

Rejoice! Because God so Loved the World

Image by [Monika Robak](#) from [Pixabay](#)

We are nearing the great Easter Triduum: the celebration of our Free gift of Salvation. The Scripture [Readings of this Fourth Sunday](#), called also “Laetare (Rejoice) Sunday,” remind us, in case we have forgotten it, that indeed Salvation is a free gift, a gift given in spite of our rejection and blindness.

What is it with us humans that at times we can be so blind and deaf to warnings and even evidence that something cannot continue as it is, even to our own peril?



The first reading tells us that God tried everything to warn the people about their behaviors. God sent messengers to help them confront the evil of their actions, but they did not listen and they mocked the messengers. They were not able to heed the warning and change their behavior. So the house of God was burned and the people sent into exile. But God in the end did not leave them and through the vision of Cyrus, king of Persia, the worship in the temple was restored.

St. Paul, in the letter to the Ephesians, also makes it clear that while we were dead in our transgression we were brought to life with Christ. And finally, John’s Gospel presents us with the very well known verse “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.”

If I could attempt to summarize the Scripture messages of today, I would say they are a hymn to love and mercy. And that is why it is indeed a Laetare Sunday.

So today as we listen to God’s Word, we may ask ourselves if we too are deaf and blind. Are there warnings to which we are not paying attention? Who are the prophets we ridicule or ignore? In these troubled times, our country and our world need to pay attention to the signs around us: climate crises, poverty becoming more widespread, violence on the increase, white supremacists acting out their fear and hatred, just to name a few. We need to listen and pay close attention to at least one prophet of our time.

Pope Francis is tirelessly pointing us in the direction of change, encouraging us to believe that a different society is possible, writing documents to show us the way. Pope Francis also reminds us that while we are sinners we are also infinitely loved and surrounded with the tenderness of God, if only we recognize it. There could be such a different way to live if only we would be energized by this truth, that God so loved the world, and therefore act with mercy and compassion. May the end of the Lenten season be the time for us to listen. It is never too late to rejoice in the awareness of God’s love.

Suggested Action:

In these last weeks of Lent, choose one of the documents written by Pope Francis and reflect on a couple of chapters.

LAUDATO SI':

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

FRATELLI TUTTI:

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

or OTHERS:

<http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/index.html#encyclicals>

Suggested Petitions:

- For all who are struggling and suffering in the weather events of the past weeks. We pray...
- That leaders may heed the signs of the climate crisis and prepare adequately. We pray...
- For Pope Francis and all church leaders, that God may continue to guide their ministry to the Church. We pray...

Collect Prayer:

O God, who through your Word
reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way,
grant, we pray,
that with prompt devotion and eager faith
the Christian people may hasten
toward the solemn celebrations to come.
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.

Take Action: Urge Congress to Vote on the No Ban Act

The [No Muslim Ban Ever](#) campaign, representing over 100 Muslim and immigrants' rights groups, is urging Congress once again to pass the historic NO BAN Act. The bill was recently [re-introduced](#) by Representative Chu, however has not yet been scheduled for a vote, which leaves the legislation vulnerable to potentially harmful amendments.



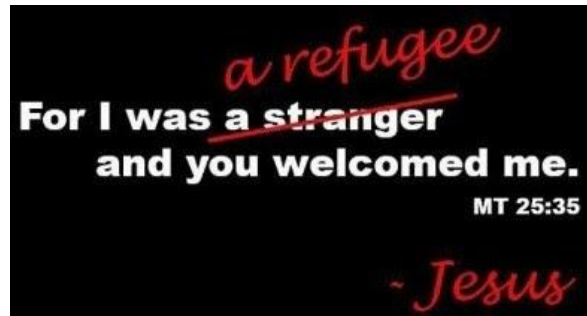
The first-ever Muslim Civil Rights Bill, if passed, would limit U.S. immigration law so that no future president can single-handedly issue bans that bar immigrants based on their national

origin or religion.

We urge our members and friends to make calls and write letters to House Representatives who have the authority to move this historic bill to a vote. Use this easy tool to [call](#) or [email Congress](#) telling them to vote on the **#NoBanAct** with no amendments.

Take Action: Urge Biden Administration to Protect Refugees

The Biden administration is expected to take executive action to increase refugee arrivals and begin restoring the resettlement program. This is particularly welcome news, in light of strong support for America to restore our reputation as a beacon of hope, safety, and refuge. It is vital that a new, revised Presidential Determination gets signed soon.



Our friends at [Church World Service](#) have developed letters to the Biden Administration urging the restoration and strengthening of the refugee resettlement program. We urge our members and friends to sign on using the forms linked below.

Note: there are **two letters**:

[Individual Faith leaders sign here](#)

[Faith Organizations sign here](#)

All signatures are due by the close of business, March 18, 2021.

Webinar: *Fratelli Tutti* Around the World

Pope Francis' recent encyclical is resonating with peacebuilders and justice-seekers around the world. This timely message grapples with the realities of a polarized, violent and unjust world amid the pandemic. It envisions a new way forward to a more just, peaceful, equal, hopeful and nonviolent future.

Pax Christi International is hosting [one-hour webinars](#) for reflection and discussion on the meaning of *Fratelli Tutti* in our local contexts. The same program will be repeated to capture most time zones in the world. For the United States, the program will take place on **March 11th at 10am ET / 7am PT**. [Click here to register](#).

After you register you will receive a link for the Zoom session one day before the event.



Webinar Exploring the Role of Church Lands in Resilience and Adaptation

Our good friends at Creation Justice Ministries will host a webinar, "[Climate Justice on Sacred Ground](#)" on Thursday, March 25th at 6pm ET / 3pm PT to explore the role of Church lands in climate justice.

The land that our churches inhabit is holy land. The seeds we sow—both physically and spiritually—can flourish into beautiful hubs of life and diversity long after we leave. In a time of climate crisis, church lands can be a powerful force of resilience and refuge.

Attendees will hear inspiring stories of land regeneration, transformation, and adaptation in the face of the storm of the climate crisis, and gain some tools to leverage your own church land for climate resilience. [Click here](#) for more information and to register.



Registration Open for Virtual Ecumenical Advocacy Days Conference

Registration for the [2021 Virtual Ecumenical Advocacy Days](#) Conference is now open!

[Join us on April 18 - 21, 2021](#) for the opportunity to advocate for climate justice and support the global movement centered and led by people and communities most vulnerable to climate impacts due to historic racial and colonial inequalities.

2021 Online Event and Theme



[Imagine! God's Earth and People Restored](#)

We continue to see how the historic reality of colonialism and structural racism has designed systems that live on today through environmental racism and a myriad of other injustices that grew out of the same evil roots. Throughout 2020, these systemic issues manifested themselves in the disproportionate number of racial and ethnic minorities who became sick with and died of COVID-19, as well as the continued extrajudicial killing of Black men and women. The Earth and its people are groaning. We are called to respond.

This year's #EAD2021 conference hopes to passionately advocate and reimagine a world that lives out the values of justice, equity, and beloved community. [Register before April 1st for a discount!](#)

Migrant Center of New York Offers DACA Legal Help

The [Migrant Center of New York, Inc.](#) is a Franciscan ministry to promote and protect the rights and welfare of migrants and refugees by providing pro bono or affordable immigration legal services, education and advocacy. Right now, the Migrant Center is offering **FREE legal consultations about filing #DACA applications, no matter where you live in the U.S.**



After almost five months of closure, the Migrant Center has reopened, resuming their services. They are currently accepting DACA renewals & new DACA applications.

Feel free to spread the word to advocates to [contact the Migrant Center today](#).

Save the Date: Refugee (Virtual) Advocacy Days

[Refugee Council USA](#) (RCUSA), its members and partners will host a **special refugee virtual advocacy week from Monday, April 19 to Friday, April 23, 2021**. [Help is needed](#) during the week to champion pro-refugee legislation, federal funding for the resettlement program, and oversight over the administration's rebuilding of the program.

By agreeing to participate, you will be expected to attend the following:

- at least one training session the week prior
- a prep meeting with fellow constituents from your state (on Mon. Apr. 19th at a time TBD)
- 2- 3 virtual legislative visits with your Members of Congress

Legislative visits will be scheduled between 9am-5pm ET (6am-2pm PT) Mon. Apr. 19-Fri. Apr. 23rd. **Please make sure to note on the RSVP form any "blackout" times when you are not available.**

If you are interested in participating, please sign up via the [RSVP form](#), here. We invite refugee and immigrants' rights partners, former refugees, new Americans, resettlement staff, faith leaders and people of faith, and individuals who support refugees to consider participating.

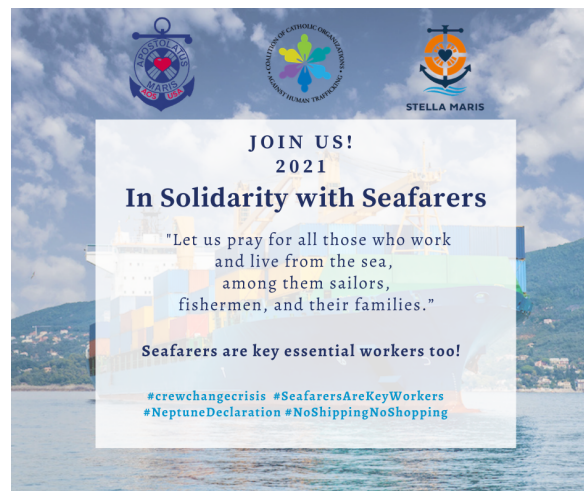


Educate, Pray, Advocate in Solidarity with Seafarers

Each year, the [Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking](#) (CCOAH) launches a Campaign that begins during Lent to raise Catholic awareness of forced labor in the fishing industry. This year, due to the global pandemic, a new humanitarian crisis has emerged that is severely impacting all men and women who work at sea.

Thus in 2021, CCOAH - together with [Stella Maris](#) and the [Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America](#) (AOS-USA) - are urging Catholics and all people of good will to pay witness to the life of the seafarer and to leverage their voices as community members and consumers to uplift the safety and wellbeing of one of the world's most invisible group of essential workers.

Join CCOAH, AOS-USA, and Stella Maris this Lent and Spring as we elevate the visibility of



the seafarers' plight. [Click here](#) to download some background about the Campaign and more information. Stay tuned as new materials and activities will be released each week.