

Publication Date: January 25, 2021

Reflection Date: January 31, 2021 - 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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## If Today You Hear His Voice

Image by [Free-Photos](#) from [Pixabay](#)

The [readings for the 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time](#), 2021, talk about God speaking to us, to you, to me, to all people. In the first reading from Deuteronomy, Moses tells the people, “A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you from among your own kin; to him you shall listen.” The Gospel reading, Mark tells us that when the people hear Jesus teach, they are astonished, “for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes....He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.”



I often ponder, what must it be like to teach with authority? Do we have teachers with authority today? While we each have our reason, our intellect and the talents with which God has blessed us, can we be sure that our ideas can be taught with authority? Does the teaching with authority ascribed to Jesus apply to our teachers in universities, government, and media outlets?

Certainly, these secular institutions have authority to ensure we have a civil, just and equitable society, where the rights and dignity of each person is upheld. These institutions have a duty to teach us, authoritatively, how to live in a civilized manner and how to protect and uphold the rights of the other. They have a duty to teach us how to administer and manage the complexities of government, infrastructure, education, justice systems, economics, public safety and defense.

Jesus taught with the authority of God. Jesus left us a teaching authority, the Church, to guide us on our spiritual journey, navigating the simple (yet complex because we get in our own way) infrastructure necessary to attain the Kingdom of Heaven. “Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.” (Lk 10:16) “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:19) and so we have our bishops to teach and guide us along the way.

I don’t know about you, but sometimes I struggle to reconcile secular teaching authority with Church teaching authority. Often, my ego will rebel against both. Government, I claim, is taking away my “individual” rights. The Church is telling me that some of my human desires are not in line with the moral teachings of Jesus. We, as Americans, are used to being highly individualistic in our thinking. We often selfishly complain that anything that infringes on our “individual” wants and desires, even if it is for the good of the whole, is an affront to our personal liberty. St Paul instructs us to “be under the control of magistrates and authorities, to be obedient, to be open to every good enterprise.” (Titus 3:1) We have the duty to be obedient to those who govern in all things but sin. “First of all, then, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgiving be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority, that we may

lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity. This is good and pleasing to God our savior.” (1 Tim 2:3)

It isn't easy living a Christian life in our culture today. What are we to do? “If today you hear my voice, harden not your hearts” our Psalm response proclaims. We hear the voice of God in Sacred Scripture, in the Church and the Holy Spirit's inspirations. And what is our response? “Come, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the LORD who made us. For he is our God, and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.” (Ps 95:6-7) Obey the Lord, obey civil authority in all things but sin and pray for them. Render our praise and worship to God and let the peace of Christ reign in our hearts. This is good and pleasing to God our savior.

David Seitz, OFS  
FAN Member

### **Suggested Action:**

Take time this week to be in nature, close your eyes and listen to the sounds of wind in the trees, birds singing, and squirrels moving about. See if you can open your heart to hear God speak to you.

### **Suggested Petitions:**

May our hearts be open to hearing the loving message of God. We pray...

May we possess the Wisdom of Jesus to discern the teachings of authority. We pray...

### **Collect Prayer:**

**Grant us, Lord our God,  
that we may honor you with all our mind,  
and love everyone in truth 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.**

## **What's Next? Reaction to Immigration Policy Actions and the Future of DACA**

As an active member of the [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#), FAN was [delighted](#) to see the actions taken by the Biden-Harris Administration on numerous immigration-related issues. Earlier this month, the coalition as a whole took a [blueprint for policy change](#) to the Biden-Harris transition team and recommended implementation of three

### ***What's Next?***

*The Future of DACA in Regards to  
Litigation, Executive Action &  
Legislation*

A New Briefing from the Presidents' Alliance & TheDream.US

Jan. 25, 2021  
2 p.m. ET / 11 a.m. PT

RSVP: [bit.ly/DACABriefing2021](https://bit.ly/DACABriefing2021)



THE DREAM.US PRESIDENTS' ALLIANCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND IMMIGRATION

big-picture goals:

- Bring accountability, compassion, fairness, and morality to immigration and other policies. Tear down walls and build communities.
- Decolonize the U.S.' role in other countries as they build and strengthen.
- Work with Congress to pass bold, humane, and compassionate immigration laws.

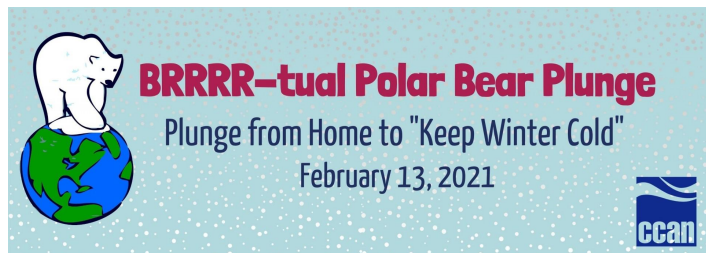
For more, see the summary [here](#).

For those who want to learn more, at **2pm ET (11am PT) TODAY** the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration and [TheDream.US](#) will host a briefing for members, partners, and advocates to provide information on the future of DACA. The briefing will share the latest updates on the Fifth Circuit legal challenge that threatens the continued existence of DACA. Speakers will also discuss how we expect DACA to change under the incoming administration, including ongoing efforts to shape implementation. [Click here to register](#).

We look forward to building a strong, beneficial relationship with policy-makers to achieve bipartisan legislation that reflects the beautiful diversity of our nation.

## Franciscan Action Network Takes the Polar Bear Plunge...from Home!

On February 13th Franciscan Action Network (FAN) staff and friends will be taking the [#PolarBearChallenge](#) to Keep Winter Cold, draw attention to the critical issue of climate change, and support the important work of both FAN and the Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN). [Join our team and plunge from home with us!](#)



You're probably thinking we are a little nuts (or, maybe you knew that already) but we believe in the good work of CCAN, an organization that's making a real difference. We will be joined by hundreds of other climate activists (including Bill McKibbin of 350.org) as we choose our challenge, whether the ice bucket challenge or jumping into a freezing cold body of water. To learn more about the 16th annual "Keep Winter Cold" Polar Bear Plunge visit [keepwintercold.org](#).

What does the Polar Bear Plunge have to do with helping FAN and CCAN? Well, that's where you come in! Just like people do for a turkey trot or 5K run, we are only agreeing to take this challenge if you support us. You pledge, we freeze, and together we raise money to continue the work of caring for God's Creation.

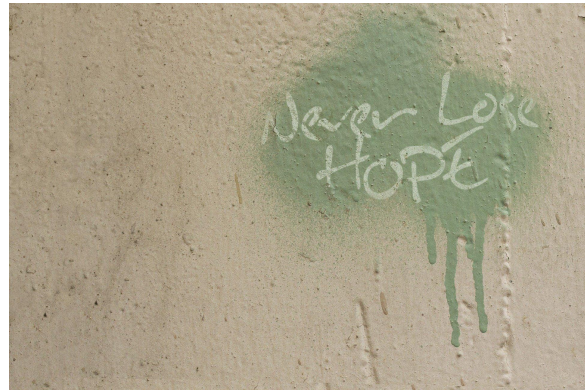
**Can you help out by donating \$35, \$50 or \$100 to sponsor us?** [Simply pull out your credit card and visit our donation page](#). How's that for easy?! If you prefer to sponsor our plunge by check, make it out to "Franciscan Action Network" and send to P.O. Box 29106, Washington, DC 20017. Just make sure to write "POLAR BEAR PLUNGE" on the memo line.

Thank you so much for supporting us in our efforts to care for Creation.

## New Administration Brings Out Hope for Unity

Image by [ShonEjai](#) from [Pixabay](#)

The staff of Franciscan Action Network watched last week's inauguration with the hope that the words of unity from President Biden would come to fruition. In a [statement](#) released that afternoon, we offered "our faith and the Franciscan tradition of peace to illuminate a path toward that unity – in service to those most vulnerable among us."

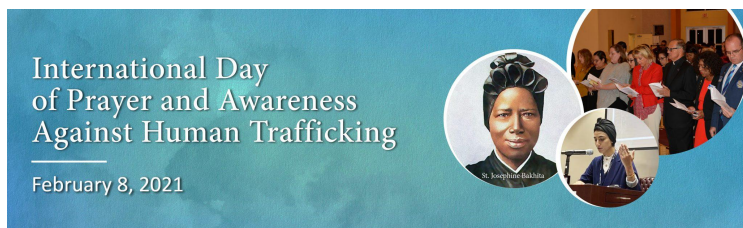


In his first hours, President Biden [signed](#) 17 executive orders, memorandums and proclamations, many of which directly affected policies which we have worked on for years. Issues such as the [environment](#), [immigration](#), economic recovery, and restoring efforts to promote diversity align with FAN's mission to promote equity and human dignity. We look forward to working with the new administration on these topics.

So, we "...begin again, brothers [and sisters], for up until now, we have done little or nothing."  
- St. Francis of Assisi

## International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking

Four organizations have collaborated in organizing a [series of events](#) honoring the **International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking coming up on February 8th.**



The John J. Brunetti Human Trafficking Academy at St. Thomas University College of Law and the [Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking](#) (CCOAHT), the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services, and Catholic Health Association of the United States together invite you to join one or all of three events which we are proud to offer free and open to the public. FAN Director of Advocacy, Sr. Maria Orlandini is our representative in CCOAHT and will be part of the prayer service on February 8th.

**PART I:** Prayer Service for Reflection and Action against Human Trafficking (Virtual)  
10:15 AM – 10:45 AM EST (7:15 AM - 7:45 AM PST)

**PART II:** Survivor Perspectives: Informing our Work against Human Trafficking (Virtual)  
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM EST (8:00 AM - 9:00 AM PST)

**Mass** for Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking (In-person & Online)  
12:15 PM – 1:00 PM EST (9:15 AM - 10:00 AM PST)

[Click here for more information and to register to attend.](#) "We cannot rest until trafficking in human persons is eliminated from the globe." – Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski, Archdiocese of Miami.

## Save the Date: Sacred People, Sacred Earth Day of



## Action March 11, 2021

Our good friends at GreenFaith are among the founding grassroots partners in 14 countries collaborating in a new era of global, multi-faith climate action. [Sacred People, Sacred Earth](#) is billed as the **biggest ever multi-faith climate day of action**. On **March 11, 2021** diverse, grassroots people of faith and conscience will [come together to demand real climate solutions and to lead by example](#).

United by a fundamental belief that all people, all living things, and the Earth are sacred, partner organizations from all over the world have come together to coordinate actions. Watch this [moving video](#)! There are [10 bold demands](#) that grassroots faith communities around the world have developed which seek to provide opportunities for people of diverse faiths and spiritualities everywhere to get involved.

We hope our members and friends will use this [helpful guide](#) to plan or join an action during [Sacred People, Sacred Earth](#). Let's mobilize our communities to a better world for the benefit of all.

