

Family Life and Public Policy

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The Mass readings for next Sunday, the [27th Sunday in Ordinary Time](#), are among Scripture's most beautiful pertaining to love, marriage, and family.

The reading from Genesis recounts the union of Eve and Adam, relating how "a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two become one flesh." The responsorial psalm, from Psalm 128, has for generations been a traditional blessing for Jewish and Christian weddings. May your children be "like olive plants around your table." "May you see your children's children."

The Gospel from Mark rephrases the Genesis story of marriage, adding that "what God has joined together, no human being must separate." Even more sweetly, the Gospel continues...



Let the children come to me;

Do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Amen, I say to you,

Whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it. (Mark 10:14)

In about two weeks, I will be retiring as Executive Director of Franciscan Action Network. And, given my impending retirement, you can imagine my age and surmise my place on life's trajectory through births and deaths, weddings and funerals. With my wife, I'm looking forward to more time with our children, our "olive plants" around the table, and enjoying life with our "childrens' children."

I'm remembering as I write this Paul Stookey's [Wedding Song \(There is Love\)](#). In the early '70s, when I was in my 20s, a wave of my friends rushed to the altar, grooms in bell-bottoms and brides with flowers in their hair, and every reception DJ played the song. So much so, the tune became almost humorous. Ten years ago I would have complained it was a ridiculously corny song. Today, seeing many of those same old friends' Facebook photos with their grandchildren on their knees or their celebrations of 40th and 50th anniversaries, it all seems a little poignant again.

Of course, my friends' families are complicated, as are most contemporary families. Scattered across the world, reshaped by deaths, divorces, and remarriages, failures to launch, single-parent households, same-sex relationships, children with grandparents, and much more, my friends' family experiences remind us that throughout history the reality of family life was never as tidy as June, Ward, Wally, and the Beaver might once have led us to believe.

Yet, loving families are tremendously important for a happy, healthy, and successful life – and that is doubly true for those in poverty and for oppressed or marginalized populations. Loving families are utterly essential for a flourishing society and culture; they are the hearth of civilization. That's the message of Christ, the psalmist, and Genesis in Sunday's readings, a message shared by every religion.

Good laws and public policies must recognize this message, too. Family life is impacted by almost everything that the government does. Health care, economics, the tax system, women's rights, housing, education, welfare, immigration, employment, racial justice, and on and on. Think about how the GI Bill changed the shape of American families, or how the development of the interstate highway system enabled suburban family life (for better or worse), or how Social Security and Medicare changed the relationship of seniors with their children and grandchildren. Think, too, about how recent immigration policies devastated many families by separating children from parents.

It's so important, then, to make ourselves more aware how existing and proposed laws and policies might affect family life. In particular, echoing the words of Mark's Gospel, the lives of children should always be foremost in weighing what legislation might mean for families. Even more, given the profound challenges families face amidst the many crises of our day, the onus is on us all to advocate for new and better programs to support and promote opportunities for loving families, like: child care, Medicaid and Affordable Care Act or 'Obamacare' expansion, family leave, affordable housing, early childhood education, ending the gender gap in wages, and much more. The infrastructure bill working its way through Congress now, for example, has several promising "family friendly" provisions and programs.

As I look to retire to be more with my family, I must also say in closing that in many ways Franciscan Action Network has become like a family to me, too. In the days ahead, I will miss hearing the passion for justice in Sr. Marie's voice, the Franciscan heart of Sr. Maria, Janine's effervescent can-do optimism, Jason's savvy righteousness, Sr. Louise's gallant witness for the oppressed, Phyllis's unflappable competence, Nora's incredible ethic for doing it right, and Fr. Mike's reassuring confidence that all will be well in God's good time.

Of course, I will continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder on the barricades with them all in spirit. My friends and colleagues can always count on me to support their mission for Franciscan-hearted social justice. But, it's bittersweet that my support now will be from afar.

Please join me in asking our God, through the intercession of Sts. Francis and Clare, to bless my FAN friends and colleagues in their lives and in their work, to sustain them in the mission to which they have been called, and to grant each -- peace and all good. Farewell.

Stephen Schneck
FAN Executive Director

Suggested Action:

Familiarize yourself this week with the [infrastructure bill](#) and contact your member of Congress about aspects you feel are important.

Suggested Petitions:

For all families, varied as they are, may love be the undercurrent that sustains the relationships. We pray...

For all those who feel they have no family. May they be surrounded by love from friends, neighbors and our ever-loving God. We pray...

Collect Prayer:

**Almighty ever-living God,
who in the abundance of your kindness
surpass the merits and the desires of those who entreat you,
pour out your mercy upon us
to pardon what conscience dreads
and to give what prayer does not dare to ask.
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

Follow-up to National Catholic Action for Citizenship

National Catholic Action for Citizenship recently [hosted a call](#) to build support for protecting and advancing a broad pathway to citizenship for 8 million essential workers, farm workers, TPS-holders and Dreamers within the budget reconciliation bill.

More than 700 members of the Catholic community from across the country - including Cardinal Tobin, Archbishop Wester, Bishop Stowe and Bishop Dorsonville, Chair of the USCCB's Migration Committee - joined the call. Stories of essential workers Maribel, Jaime, and Rosa, reflected on how Catholics are called to respond to our immigrant neighbor with love and justice. Senator Tim Kaine challenged us to continue pressing Congress to take action.

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



Prayer and Fasting for a Faithful Democracy

A functioning democracy reduces inequality, gives the most vulnerable a voice, and affirms the God-given dignity of every voter. That makes it a critical tool for social justice and the common good.

Faithful Democracy partners in West Virginia will lead the call for accountability from Senator Manchin to pass "Joe's Bill" as they affectionately call the "Freedom to Vote Act." If the filibuster remains the obstacle to



passage and we move into October, West Virginian faith leaders will begin a Season of Prayer and Fasting for a Faithful Democracy. Here is how you can participate:

- Join the [educational webinar](#) on **September 27th at 7pm ET (4pm PT)**. Faith leaders from different faith traditions as they reflect on the connection between personal prayer and fasting with the call to engage in the world, and how communal actions can serve to raise public awareness and highlight pressing moral issues. [Register here](#).
- Join the **Prayer and Fasting for a Faithful Democracy on October 3rd**, World Communion Day, or "Awareness Sunday" for non-Christian faith traditions. West Virginians will be hosting an overnight prayer vigil and fast. You are invited to participate in solidarity, and/or host your own coordinated Prayer & Fasting event in October with your members. Sign up to join as an [individual](#) or as a [community/organization](#).

Take Action with Faiths 4 Climate Justice

Two weeks before global climate negotiations, [people of diverse religions will rise](#) to send a message: destroying the planet is against our religions.

As this year's UN climate negotiations approach, climate change is inflicting fires, droughts and floods on more and more communities around the globe. Our governments have failed to meet the Paris Agreement pledges they made six years ago. This lack of leadership is unacceptable.



Across the globe, [multi-religious actions](#) are planned to deliver our demands to those in power. On October 17th, faith communities will host events where we will unfurl banners calling for climate action, ring our bells, sound gongs and chimes, call the Azan, and more. Then, on October 18th, dressed in traditional religious clothing, we will line up outside of government buildings, banks and investment houses, delivering our demands in person. In Washington, D.C., FAN will attend an action near the State Department. [Register your action here](#).

We are calling for: an immediate stop to new fossil fuel projects, deforestation and related financing, a commitment to green jobs, a rapid transition to 100% renewables away from fossil fuels, climate reparations, and investments in frontline communities.

Take action in your community! Learn more here: <https://greenfaith.org/faiths4climatejustice/>

Brady Releases Updated "The Truth About Suicide and Guns" Report

In conjunction with National Suicide Prevention Awareness month, Brady has released an updated version of its report on gun suicide, '[The Truth About Suicide and Guns](#).' The report builds on and updates previous versions of the report, detailing the crisis of gun suicide in the United States.

During this month designated to bring awareness to preventing suicide, this report not only lays out the scope of



this crisis but likewise details steps that policy makers, individuals and loved ones can to help reduce the risk of gun suicide for those in crisis. [Download and read the entire report here.](#)

Small Grants Available for Creation Care Projects Inspired by Laudato Si'

Recently, the Catholic Climate Covenant made us aware that the [Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters](#) are providing funding for [small grants](#) of up to \$1,000 to groups to seed sustainability and climate justice projects inspired by Laudato Si'.

They are designed to assist parishes, dioceses, schools, religious communities and other Catholic institutions in the United States to organize and mobilize the U.S. Catholic community to express their care for creation and take climate action.

If you are a Catholic parish, diocese, school, religious community or other Catholic organization, you are eligible to apply by October 14th. Get [more information and inspiration by clicking here.](#)



Webinar Recording: Tax Equality for Immigrants

The Center for Migration Studies of New York (CMS) and co-sponsors, the Price Center for Social Innovation at the University of Southern California and NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice, recently hosted a [webinar and discussion](#) of the the Journal on Migration and Human Security [report](#) entitled, "Tax Equality for Immigrants: The Indispensable Ingredient for Remedying Child Poverty in the United States."



The report examines the unequal treatment of citizens and non-citizens in the US tax system and how it impacts the lives of immigrant families and plans to combat child poverty which are now under debate in Congress. [Watch the full discussion by clicking here.](#)