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Reflection Date: February 21, 2021 - First Sunday in Lent

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## Living out the Covenant with God and All Creation

Image by [Sasin Tipchai](#) from [Pixabay](#)

This week we begin our Lenten journey, a solemn religious observance where Christians focus on simple living, prayer, and fasting in order to grow closer to God. It is often thought of as a period to coincide with the forty days Jesus went into the desert and fasted, then faced three temptations of money, power and greed. These are the things that, had Jesus succumbed, would have led him away from God. These are the same three things that we are tempted with today. How easy it is for us to fall prey to those temptations.



In the [first reading](#) from Genesis, God said to Noah: “See, I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you: all the birds, and the various tame and wild animals that were with you and came out of the ark. I will establish my covenant with you.” God did not establish a covenant with just humans. The Noahic covenant is with all of God’s creation. Several times in this reading God reiterates that the covenant is with all creatures, not just man. I often think this is one of those stories that we tend to gloss over. We focus on the rainbow and forget the wondrous beauty of a covenant with all living creatures. Why would God feel it necessary to include all living creatures in this Covenant? As St. Hildegard of Bingen, the 12<sup>th</sup> century mystic taught us; every creature has a spirituality. And as St Francis of Assisi believed, all of God’s creation are his brother and sister thereby, we are connected to all of creation through God. Think about how profound that is. It is not just about you and God, but you, God *and* all creation. This covenant should give us pause for reflection the next time we consider destroying the environment through fracking, building a pipeline or digging up coal and oil, or when we think nothing about polluting the water and air. We are breaking the covenant that God set down at the very start of the first book of our sacred scriptures.

In the Gospel reading from Mark we are told the “kingdom of God is at hand.” What kind of kingdom are we building? Is it a kingdom where we live in separation? A kingdom where we feel righteous while we destroy God’s creatures, where we think it is okay for some to starve while others waste? Are we building a kingdom where we feel that it is just about me and God?

As we begin our Lenten journey let us take time to reflect on how we can truly live out the covenant God made with us and all living creatures so as to build a kingdom of interconnectedness. A kingdom based on the fundamental truth that we are all brothers and sisters, connected to all creation through God.

Janine Walsh

FAN Communications Coordinator

### **Suggested Action:**

Sit in nature this week and contemplate your deep rooted connection as a spiritual being to all God's creation.

### **Suggested Petitions:**

For the humility to enter our Lenten Season with contrite hearts, relying on our Merciful God's forgiveness, we pray...

For hearts and minds to be open to the transforming love of God, we pray...

### **Collect Prayer:**

**Grant, almighty God,  
through the yearly observances of holy Lent,  
that we may grow in understanding  
of the riches hidden in Christ  
any by worthy conduct pursue their efforts.  
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.**

## **Immigration Work Builds as Advocates Continue Pressuring Biden Administration**

As a member of the Justice for Immigrants Campaign (JFI) of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), FAN joined other Catholic Leaders in delivering a [letter to the Biden Administration](#) urging them to redesignate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Central American countries based on recent devastating hurricanes that have hit the area. In addition, many immigration rights advocates continue to pressure the administration urging a halt of deportations. A [report from Witness at the Border](#) showed deportation flights had declined in January, which is good news.



This **Thursday, February 18th at 2pm ET / 11am PT** Justice for Immigrants will host a webinar titled "*Impacts of COVID-19 on Immigrant Communities and Catholic Responses.*" Discussion will center on the impacts of the pandemic on immigrant and refugee communities throughout the U.S. along with Catholic community responses. **This webinar will also be held in Spanish immediately after at 3pm ET / 12pm PT.**

Register for the webinar in [ENGLISH here](#) and in [SPANISH here](#).

Finally, it was announced last week that beginning on February 19th, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will begin phase one of a program to restore safe and orderly

processing at the southwest border. DHS will begin processing people who had been forced to “remain in Mexico” under the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP). Approximately 25,000 individuals in MPP continue to have active cases. This is also good news and we will continue to monitor the progress of this program.

## Lent Begins Wednesday. Find Resources Here

Image by [Gerd Altmann](#) from [Pixabay](#)

The season of Lent begins this Wednesday, February 17th and we want to make you aware of several resources being offered to help you engage in the season with an open heart and mind.

The FAN staff has put together a series of reflection videos based on the [Franciscan Values](#) written at our founding which continue to guide our work. We will be sending out an email with a link to these videos beginning on Ash Wednesday and continuing each Friday of Lent. [Find more information here.](#)



The Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC) will release a Lenten devotional from the Holy Days and Holidays committee. *Lenten Values: Springing into Action* will reflect on nine values that ground the work of immigration justice; each one features scripture, stories, and more. [Sign up here to receive the materials once they're ready.](#) FAN's own Sisters Marie Lucey and Maria Orlandini contributed to the series.

The Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth are offering a special Lenten Calendar that complements the anti-racism initiatives many have recently undertaken. [Click here to download \*A Lenten Journey from Racism to the Beloved Community.\*](#)

## ACTION: Social Media Art Storm this Wednesday to #StopLine3

Allied climate organizations in Minnesota are summoning an [Art Storm to #StopLine3](#) on February 17th to amplify the widespread opposition to the Line 3 tar sands pipeline. Recently the Biden Administration revoked federal permits for the Keystone XL pipeline and the same can be done for Line 3. The Art Storm on social media is a collective call on the administration to hold true to climate justice promises.



For more information, follow the [Facebook event page](#) and see this [action toolkit](#) for ideas and instructions on how to contribute.

**Two more ACTIONS:** Additionally, two separate petitions have been organized asking President Biden to take executive action to stop Line 3:

1. [Individual people of faith](#) are encouraged to sign this petition.
2. [Organizational signers](#) are encouraged to sign this petition.

## Franciscan Federation Webinar for Black History Month

To heal the divisions and injustices of our world Pope Francis calls for a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach at all levels: personal, social, political, economic, no matter the issue. We keep this directive in mind in all our work to combat systemic racism.

FAN's own Jason Miller will be speaking on a webinar hosted by the [Franciscan Federation](#) coming up next week on **Feb. 22nd at 7:30pm ET / 4:30pm PT** titled, [Where Do We Go From Here?](#)



With St. Francis and Pope Francis as our guide, Jason will lead a discussion centered on confronting white privilege and white supremacy in the post-George Floyd and Post-Donald Trump era. This eye opening conversation promises to not only educate participants but challenge them as well. [Join us by clicking here to register.](#)

Additionally, our good friends at Franciscan Media recently published a very engaging profile article in St. Anthony's Messenger called [A Catholic Response to Racism](#).

Each of us has a narrative that has helped form who we are. Those stories are made up of pleasant experiences as well as harsh realities. For Deacon Art Miller, the latter played a large part in shaping both his life and ministry of combating racism in our Church and in society. [Click here to read Deacon Art Miller's inspiring story.](#)

## Tragedy Strikes Former Member of FAN Staff

Many of our faithful members and friends might remember Rhett Engelking (*pictured, far left*), who was on staff with FAN for several years between 2013-2016. Originally from Wisconsin, Rhett had a passion for the environment and served to begin developing a campaign, then called the Franciscan Earth Corps, which has since transformed into our current Franciscan Solidarity Tables.

We learned last week of the tragic death of Rhett's father, [Raymond Engelking](#) who was shot and killed in his home while heroically protecting his wife from a homicidal intruder. As a past staff member and a current member of a Franciscan Fraternity, we mourn with our friend and his family during this most difficult time.



The family has established the "Ray Engelking Memorial Scholarship Fund" in his name to support at-risk students from West Bend West high school where Ray taught economics for 45 years. To make a 501c3 tax-deductible tribute to Ray please visit <http://wbcolumns.org/donate> and in the "Name of the Scholarship" field, type "Ray Engelking."

We ask that you keep Rhett and his family in your prayers.

## How Does our Sacred Story Affect our Call to Justice?

Franciscan Sister Ilia Delio, OSF and the [Center for Christogenesis](#) will host a Zoom conversation with FAN friend Patrick Carolan discussing how our sacred story affects our call to justice.



Faith activists are engaged in the critical and absolute necessary work of rooting out and changing the systemic injustices so entrenched in all of our systems. Many self identify as “Matthew 25 Christians.” They often use Catholic Social Teachings and Biblical quotes from Isaiah 58 and others to support their work.

In a world that is filled with suffering and pain it is comforting to believe in a story—a theology—that God is always there, interceding on behalf of the faithful. A theology that teaches that the ultimate goal is to go to a better place. But is this a theology that can truly bring about justice and peace?

On **Feb. 25th at 4pm ET / 1pm PT**, join the [Center for Christogenesis](#) in this exciting conversation with Patrick and Ilia exploring a renewed sacred story for a more just world. Find more information and register by [clicking here](#).

## Join in the Sacred People, Sacred Earth Day of Action March 11, 2021

As Franciscans and Franciscan-hearted people, we have a special responsibility to care for all God’s Creation and hurting communities, especially in the conversation around how to recover from COVID-19. This responsibility requires us to take action in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in our nation and around the world who are simultaneously affected adversely by climate change and most severely impacted by the pandemic.



[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. As a co-sponsor we at **FAN invite you to join us in this global day of action on social media** and together create a powerful Franciscan call to protect God’s sacred people and sacred earth!

Click [here to find an event in your local area](#) or if you are interested in organizing your own event, find useful information [here](#). We look forward to joining you on March 11th as we join Franciscans and others all over the world in sounding the alarm for the environmental crisis. A far better future is possible if our collective response to the pandemic and the climate crisis is guided by compassion, love, and justice at a scale that meets this moment.

## February Issue of Stop Trafficking Newsletter

The focus of the [February 2021 issue of the the stop trafficking newsletter](#) is on human trafficking within the prison system of the United States.

The United States is home to 4% of the world's female population, and 33 % of the entire world's incarcerated female population. As of January 2019, 133 women per every 100,000 female citizens in the United States were imprisoned. The number of women in state prisons has risen

by 834% over the past 40 years. Traffickers are targeting these women, trapping many of them in an endless cycle of criminalization and exploitation.



Please [click here](#) to read the February issue of the Stop Trafficking Newsletter. For archived issues of this newsletter, please visit our [website](#).