benefit

Wednesday evening, October 28th saw a truly inspiring group of Franciscan and Franciscan-hearted friends and supporters [gather](#) for prayer, music, reflection, and fun!

While we missed being able to gather in person, our virtual event was the best attended we have experienced thanks to

YOU. Over 170 people gathered for prayerful solidarity and heard passionate speakers who shared how brightly the flame burns in living the Gospel with courage and integrity. We heard five diverse pieces of music, from choral to hip-hop, that lifted our spirits in ways beyond just words. We were joined by such inspiring Franciscans throughout the evening-- Bishop John Stowe, OFM, Conv., Sr. Joan Brown OSF, Sr. Jannette Pruitt, OSF, Marie Dennis, OFS, Archbishop Roberto González Nieves, OFM and our keynote speaker, Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF. The passion to work together to build God's Kingdom here and now shown through.

We are happy to share with those who couldn't join us live the [recording of the event here](#).

You make FAN's work possible and we are honored and blessed to be walking side-by-side with you in our mission to transform U.S. public policy related to peacemaking, care for creation, poverty and human rights. For those who have not yet donated and still wish to do so, you can [donate online here](#) or send a check to Franciscan Action Network PO Box 29106 Washington, DC 20017.

A GIANT THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!



The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Human

Trafficking

The [November issue](#) of the Stop Trafficking Newsletter highlights some of the many predictable and many unforeseen ways the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted human trafficking.

A blog series on the evolution of human trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic offers a stark look at the increase in sexual harassment complaints and exploitation possible amid the lockdowns and isolation. This month's issue may be accessed by [clicking here](#).

For access to all previous issues of the Stop Trafficking Newsletter, please [visit this page of our website](#).



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Sacred Season of Voting Continues in Election Aftermath

Last week's election day saw record-high turnouts of voters across the country. Increased numbers of absentee ballots meant a more elongated period of time than usual to ensure every vote was counted. That's OK—the election process and our democracy is working. We must always count every vote, no matter how long it takes. The [Sacred Season of Voting](#) continues in the aftermath. The voters ultimately decide who wins an election, not the candidates. We must all respect the rule of law.

During the wait, we were grateful for reflection and prayer. Two pieces we would like to share with you are [this piece by Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv.](#) and this one [by Fr. Dan Horan, OFM.](#)

We also know that no matter the outcome of any election, our work continues as we advocate for peace, justice, and the integrity of creation. Last week, the United States formally withdrew from the Paris Climate Accord. FAN [signed onto an interfaith letter admonishing the decision](#). Together, we continue to advocate as a Franciscan family as we follow Pope Francis' plea in *Laudato Si* to “hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.” Now to do what is ours.



New Report on Family Separation Policy

The House Judiciary Committee recently released a [report](#) of the findings of its 21-month investigation into the development and execution of the administration's family separation policy, which resulted in more than 2,500 migrant children becoming unnecessarily separated from their parents.

The report, entitled "[The Trump Administration's Family Separation Policy: Trauma, Destruction,](#)



[and Chaos](#)," is revelatory from the Executive Summary, which states:

"Our examination of these documents allows us to provide the first complete narrative of the Trump Administration's inhumane family separation policy, in the Administration's own words. The investigation reveals a process marked by reckless incompetence and intentional cruelty." The report cites significant documents not shared publicly before now, which "reveal the extent of the chaos that enveloped the federal government during the planning and implementation of the family separation policy, as well as its failed attempts to reunite families."

This information discloses that there are children who will likely NEVER be reunited with their parents. We use this information to fuel our actions to advocate for these and all migrant children and raise our collective voice on behalf of them and their families.

Advent Resources for Prayer and Reflection

Image by DarkmoonArt_de from Pixabay

As we approach what will undoubtedly be an Advent season unlike any we have celebrated, we seek all those varied resources which will help us navigate the sacred time in a spirit of hope during this extraordinary year of uncertainty and anxiety. Thus far, we have been made aware of the following.



- **Franciscan Media** will have new resources coming soon. In the meantime, here is last year's blog post: [A Guided Tour through Advent](#) along with multiple books and reflection guides for the season available for purchase by [clicking here](#).
- **Pax Christi USA's** popular Advent-Christmas reflection booklets are available [here](#) for purchase. Entitled, "[I Say to You: WATCH!](#)" [Reflections for Advent & Christmas 2020](#), one finds reflections for Advent Sundays, Christmas and Epiphany from the granddaughter of Dorothy Day.
- The **Episcopal Church** has a plethora of updated [resources](#) for the 2020 Advent season, including a calendar, sermon helpers, bulletin inserts and more. [Click here](#).
- The **United Methodist Church** publishing house has [books and resources here](#), including a series of webinars to help plan and celebrate.

If you know of other resources from communities or organizations, please [let us know](#).

New Immigration Bill Introduced In Congress

Bishop Mario Dorsonville of Washington, DC, and Chairman of USCCB's Migration Committee, wrote a letter of support to members of the [House](#) and [Senate](#) endorsing [H.R. 4928](#) / [S.3470](#), *The New Deal for New Americans*, introduced by Representative Grace Meng and Senator Edward Markey, respectively.



The bill would establish a National Office of New Americans in the White House, provide social, economic, and civic support to refugees, and rebuild the capacity and infrastructure of local communities to welcome refugees. Additionally, the bill would also set a minimum refugee admissions goal of 110,000 and eliminate roadblocks to citizenship for eligible residents.