

Signs of the Kingdom of God

I don't know about you but I don't often find myself sitting around thinking about the kingdom of God. Oh yes, I believe in the kingdom, especially that it is here with us, yet not fully revealed. I also believe that Jesus truly meant it when he said the kingdom of God is within us and that it is in our midst. However, life's daily schedules, the cares and concerns of the present moment and, especially in this pandemic year, the numerous Zoom webinars and meetings, tend to keep me rooted in the here and now.



Nevertheless, like me, you might be seeing signs of new life emerging from the throes of winter and the ever-growing vaccine efficiency with the lessening of Covid restrictions. These promising signs anticipate feelings of hope, light-heartedness and a re-emergence of newness from the darkness and gloom of a pandemic. Perhaps we all need a solid dose of the hope and the refreshing breath of the kingdom of God. Our readings for this [Eleventh Sunday of Ordinary Time](#) are the right place to start!

Both the reading from the book of Ezekiel and the gospel of Mark 4:26-34 present us with delightful images of the kingdom through nature and creation. What Franciscan would not delight in thoughts of high and lofty mountains, seeds, plants, fruitful trees and winged creatures. All of this is in our Franciscan DNA. We are rooted and grounded in the God of all creation. We are immersed in a God who delights in beauty, creativity and imagination. To be connected with the Source of All Life, we must recognize that we are God's creation, integrally one with all creatures and all of creation. We are called to express and make visible God's kingdom of beauty, creativity and imagination. How are we signs of the kingdom?

One only has to spend time reading our Franciscan Sources to see how our charism and spirituality arose from people who were inspired, imaginative and creative. For St. Francis, my thoughts immediately went to a story in the Legend of the Three Companions, Chapter XVI. Francis had sent brothers to other countries to preach. Upon their return they expressed great bitterness because of the mistrust and harassment they experienced from some people and even from the clergy.

Francis, not to be deterred in the gospel mission, sought help from Rome for a Cardinal Protector. He did this because he had a dream. In his dream Francis saw a hen, small, black, with feathered legs and the feet of a domestic dove. It had many chicks and was unable to gather them under her wings. As Francis awoke from his dream he realized and said, "I am that hen, short in stature, and dark by nature...The Lord in his mercy has given, and will give me, many sons whom I will be unable to protect with my own strength. I must, therefore, commend them to the holy Church who will protect and guide them under the shadow of her wings."

Francis, poor, simple and humble, was definitely a man who lived with a dream and his eyes fixed on making the kingdom of God visible and nothing would dissuade him. In his later years his lyrical prayer of the Canticle of Creatures inspired and still inspires us today. Francis was intimately connected with all life and the kingdom, praising God through sun, moon, stars, wind, water, fire and yes even through our bodily death which is so much a part of the cycle of life.

Are we living as signs of God's kingdom? Our world today is in need of creative and imaginative people who are intentional and attentive to the signs of God in our midst and who speak and witness to the gospel of God's love, mercy, compassion and justice. In the words of John E. Lewis, "If not us, then who? If not now, then when?" May our gift to God be this one precious life we have been given. May God's breath and Spirit fill us with the creative imagination and courage to give our lives totally to bring the kingdom to birth in our time.

Sr. Margaret Magee, OSF
FAN Board Member

Suggested Action:

During this week, let us reflect on the words of Caroline Adams in our call to be signs of the Kingdom of God (see prayer below).

Suggested Petitions:

May we recognize with humble and grateful hearts the gift of our lives, given by God. We pray...
May we care for and protect all that God has bestowed on us to bring about the kingdom of God in our time. We pray..

Prayer/Reflection by [Caroline Joy Adams](#)

"Your life is a sacred journey. And it is about change, growth, discovery, movement, transformation, continuously expanding your vision of what is possible, stretching your soul, learning to see clearly and deeply, listening to your intuition, taking courageous challenges at every step along the way.

"You are on the path exactly where you are meant to be right now. And from here, you can only go forward, shaping your life story into a magnificent tale of triumph, of healing, of courage, of beauty, of wisdom, of power, of dignity, and of love."

Amen

What does Welcome With Dignity Mean?

As an active member of the [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#), we often promote welcoming with dignity. But, one may ask, what does #WelcomeWithDignity really mean?

It means embodying our faith values by protecting children at our border,



**WELCOME
WITH DIGNITY**

allowing asylum seekers to exercise their right to claim asylum, and respecting the sacred humanity and dignity of all of our neighbors.

Here are 5 ways to take action in helping transform how the U.S. receives and protects people forced to flee their home countries:

1. **Advocate:** [Call or email your Members of Congress](#) and urge them to hold the Biden administration accountable to end Title 42 expulsions; restore asylum protections; and invest in the U.S.' capacity to humanely welcome and process asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, and immigrants.
2. **Sign the #WelcomeWithDignity Pledge:** [Add your name](#) and join the movement to reimagine the way our country treats people seeking safety.
3. **Host a Faith Vigil:** [Plan a vigil](#) to raise awareness and support for ending Title 42 expulsions and creating a more humane asylum process.
4. **Sign a Faith Letter:** Add your name to [this letter](#) (by June 16) to urge President Biden to end Title 42 and restore asylum protections. Individual Faith leaders, [sign here](#). Faith-based organizations, [sign here](#).
5. **Learn more and take further action:** Use [this action toolkit from the #WelcomeWithDignity campaign](#) and [this #Faith4Asylum resource from the IIC](#) to learn more about asylum and how you can get involved in the movement to welcome. And [use this social media toolkit](#) to spread the #WelcomeWithDignity message online!

Now is the time for visionary action to restore and strengthen asylum protections. We invite our members and friends to raise your voices today.

Newest Video Homily for Belonging Begins with Us

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.



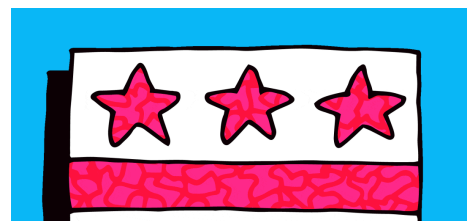
[Bp. Stowe, OFM Conv.](#) kicked off the campaign with an engaging homily for Pentecost Sunday.

The [Trinity Sunday homily](#) came to us from Fr. Michael Newman, OSFS of Adrian, Michigan and we premiered the [homily for the feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ](#) last week. In it, Fr. Joe Nangle, OFM gives us his insight on the opening of our churches post-Covid and how the Eucharist is a social sacrament.

This campaign will run through the end of the year and we will need more help! 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.

Take Action: Sign Faith Letter Supporting Statehood for D.C.

A group of leaders from many faiths in and around Washington D.C. have come together to advocate for D.C. to become the 51st state in our nation. D.C. has more residents than two of the 50 states but lacks full representation in Congress despite paying full federal



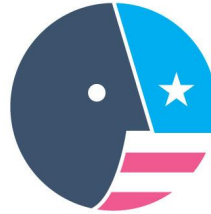
taxes.

Legislation for D.C. Statehood passed the U.S. House of Representatives on April 22nd and is now headed for consideration in the U.S. Senate, where it already has 46 cosponsors. We invite our members and friends to support this cause by [signing this letter to Senate leadership](#).

We thank you in advance and ask that you **pass this request on to other faith leaders in your networks**.

America Talks Kick-off This Weekend

As Franciscans, we know the power of relationships. We also know that it's hard work to reconcile when one of those relationships hits a snag. In an effort to foster productive dialogue the [#ListenFirst Coalition is hosting a two-day event](#) on June 12-13, creating one-on-one virtual discussions among thousands of Americans with different points of view.



America Talks

[America Talks](#) is a powerful two-day event that invites Americans to connect one-on-one via video across our divides. Participants will be asked survey questions to be matched with a conversation partner who answered the same questions differently. Each will then be sent a link via email to join their face-to-face video conversation. Anyone interested in joining the conversation can sign up by [clicking here](#).

The launch of America Talks will be followed by a [National Week of Conversation](#) from June 14-20, which offers even more opportunities to join on topics such as listening with empathy and building belonging and trust. See the [complete list of topics here](#).

Together, we can transform division and contempt into connection and understanding.

Resources for Christians and the Covid-19 Vaccine

[Christians & the Vaccine](#) is a project of Redeeming Babel with a goal to equip pastors and Christian leaders to help others apply biblical principles to questions regarding the Covid-19 vaccine.

[Redeeming Babel](#)'s mission is to provide "biblical thinking in a confusing world," and the COVID vaccine has certainly become one of the more confusing issues of our time. They have created a video series addressing the most common spiritual questions Christians have regarding the vaccine. They are also producing short [video conversations](#) with key Christian leaders providing their unique perspective and guidance. For pastors specifically, there is a [Pastor's Toolkit](#) on the Vaccine to help them shepherd their congregations on this issue.



Webinar on Faith, Farming & U.S Policy: How Proposed Agriculture Bills Address Climate Change

Photo source: Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA.

The NYC Franciscan Solidarity Table of the Franciscan Action Network invites you to a Zoom webinar on **Thursday, June 17 from 7p-8:15p ET (4p-5:15p PT)** about proposed agricultural legislation critical for food justice and environmental sustainability.



These bills are part of a Climate Crisis Policy (see below) package being promoted by Metro New York Catholic Climate Movement and other environmental advocacy groups. Panelists will highlight the importance of five Congressional bills from a faith perspective and their impact on farmers, U.S. agricultural policy, and environmental justice while addressing climate change.

You must [register to attend by clicking here](#). Once you register, you will receive the link to join the event.

Take Action: Take The Earth Bill Pledge

We have mentioned before our endorsement of the [Climate Crisis Policy](#) (CCP) organization which is working to promote legislation addressing climate change. The proposed bills pertain to agricultural and land management practices, fossil fuels, plastics pollution, pesticides, manufacturing practices, and environmental justice. There is very detailed information regarding this legislation and the opportunity to Adopt-a-District by meeting with Congressional legislators on the [CCP website](#).



Climate Crisis Policy also supports [The Earth Bill](#) which calls for a 100% clean renewable energy standard, prioritizes 100% Renewable Agriculture practices and will be a companion bill to other environmental legislation. They would like to get The Earth Bill, currently being drafted, into the American Jobs Act by July 4th, 2021. This is probably the most critical climate decision the Biden administration will make, and will dictate whether we stop our current greenhouse gas pollution fast enough to stop global warming at 1.5°C.

To create groundswell support for this legislation, we join the good people at Climate Crisis Policy in extending an invitation to **take the Earth Bill Pledge, either as an [individual](#) or with a [group](#)**. Here are some great [Reasons to Take The Pledge](#).

For more information and to get further involved, please [click here](#).

Laudato Si and the US Catholic Church Conference

[“Laudato Si’ and the U.S. Catholic Church: A Conference Series on Our Common Home”](#) is a



biennial conference series sponsored by Creighton University and [Catholic Climate Covenant](#). The conference will be held virtually from July 13-15, 2021 and is meant to convene, equip, and inspire Catholics who can more deeply integrate *Laudato Si'* and its climate change teaching into the U.S. Church. [Click here for more information on the conference](#).

The 2021 conference will open on July 13th with keynote addresses by [His Eminence Blase Cardinal Cupich](#), Archbishop of Chicago, and [Maureen Day, PhD](#), Assistant Professor of Religion and Society at the Franciscan School of Theology. Together, they will assess why the U.S. Catholic response to *Laudato Si'* has not been commensurate with the urgency and gravity of the climate crisis. [Click here to register](#).