

Old Stories Ever New

[Jump For Joy by Corby Eisbacher](#)

In the scriptures, there are few stories in which women are the main characters. The bond between Ruth and Naomi is one such story, and the gospel account for the [Fourth Sunday of Advent](#) of the visit of Mary to Elizabeth is another. Year after year we read the familiar narrative of the Visitation, treasured especially by women. Joseph and Zechariah are good, faithful men, but this story belongs to Mary and Elizabeth, praising God, rejoicing in their pregnancies, and delighted to be together.



It is Elizabeth who speaks. Having felt her infant leap in her womb, Elizabeth cries out in words that are so familiar to us because they are joined with Mary's words at the Annunciation in one of the first prayers we ever learned, and which is prayed in every Rosary, the *Hail Mary*.

While the words of the narrative don't change, the context in which it is read alters from century to century. The history and culture in which we reflect on the story are very different from those of Elizabeth and Mary. Yet, some realities don't change very much. The world of these women was ruled by Roman emperors and governors, and by Jewish tetrarchs and high priests, all men. Women were near the bottom of the pecking order. Today's world, country, and Church are still ruled predominantly by men, changing ever so slowly. Yet, it was not on powerful men that God's favor fell, but on two humble Jewish women whose children would alter human history forever.

Imagine their conversation. First, they would share amazing stories of their pregnancies, their great joy and deep gratitude to God, and their questions about what their children would become. Personal stories. But in the gospel of Luke, Mary's response to Elizabeth is her Canticle, in which she sings that God's "mercy is from age to age..." God "throws down rulers from their thrones but lifts up the lowly. . ." The personal encounter expands to embrace God's saving greatness through all ages to all peoples. What meaning might this blessed encounter have for us today, in our particular time of woes and blessings, in our society, culture, and church?

Sr. Marie Lucey, OSF
FAN Associate Director

Suggested Action:

Reflect on the encounter between Mary and Elizabeth, what it meant over 2,000 years ago, and what it means for us today.

Suggested Petitions:

That we may believe in God's promises in this last week of Advent, let us pray. . .
That we may pay close attention to meaningful visitations in our lives, let us pray. . .

Prayer: O Antiphon for December 19th

O Root of Jesse,
standing as a sign among the peoples;
before you kings will shut their mouths,
to you the nations will make their prayer:
Come and deliver us, and delay no longer!

Amen

Take Action: Join the Moral Imperative for Immigrant Justice Faith Week of Action

This week, from Dec. 13th-17th, [We are Home](#) and several other Immigrant Advocacy Organizations are hosting a Moral Imperative for Immigrant Justice Faith Week of Action. **The goal is to urge Senators to deliver on immigration this year and include a pathway to citizenship in the Build Back Better Act.**

1. Dec. 13th: Day of Fasting
2. Dec. 14th: Nationwide Vigil (prayers at in-district offices for 100 senators) + DC Faith Lobby Visits & Walk for Freedom Faith Action ([Facebook Event](#))
3. Dec. 15th: Clergy & Faith Leaders Virtual Town Hall + Walk for Justice at 11 am ET at Benjamin Banneker Park
4. Dec. 16th: Call-In Day ([Toolkit](#))
5. Dec. 17th: Tweet Storm



As the Senate deliberates the Build Back Better Act, a pathway to citizenship hangs in the balance in the Senate. This moment requires both faith and action. We encourage you and your community to take action in any way you are able.

FAN Staff will be Plunging Again in 2022

The Staff of the Franciscan Action Network has once again committed to join our partners at Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) in the [2022 Virtual Polar Bear Plunge](#). CCAN has been recognized as “the best regional climate organization in the world” by Bill McKibben. We consider them our good friends and delight in participating with them in this event each year.

The Plunge this year will be [hybrid](#), so everyone can join in the fun! Some FAN team members



will gather at the National Harbor to take the plunge and others will be plunging in their own backyards. But, before we Plunge, we need help reaching our fundraising goal. Last year you helped us to raise over \$5,000 and we know we can raise that much again. [Please donate to our team page today by clicking here.](#)

Thank you for supporting us in our pursuit to make a positive change in the world. We will be gearing up to get cold on February 12th.

Take Action: Commit to GreenFaith's "Time for Living the Change"

The good people at GreenFaith are once again urging people to [Live the Change](#). This simple commitment to making a low-carbon New Year's resolution and living it out during January sends a clear message. Rooted in gratitude for life and for Earth itself, our spiritual paths guide us to care for creation, live simply, avoid waste, and love our neighbours--especially the most vulnerable.



You can join as an individual or gather some friends in your community and join as a group. Aligning our lives with our faiths is one way that we stand firm against injustice and reject the desecration of people and planet. [Click here to get more information.](#)

Gun Violence Prevention Vigil and Educational Campaign

Our partners at Newtown Action Alliance and other gun violence prevention organizations once again hosted the [9th Annual National Vigil for All Victims Of Gun Violence](#) on December 8th. Working through technical difficulties, the virtual portion of the vigil honored people whose lives were lost to gun violence by broadcasting beautiful photos with a background of soft music, allowing the watcher to sit in prayer and honor them. We encourage you to watch a little while by [clicking here](#). The vigil begins around the 25 minute mark.

As we continue to work toward a more peaceful society, we alert you to [the Campaign to #KeepKidsSafe](#), also brought to us by Newtown Action Alliance. The goal of the educational campaign is threefold: 1) convince Americans that a gun-free home is the safest home for our children 2) encourage all gun owners to safely lock up their guns 3) provide opportunities for parents and others to safely remove their guns



from their homes via gun buyback opportunities and 4) distribute free gun safes. Learn more and download the brochure [here](#).

Creation Justice Ministries Hosts Truth, Healing and Conservation Webinars

As people within many Christian denominations begin to acknowledge and seek to make amends for the role of the Church in sanctioning the removal of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands, our partners at [Creation Justice Ministries](#) recently hosted two webinars highlighting Indigenous-led conservation efforts in California and what faith communities can do to support them.

- Truth, Healing & Conservation: [Faith Communities & Indigenous Land and Water Protection](#)
- Truth, Healing & Conservation: [Tracing the Roots of California Ecocide, Seeking Fruits of Repentance](#)



We invite you to watch the recordings by clicking the appropriate link above.

Updates on the Franciscan Justice Circles

This portion of our newsletter is dedicated to the [Franciscan Justice Circles](#) (FJC), our grassroots advocacy initiative.

On last week's national FJC call, during a reflection on the difference between secular and faith-rooted advocacy, one of the FJC members shared this quote:

Thomas Merton was advising a discouraged activist, "Do not depend on the hope of results. When you are doing the sort of work you have taken on, essentially an apostolic work, you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no worth at all, if not perhaps, results opposite to what you expect. As you get used to this idea, you will start more and more to concentrate not on the results, but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself..." -- Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love*, p. 294.



Inspired by the charism of Saints Francis and Clare, [Franciscan Justice Circles are forming nationwide](#). If you feel called to join FAN's local, grassroots, advocacy movement [contact FJC Director, Nora Pfeiffer with any questions](#).