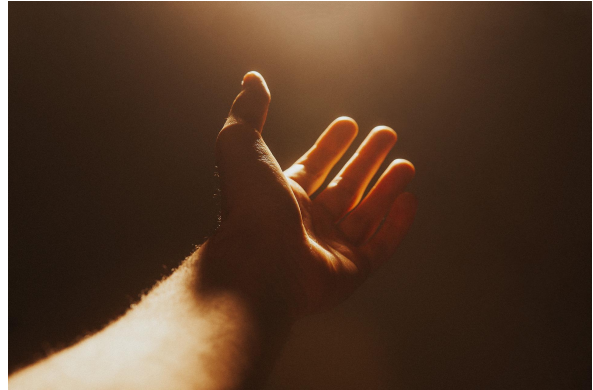


A Divine Gift Offered Unconditionally

Image by [Jackson David](#) from [Pixabay](#)

In the summer of 1964, I was eleven, growing up in Clinton, Iowa, and my parents bought our first color TV – the first in our neighborhood. Mom was across the street at the Klinkners, playing euchre with other moms, and I was in charge at home, as the oldest of four brothers.

In fact, with my brothers, I was playing “knights,” which involved a wagon and a broomstick in the living room. Predictably, the brand-new color TV had its picture tube broken. Panicked, I offered a deal to God that I would go to Mass every day for a year if God would somehow fix the TV or brainwash my parents so that they would not notice. I’ll spare you the details of what happened next.



Yet, that same kind of thinking is sometimes seen in the Old Testament approach to God. For example, the first [reading for this Sunday](#) is from Exodus, relaying how Moses offered the blood of young bulls and the promise of the people of Israel to heed the Commandments in exchange for divine favor. That covenant seems transactional, an exchange, much like the eleven year old me promising Mass attendance for a color TV miracle.

With Christ, we know, comes a different covenant, a New Covenant that can never be understood as transactional. Sunday’s second reading, from Letter to the Hebrews, spells this out clearly. St. Paul explains Christ “entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.”

We are redeemed not by our human hands offering things to God. Nothing we can do or promise or offer could win us redemption. Redemption is, instead, the ultimate gift. It is the person of Christ, who is himself God, freely giving his life in sacrifice -- as a gift to overcome the weakness of sin. No matter how pure we try to be, no matter how many good works we do or how carefully we follow the Commandments or how many Masses we promise to attend, we can never live a life worthy of redemption. Ultimately, redemption is Christ’s gift to us, from the overflowing of divine love for us and the infinite generosity of grace. We are free to choose or reject this ultimate gift, but it is offered unconditionally by God.

On Sunday, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, we celebrate exactly this, because every celebration of the Eucharist is that same divine gift offered unconditionally to us.

The poignant words of Mark’s Gospel explain:

While they were eating,
he took bread, said the blessing,
broke it, gave it to them, and said,

"Take it; this is my body."
Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them,
and they all drank from it.
He said to them,
"This is my blood of the covenant,
which will be shed for many."

In the Eucharist the New Covenant is offered to us unconditionally at every Mass, utterly the same as Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. No quid pro quo, nothing transactional is present in receiving Holy Communion. Nothing we could ever do could earn us this gift. It is not a trade. Never a "thing" given in exchange for what things we sinners could ever do. We could never hope to be worthy of the person of Christ – the Body, Blood, soul, and divinity that is the Eucharist.

Indeed, Holy Communion is the ultimate gift, given freely by God for our redemption. Pope Francis, as is often the case, puts this so well. The Eucharist, His Holiness affirms, "is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak." Amen.

Stephen F. Schneck, PhD
Executive Director

Suggested Actions:

Consider the times you have bargained with God and offer repentance as you process for Eucharist.

Suggested Petitions:

May we recognize the dignity of all people in the breaking of the Bread. We pray...
May we yearn for the nourishment of Jesus' body and blood. We pray...

Collect Prayer:

**O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament
have left us a memorial of your Passion,
grant us, we pray,
so to revere the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood
that we may always experience in ourselves
the fruits of your redemption.
Who live and reign with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.**

Amen

Franciscan Sisters Working at the US-Mexico Border

Photo credit: CNS/Reuters/Adrees Latif

The [Global Sisters Report](#) this past week published an [article by Dan Stockman](#) titled, "Answering the call to US-Mexico border, sisters share the intensity, gifts of what they witness". U.S. sisters have been rotating down to the southern border with Mexico to serve the people who seek asylum in the United States. They do what they can to provide dignity and comfort.



Sr. Kristin Peters and Sr. Meg Earsley of the [Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration](#) are two of eight sisters who reported on their experiences at the border for the article. The pair traveled to Arizona, where they ministered with several organizations helping migrants who brave the desert to cross from Mexico into the United States.

We admire the work all the sisters are doing to help welcome the stranger. If you or someone you know has been doing good in your community we would like to uplift the story! Contact Communications Coordinator [Janine Walsh](#), our newsletter editor.

Take Part in World Refugee Day - June 20

The [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#) estimates that twenty six million refugees who have been forcibly displaced from their homes because of a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion." On June 20th we celebrate World Refugee Day, which was created two decades ago to increase awareness about the situation of refugees around the world.

In preparation for the celebration next month, our good friends at [Justice for Immigrants](#) have created a comprehensive resource with Prayers, social media, answers to common questions, and more. We invite our members and friends to download the [World Refugee Day 2021 Toolkit](#) and use the resources it holds to plan your own event.



We Are Essential Fast for Freedom - Update

Here are the latest updates on the upcoming faith Fast for Freedom.

On June 9th (note the change of start date) faith leaders and directly impacted immigrants will hold the

[#WeAreEssential](#) **Fast for Freedom** to shine a spotlight on our nation's moral obligation to fully and finally include our immigrant siblings as part of the American family. Several dozen fasters will gather in stages for at least 3 weeks to encourage Congress to utilize the jobs and infrastructure package and budget reconciliation to codify a path to citizenship for 11 million undocumented community members - many of whom have kept our families and our economy

[#WeAreEssential](#)

Fast for Freedom

functioning as essential workers during the pandemic.

Advocates from around the country can support the fast in several ways:

1. **Invite leaders to be a core faster** or solidarity faster in Washington, DC. Learn more about the [criteria to be a faster](#) and what fasting entails. If you have a leader you want to send please reach out to Nanci Palacios at npalacios@faithinflorida.org
2. **Organize a local Fast for Freedom** with faith leaders in your own community. Use [this document](#) to learn more about fasting and how to prepare and break a fast. [Tell us about your fast here](#).
3. **Organize a Solidarity Action** in your community with leaders, clergy, your local elected officials and Members of Congress to support the call for a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrant workers. This [toolkit](#) was designed to help plan your action. Be sure to [list your event here](#).
4. **Set up a meeting with your Members of Congress** to advocate for a pathway to citizenship for immigrant workers. [List your meeting here](#).

We encourage you to help in any way you can to pressure the White House and members of Congress to secure a pathway to citizenship for essential workers and their families, DACA recipients, dreamers, TPS holders and all 11 million undocumented immigrants.

Webinar Recording: *Fratelli Tutti on Economics*

Last week, on May 26, 2021, Franciscan Action Network hosted the third in our [series of four panel discussions](#) on *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis' latest encyclical. Our panelists, Meghan Clark and Anthony Annett, expounded on the ethics of how economic "growth" is measured and reported today--who is left out of current metrics, and how these metrics could take equity and health into account.

Fratelli Tutti: Finding Sisterhood and Brotherhood
to Overcome What Divides Us

On Economics

FRANCISCAN
ACTION NETWORK



If you missed it, **you can access the [recording here](#)**.

We hope you will join us for our **fourth and final panel discussion of the series, [Fratelli Tutti on Government and Politics](#), on June 16, 2021 at 7pm ET (4pm PT)**, where our panelists will be Amy Uelmann and David Cloutier who will discuss the brokenness and polarization of our political system and how we can overcome divisions to achieve unity. **Please note, even if you joined us in last week's discussion, you must register separately for the next in the series.**

Register for our final panel discussion by clicking here: <https://tinyurl.com/238pjwbj>

Four Ways to Take Action for Creation Care

Many partner organizations that focus on creation care issues are working hard to make a difference in the United States and around the world. Here are a few actions and movements we want to mention:

Healthy Planet, Healthy People Catholic Petition: Catholics from all over the world are coming together to heed the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, as



we are called in Laudato Si'. This petition is an opportunity to lift up the voices of the most vulnerable and advocate on their behalf ahead of two UN Conferences being held later this year. [Read more here.](#)

Line 3 Treaty People Gathering:

We previously made you aware of the Indigenous-led movement happening June 5-8, 2021 in Minnesota to oppose the oil pipeline. Join the delegation of people of faith and spirituality who know the power of community coming together in witness and solidarity. [Read more here.](#)

Walk 4 Our Grandchildren:

In 2013, a multi-generational group of climate activists walked from Camp David, Maryland to Washington, DC. Now, from June 20-28, 2021 a group of young people, parents, grandparents and great grandparents are walking once again, from Scranton, PA to Wilmington, DE, to demand climate action. [Read more here.](#)

21-Day Catholic Environmental Justice Challenge:

Several of our partner organizations have created this enriching challenge of learning, praying and acting for environmental justice, prophetically calling us to change the systems that create the unjust distribution of environmental hazards. [Read more here.](#)

Laudato Si' Action Platform Launched

The Laudato Si' Special Anniversary Year came to a close with the launch of the [Laudato Si' Action Platform](#). Several prominent Catholic leaders held a press conference to present the platform initiatives. [Watch the press conference here.](#)

The Laudato Si' Action Platform is the next step in our journey to care for our common home. The Vatican-led tool will empower Catholic institutions, communities, and families to implement Laudato Si'.



[Laudato Si' Action Platform](#) is a space for institutions, communities, and families to learn and grow together. You are warmly invited to [join this community](#). Your unique "culture, experience, involvements, and talents" are needed on our journey towards greater love for our Creator, each other, and the home we share.

Gun Violence is Running Rampant and Must be Stopped

Last week, we learned of some scary statistics on the topic of gun violence. Here are some we wanted to share:

- For every person shot and killed by a gun in the US, two more are wounded, according to a [new analysis](#) published in the Western Journal of Emergency Medicine. Being shot and wounded can have devastating physical and mental health and financial consequences for survivors.
- [Violence Policy Center](#) (VPC) is a national educational organization working to stop gun death and injury. VPC has developed an [eye-opening listing of examples](#) of mass

say **NO** to

#WeaponsOfWar.



shootings since 1980 involving large-capacity ammunition magazines, which are the common thread running through most mass shootings in the United States.

We urge our members and friends to take advantage of opportunities to educate your family, friends and community on gun violence and contact your elected officials about various gun violence prevention legislation. Here are some examples:

- Sign this [Brady Petition demanding a ban on assault weapons](#)
- **Universal background checks** could be voted on in the Senate any day now. [Learn about how this bill would help.](#)
- **Wear Orange** this weekend, June 4-6 and tell everyone you see why. [Learn more here.](#)

Latest Video Homily for Belonging Begins with Us

In our last newsletter, we shared that Franciscan Action Network has joined the [Belonging Begins with Us](#) campaign to foster a more welcoming nation where everyone - regardless of background - feels they belong. Using video homilies from priests all over the country, we aim to help find points of connection and shared experiences to create a more welcoming nation where everyone can belong.



We were honored to have [Bp. Stowe, OFM](#) [Conv. record the homily](#) for Pentecost Sunday. The [Trinity Sunday homily](#) was sent to us by Fr. Michael Newman, OSFS of Adrian, Michigan.

If you or someone you know would like to get involved in making a homily video, please [contact us](#). We can all play a part in making sure everyone feels like they belong.