

Remain...

The Gospel of this [Fifth Sunday of Easter](#) brings me back to childhood memories. Having been born on a farm, surrounded by vineyards, the images that Jesus uses in the gospel passage are very clear and vivid in my mind. I have watched time and time again my father pruning a grape vine leaving me wondering if there will be grapes in late summer. As I grew, I realized that what was really important were those two short branches that remained attached to the grape vine. They looked insignificant but without fail they would grow and produce an abundant harvest.



More childhood memories stirred from the words: “Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned.” Again, I remember spending time playing in the vineyard while pretending to help my mom collect the cut branches and make big bundles with them that would become kindling for the fireplace in winter or if too many, burned in a big pile.

In the Gospel, Jesus uses the word “remain” so many times in this short passage: remain in me, as I remain in you, it remains on the vine, anyone who does not remain in me...and so on. So, what is the message that Jesus wants to convey, what is he calling us to?

I believe we are called to remain in intimate union with God and that God never tires of calling us to it. Our hearts long to remain in God’s loving embrace and apart from God we will never be satisfied. To remain in God is the goal of all of us who are striving to be faithful followers of Jesus of Nazareth. It was the longing in St. Francis’ heart that gave him the desire to spend great periods of time just alone with his God. His remaining in God bore fruit when he came down from the woods around Assisi to serve his brothers and his neighbors.

Remaining in God is also a commitment to act on what is important for God. We cannot remain in God and ignore our fellow human beings, especially the ones God is especially concerned with: the ones in pain, in despair, in distress, in poverty and in sub-human standard of living, the ones treated unjustly or imprisoned without proper representation, the ones at our border seeking refuge and safety.

To remain attached to the vine is yes, to enjoy the certainty of God’s love, the assurance of God’s mercy and tenderness toward us, but also to be mercy for someone else, to act with justice towards others. It is to love as Jesus loves.

As I am writing this reflection the country woke up to yet another mass shooting. More people’s lives taken that did not need to be, more families are grieving the loss of loved ones. What would Jesus do? If we remain one with the vine, what fruits are we producing?

We cannot illude ourselves by spouting that we are a Christian nation and allow these slaughters to continue in the name of a conveniently interpreted second amendment of our constitution, or the money that gun sales provide to few, sometimes powerful, people. Jesus challenged the empty words of the law, wanting the law to be for the good of all the people. As difficult as it is, we cannot stop denouncing the sale of guns that multiply each day in our country out of fear. We cannot be afraid of a future that will look different if people of different colored skin will more and more become our neighbors.

I wonder if we, as a country, deserve to be cut and thrown out like branches, let to wither and be burned. Is Jesus warning us of this possibility, no matter how good it feels to remain in God's love?

John in his first letter invites us: "Sisters and Brothers let us love not in word or speech, but in deed and truth." If we do that we will be certain to REMAIN in God and bear fruit.

Sr. Maria Orlandini, OSF
FAN Director of Advocacy

Suggested Actions:

As we continue through the Spring season and celebrate our Sister, Mother Earth, contemplate the pruning of plants and the fruits which they bear faithfully each harvest.

Suggested Petitions:

In grateful thanksgiving, we remember the blessings of abundant harvest bestowed by God. We pray...

For all those who struggle with food insecurity, may they be blessed by the generosity of others. We pray...

For all those who have lost loved ones to gun violence, may they find healing in the Risen Lord. We pray...

Collect Prayer:

**Almighty ever-living God,
constantly accomplish the Paschal Mystery within us,
that those you were pleased to make new in Holy Baptism
may, under your protective care, bear much fruit
and come to the joys of life eternal.
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

FAN Issues Racial Justice Statement in Light of
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Verdict of Chauvin Trial

As many faith organizations did last week, Franciscan Action Network released a [statement](#) upon hearing the verdict of the Derek Chauvin trial in Minneapolis.

From the [statement](#):

"People of color in the United States still fear for their lives on a regular basis. Structural racism and white supremacy are the root causes of this fear. The sins of racism and white supremacy...must be addressed, confronted, challenged, and dismantled..."

The staff has recommitted to continuing to work with people of color, legislators and communities to begin to reconcile and right the wrongs of structural racism.



Franciscan Action Network Joins Climate Crisis Policy

At the invitation of Franciscan Solidarity Table members in New York, Franciscan Action Network is proud to announce our participation with the [Climate Crisis Policy](#) (CCP), a nationwide group of expert volunteers and organizations working together to pass scientifically-based federal climate legislation.

The CCP's main goal is to unite activists and organizations across sectors to work together to stop our current pollution now before it's too late for our children and all life on Earth.



Policy Teams at CCP are compiling [The Earth Bill](#) (filing pending) to mandate 100% renewable electricity, electric vehicles and regenerative agriculture nationwide by 2030, a clear demand that achieves 80% of our pollution solution. We invite you to watch this brief, informative, and easy-to-understand video explaining [The Earth Bill](#), which is real greenhouse gas reduction legislation that is measurable against time.

Complimentary to the Earth Bill is the [2021 Climate Bill Package](#) of existing climate legislation tackling various related issues. We know the power of grassroots organizing; this is where our power lies. The CCP has developed [Adopt-A-District](#) teams which are composed of community-based activists on the ground, working by Congressional Districts for powerful advocacy of the Climate Bill Package and more.

We invite our members and friends to [learn more](#) and sign up to join the movement by joining an [Adopt-A-District](#) team today.

Take Action: Urge Lawmakers to Pass Background Check Legislation

Our country's gun violence takes the lives of more than 100 people, on average, every single day. We need more than thoughts and prayers from our lawmakers. We need action now, starting with [background check legislation](#).

This sampling of shootings is just a fraction of the gun violence that occurred over one recent weekend, according to [Everytown for Gun Safety](#):

- At least 24 people were shot in Chicago, three fatally, including 7-year-old Jaslyn Adams who was shot and killed as she and her father were getting food at a McDonald's drive-thru. Her father, Jontae Adams, was critically wounded.
- In Omaha, Nebraska, a man opened fire inside Westroads Mall, fatally shooting one person and wounding another.
- At a vigil for a homicide victim in Truro Township, Ohio, one person was shot and killed, and five people were wounded.
- In Austin, Texas, three people were shot and killed by the same person.
- A five-year-old was shot and injured in Baltimore, Maryland.
- In LaPlace, Louisiana, six people were shot and wounded at a 12-year-old's birthday party. A neighbor said that all of the victims were children.

Background checks save lives but loopholes in the current laws have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning more guns sold to people without a background check, and more guns in the hands of people who should not have them.

It's **past time for our lawmakers to take action** on this crisis and listen to the will of the American public. We need life-saving gun safety legislation now, [starting with background checks](#).

Take Action: Sign the Faith Family Reunification Petition

In 2018, through the 'zero tolerance' policy, 5,500 migrant families were cruelly separated. To this day, families remain separated and the trauma inflicted by this devastating act is everlasting. The Biden Administration must [prioritize](#) making this a nation where every person is respected and every family can thrive.

As people of faith we believe in our sacred values of human dignity, family and loving our neighbor. Our teachings and traditions are clear that these values apply to immigrants as well. [Our laws should honor these principles](#).



Sign and share this [petition](#) from our friends at [Faith in Public Life](#) urging the Biden administration to commit to five specific demands. In order for us to reckon with the systematic separation of thousands of families – and ensure that no future administration will ever erroneously consider it as a deterrent measure again - our government must develop a holistic approach.

FAN Joins Catholic Coalition Promoting Covid-19

Vaccines

The Franciscan Action Network is proud to announce we have [joined a coalition](#) of U.S. Catholic organizations encouraging the public to get vaccinated and calling for equitable distribution of COVID-19 Vaccines.

The coalition, called [Catholic Cares](#), encourages our networks and faith communities to accept vaccination as an act of charity and solidarity with others that will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and build immunity against the virus.

Drawing on Catholic social teaching, we are promoting vaccine equity among people who are underserved or marginalized in the U.S. and around the world. Using [resources from the Vatican](#) and a [video addressing the moral and ethical concerns](#), we hope to spread truth about the efficacy of the vaccines and encourage people to get vaccinated.

Save the Date: Pax Christi National Conference July 30-31

Pax Christi USA recently announced that this July they will host their first [National Conference](#) since 2016, the first in what will be an annual event going forward. Due to the ongoing uncertainty regarding the pandemic and protocols for in-person gatherings, the 2021 Pax Christi USA National Conference will be virtual with plans for the 2022 version, celebrating their 50th anniversary, to be in-person.



The graphic features a portrait of Olga Segura, the keynote speaker, set against a background of overlapping red and white circles. To the right is the Pax Christi USA logo, which includes a red rose. Text on the graphic provides the event details.

Keynote Speaker:
Olga Segura

**Pax Christi USA
National
Conference**

Save the date!
Friday July 30th
Saturday July 31st

Location:
Virtual Conference
Details to follow

Olga Segura, author of *Birth of a Movement: Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church* is the opening keynote speaker for the conference, with Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv, Bishop-President of Pax Christi USA, confirmed as the celebrant and homilist for the closing Mass. [Click here for more information](#).