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Reflection Date: November 29, 2020 - First Sunday of Advent

Blessed Hope

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Our message this [first Sunday of Advent](#) is one of hope. “God wrought awesome deeds we could not hope for” (Is. 64:3) even as our nation and our world cope with a pandemic that has impacted the lives of possibly every person on earth. A microscopic virus has reminded us of our common humanity and how interdependent we are with all of God’s creation. We all can get sick, we all will die, and we all at times hang on to hope by a thread. Often during the past few months, my only thread of hope was the words cited after the Our Father at Mass “...may we



always...be free from distress as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our savior, Jesus Christ.” Blessed Hope.

COVID has forced us to question the roots of our happiness and what is important in life. Our baptismal mandate calls us to place our lives at the service of others as Jesus did, especially those poor, marginalized, those deemed not “acceptable” or not “worthy” by others.

Self-absorption can never lead to satisfaction or happiness. Self-serving behavior and actions will only prompt violence within the self. Pope Francis states in the encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*: “Isolation and withdrawal into one’s own interests are never the way to restore hope and bring about renewal.”

We enter this season of waiting remembering that “No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen, any God...doing such deeds for those who wait for him.” (Is. 64:4) Our experience this year has taught us that we cannot put our hope in our possessions, power, wealth, position, nationality, skin tone, or anything else in this world but the love of our God who is always our source of hope. The Pope exhorts in *Fratelli Tutti*, “Hope is bold; it can look beyond personal convenience, the petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon, and it can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile.”

At this time when fear, suffering, insecurity, grief, and sorrow have brought our world together, so can hope. As Pope Francis declared back in April, there “is a different type of ‘contagion’. Its message transmitted from heart to heart—for every human heart awaits this Good News. It is the contagion of hope.” In *Fratelli Tutti*, Francis writes “everyone has a fundamental role to play in a single great creative project: to write a new page of history, a page full of hope, peace and reconciliation.” So “Be watchful! Be alert!” (Mk. 13: 33) to those threads of blessed hope as we enter this season of waiting. Then exhale and allow your threads of hope to flow into our future.

Sr. Maryann Mueller, CSSF
FAN Member

Suggested Action:

Each morning this week, say a prayer of hope. We offer these [7 Christian Prayers for Hope](#) or speak to God in your own words, asking to be filled with Blessed Hope.

Suggested Petitions:

For all those impacted by the coronavirus, may they see threads of blessed hope each day as we await the coming of Jesus Christ. We pray...

May each of us be signs of hope to those we encounter each day. We pray...

Collect Prayer:

**Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ
with righteous deeds at his coming,
so that, gathered at his right hand,
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.
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.

Invitation: Join in Praying a Migrants Novena

Carolyn Townes, OFS is a FAN friend and the Animator of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation for the National Secular Order in the United States. She contacted us recently about a new [Migrants Novena resource](#) developed by the National Immigration Focus Group.

Where there is a need, there is a Franciscan and when we Franciscans join together in prayer, amazing things happen.

We invite our members and friends to join us in praying this [novena](#) for 9 days.

Through this prayer, we will be in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who, like the Holy Family, sought a distant land for safety, security and solace. Meditating on the prayers, the reflections and the Scripture passage of the Holy Family fleeing into Egypt will focus us on the plight of the migrants and refugees in our country and in our world.

We invite you to begin on December 12th, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas, ending on December 20th, the 4th Sunday of Advent. [Click here](#) to download the novena.



Take Action: President-elect Joe Biden & Congress

must enact democracy reform

In 2021, President-elect Joe Biden will have many important issues to address: from combating climate change and gun violence, to overcoming the coronavirus pandemic and dismantling systemic racism in America. But in order for effective movement to happen on any of the issues we care about, we need to [build a stronger and more representative democracy](#).



In March 2019, the For the People Act (HR 1) passed the House with unanimous support from the Democratic caucus, and is supported by every Democrat in the Senate -- yet the Senate Majority Leader refuses to bring it up for a vote. FAN has joined with our good governance and Faithful Democracy partners in promoting [this petition](#) urging the Biden Administration to make passing this important legislation a top priority. This bill would transform our political system into one that is more inclusive, responsive, and representative of the American people. HR1 would expand and protect voting rights, put ordinary Americans ahead of Big Money donors, and end gerrymandering. [Read more about it here](#).

We urge our members and friends to [sign the petition](#) demanding a democracy that works for all of us.

Take Action: Demand Arctic Drilling be Stopped

Last week, the Trump administration moved a step closer toward developing the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The current administration on Tuesday published a "call for nominations" on parcels of the refuge that could be offered for lease to oil and gas companies. As Franciscans who care for all of God's Creation, we must [advocate on behalf](#) of the wildlife and indigenous people who call that area home.

The refuge is located in northern Alaska, east of the oil fields in Prudhoe Bay. The Arctic lands were established as a refuge in 1960 as the area provides critical habitat for polar bears. Indigenous Peoples who depend on their traditional lands and waters in the Arctic to sustain their way of life would be hit by both dangerous, dirty drilling and a rapidly changing climate. More oil drilling will compound the devastating impacts already being felt from climate change throughout the Arctic. We must [tell the Bureau of Land Management that the Arctic Refuge is not for sale](#).



There is a public comment period on the potential leases that runs until Dec. 17th and we devised [this tool for leaving comments](#). We urge our members and friends to [write a comment](#) opposing the development of this land. **Each comment submitted must be individualized to count, so be sure to change the wording to make the comment your own!**

Advent Resource - Lighting the Candles: Journeys

with Black Migrants

As an active participant in the [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#) (IIC), FAN's own Sr. Marie Lucey and Sr. Maria Orlandini sit on the Holy Days and Holidays committee. This group develops resources with different themes for use at various times during the year. For Advent this year, the Holy Days and Holidays resource will focus on Black Migrants.



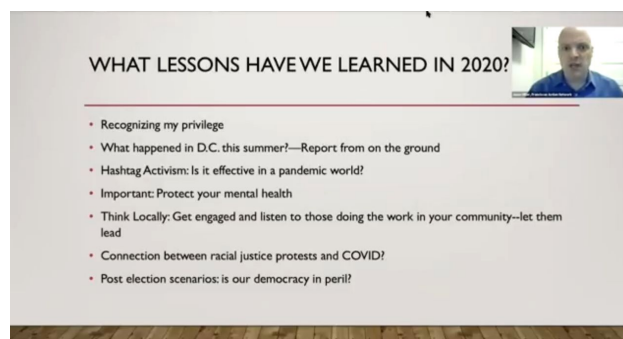
All sessions offer scripture, spiritual reflection & question, a story of black migrants, actions, and a prayer. There are 7 Sessions, one for each of the 4 Weeks of Advent, Christmas, and the feasts of the Holy Family & Epiphany.

Sign Up at: <http://bit.ly/BlackMigrantsJourneys> to receive the resources when they are ready.

Non-Violent Resistance in a Post-George Floyd Covid-19 Pandemic World

This year has been unlike any other in recent memory. What lessons have we learned from the pandemic and the protests for racial justice that can apply to our advocacy work as non-violent resisters striving for justice?

Chapman University recently [hosted](#) FAN's own Jason Miller as a guest speaker for a "lesson from the field" on the topic of nonviolent action. Taking lessons from this challenging year, Jason walked attendees through what advocacy looks like in a post-George Floyd racial justice society and showed how 2020 really is a "Franciscan Moment."



The session was recorded and is accessible on our [YouTube page here](#).

The Public Health Approach to Gun Violence Prevention

The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (Ed Fund) released a report last week, "[The Public Health Approach to Gun Violence Prevention](#)," which outlines how a public health approach can be applied to reducing the U.S. epidemic of gun violence.

In recent years, nearly 40,000 people have been killed and more than 71,000 injured by firearms annually in the



