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Reflection Date: July 25, 2021 - 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Unity Through the Bond of Peace

FAN Staff at a Peace Rally in 2017

Anyone in search of a prayer for our church, our country, or our world today may look no further than to [St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians](#), written almost 2000 years ago.

"I urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received" as a human being made in God's image and likeness. "With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace." Eph 4:2-3



The coronavirus has brought to light the inequalities now facing humanity and the growing divisions in every aspect of our society today. In the midst of the pandemic last year, Pope Francis released the encyclical [Fratelli tutti](#) which at times paraphrases much of St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

The Pope warns that we are losing our sense of belonging to one human family. He calls for human beings, all of us deemed worthy of being made in God's image and likeness, to promote unity through dialogue and to put the common good, love for others, before our personal interests and agendas. He writes "I ask God to prepare our hearts to encounter our brothers and sisters, so that we may overcome our differences rooted in political thinking, language, culture and religion. Let us ask him...for the grace to send us forth, in humility and meekness, along the demanding but enriching path of seeking peace." (Fratelli Tutti, 254)

Let us pray that leaders of our church, of our nation, and worldwide live and lead "in a manner worthy of the call they have received" with humility, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.

Pray for the leaders of our church, of our nation and worldwide so they look beyond their own interests and agendas and lead for the good of all.

Sr. Maryann Mueller, CSSF
FAN Supporter

Suggested Actions:

Meditate on [this image of Jesus](#), composed of a multitude of different faces. Consider how each face is "made in the image and likeness of God."

Suggested Petitions:

For all people, to have open hearts and minds to be able to "bear one another" through love and unity. We pray...

When we encounter others, may we look upon them as made in the image and likeness of God.
We pray...

Collect Prayer:

O God, protector of those who hope in you,
without whom nothing has firm foundation, nothing is holy,
bestow in abundance your mercy upon us
and grant that, with you as our ruler and guide,
we may use the good things that pass
in such a way as to hold fast even now
to those that ever endure.
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's Executive Director, Dr. Stephen Schneck to Retire

A message from Franciscan Action Network Board President, Friar Michael Lasky, OFM, Conv.:

Dear Members of the Franciscan Action Network community, Peace and Goodness.

Little did we know 19 months ago that the Lord had sent Steve Schneck to be the Executive Director of FAN to lead us during the challenging time of a pandemic. His ability to navigate through such uncertainty not only benefited FAN as an organization, but even more importantly impacted the poor and the marginalized for whom we advocate. From his efforts in fundraising to the latest FAN webinar, [The Covid Vaccine: A Franciscan Perspective](#), he has ensured that the words of Saints Francis and Clare, a message of 'pax et bonum', would be received in a manner that invites others to dialogue in our world today, for the sake of justice, peace, and care for creation.



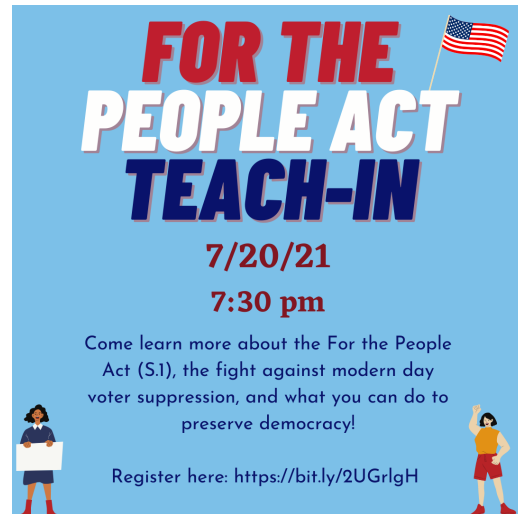
When Steve was interviewed by FAN's search committee in October of 2019, he indicated then that he could only serve for a year or two. He has informed the Board that the time has come for him to return to writing and being with the grandkids. We wish Steve peace and goodness in the future and are grateful for his willingness to stay on as Executive Director through the end of September.

As you know, FAN brings Franciscan spirituality and our intellectual tradition to bear upon the most pressing public policy issues of our day — care for creation, human rights, poverty, and peace making. We have begun our [search for a new Executive Director](#), who will engage this ministry of bringing the Gospel to the public forum.

Join FAN and the Sisters of Mercy as we kick off “Faith in Democracy Forum”

389+ voter suppression bills are currently being debated in 48 states across the country. The next couple of months are critical for protecting voting rights in the United States. We must act now to ensure that the voting rights and human dignity of all Americans are protected.

Franciscan Action Network is teaming up with the Sisters of Mercy to offer an online Teach-in to educate people of faith about what's at stake in our democracy. [Join us Tuesday, July 20th at 7:30pm ET \(4:30pm PT\) to learn about the For the People Act](#) and other democracy reform bills as we kick off [Faithful Democracy's Faith in Democracy forum](#).



The teach-in will provide background on voter suppression in the United States, which disproportionately disenfranchises American voters of color. Speakers also will offer examples of voter suppression today, highlight some of the work in states to fight voter suppression, and suggest actions to support passage of the bill. [Click here to register](#)--you don't want to miss it!

Recording: Faith, Farming and U.S. Policy Webinar

On Thursday, June 17, 2021 the Franciscan Solidarity Table of NYC hosted “[Faith, Farming and U.S. Policy](#)”, a webinar on proposed agricultural legislation critical for food justice and environmental sustainability, informed by our Franciscan lens of interconnectedness and integral ecology. From farmers on the ground to policy experts, the panelists highlighted the importance of seven Congressional bills and their impact on farmers, U.S. agricultural policy, and environmental justice while addressing climate change.



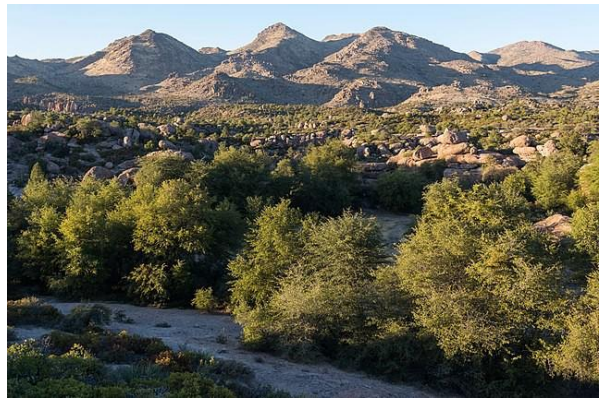
Sure to gain new insights and perspective, you can [watch the recording by clicking here](#).

We offer this information as a great example of how local groups of people are advocating for social justice by participating in grassroots initiatives. Get more information on our [website](#).

Take Action: Urge Congress to Save Oak Flat

Our good friends at [BJC \(Baptist Joint Committee\)](#) sent out an action alert last week we want to bring to your attention.

Chi'chil Bildagoteel, loosely translated as "Oak Flat" in English, is a sacred site for many Western Apache tribes. For centuries, it has been the site of religious and cultural ceremonies, a burial ground, and a place for tribal members to find medicinal plants, food and water. We invite you to [read more about the area](#) from Chairman Terry Rambler of the San Carlos Apache Tribe on this comprehensive blog post.



Located within the Tonto National Forest in Arizona, **Oak Flat is currently at risk of being transferred to a foreign mining operation** which plans to use the highly destructive [block-cave mining method](#) that will result in the permanent destruction of Oak Flat.

We urge our members and friends to take action and ask your Representative to support the bipartisan Save Oak Flat Act. Click here to [find your Representative](#) and then call the **Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121**.

Here is a sample script:

Hello, my name is [NAME]. I am a constituent and am calling to ask Representative [NAME] to support religious freedom for all by cosponsoring [H.R. 1884, the Save Oak Flat Act](#). This pandemic reminded me how important it is to gather in my sanctuary for worship with fellow believers. Just because Oak Flat is an outdoor sanctuary does not make it any less significant of a holy site as my brick and mortar church. Will Rep. [NAME] cosponsor and vote YES on the Save Oak Flat Act?

Webinars: Human Trafficking Concerns Relating to Unaccompanied Minors and the Environment

The World Day against Trafficking in Persons is July 30, 2021. To commemorate the date, the John J. Brunetti Human Trafficking Academy at St. Thomas College of Law will host an in-depth [conversation](#) of the challenges surrounding unaccompanied minors as it relates to human trafficking.

Click here to [register to attend](#) on July 30 at 10am ET (7am PT). This event is free and open to the public with registration.

After an influx of unaccompanied minors into the United States, the Office of Refugee Resettlement faced a historic number of referrals with over 20,000 children in care in May of 2021.¹ During this Webinar, distinguished panelists will share their perspectives and firsthand accounts of the challenges surrounding unaccompanied minors as it relates to human trafficking.

[We hope you will join us.](#)



Additionally, [The Freedom Fund](#) is exploring the nexus between human trafficking and environmental destruction. At a webinar on September 7, 2021, a spotlight will be placed on labor abuses in the fishing industry and its intersection with environmental degradation. You may register for **Turning the Tide: Breaking the cycle of overfishing and labour abuses** by clicking [here](#). Please pay attention to the time as the hosts are in London.

Updates from Interfaith Immigration Coalition

The [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#), of which FAN is an active member, recently sent out a comprehensive email of updates and action items. Some of these updates we list here for our members.



Recognizing that now is the time for Congress to pass a path to citizenship, people of faith in 17 states lifted their voices in our [state-based press releases](#) demanding that Congress take immediate action for citizenship. As you faithfully engage in the events listed below, please share the press releases widely to show your state's support for citizenship.

Citizenship for All: Faithful August Recess Advocacy on July 27 at 5pm ET
[Sign up now](#) for a webinar to learn how your faith community can put pressure on Congress during August recess to include citizenship for Dreamers, TPS holders, and essential workers - including farm workers - in the next recovery package.

Faith4Asylum Action Days, July 17-21

During the #Faith4Asylum Days of Action on July 17-21, join the Welcome with Dignity campaign to end Title 42 and build a humane asylum system. [Plan your vigil using this toolkit](#) and [register your vigil here](#).

President Biden: Protect Haitians, End Title 42

In light of the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse and ongoing concerns for Haitian asylum-seekers, hundreds of faith groups and advocacy organizations sent letters to President Biden urging him to put an end to "Title 42 Expulsions." Read the [July 6 IIC letter here](#) and the [July 8 UndocuBlack letter here](#).

Watch: Recordings Available of Fratelli Tutti Discussions

Inspired by Saint Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis' [Fratelli Tutti](#) calls for a way of life marked by the "flavor of the Gospel." The pope's encyclical focuses on contemporary social and economic problems while urging us to create an ideal world of more human fraternity and solidarity.

Earlier this summer, Franciscan Action Network hosted a [series of panel discussions](#) to unpack the Holy Father's directives to help heal divisions and guide us towards better unity.

These discussions were on four main themes: culture and society, racism and anti-racism, economics, and governance and politics.



At each of the discussions, we were joined by various experts in fields related to the topics. Our panelists helped us to enrich our understanding and reflection on the encyclical by answering initial queries and then taking more questions from attendees.

All four of these discussions were recorded and are [available for viewing on our website](#). We hope you will **watch and share** these important conversations in hopes of building a world “without walls, without borders, without people rejected, without strangers.”