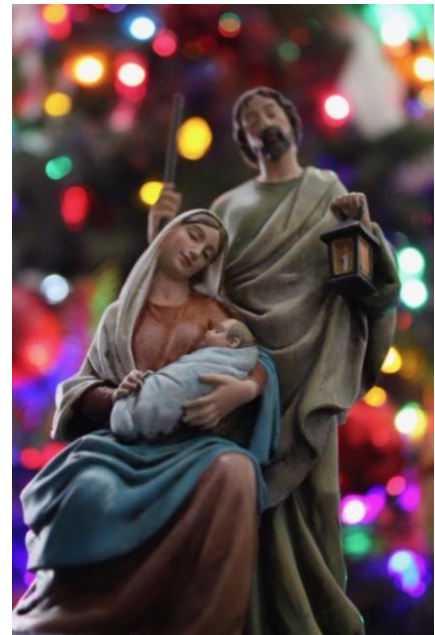


Many Different Definitions of “Family”

In life the word “Family” has expanded from a safe, supportive place, bringing a lot of memories both good and not so good, to encompass times of great cheer and times of mixed feelings.

Growing up I felt that my family was so different from what I saw on TV and in other families. In my work as a Social Worker, I finally realized that all families might have different experiences but all the family members did as best as they could.

In our faith, the word “family” plays a big part of our getting to know who God is to us. To be honest, that memory might be painful and in fact challenge us about our need for safety and welcome. It is far easier to protect ourselves than to trust in ourselves, others and even God.



What the world is experiencing today with the COVID virus has, for the most part, added to our desire to be safe. It's natural to not want to take some chances with our health and therefore, the pandemic has brought about even more separation within our families.

But to God, [belonging is important](#) and so are our families.

In this week's [readings for the Feast of the Holy Family](#), we hear that Joseph is warned to flee and find safety in Egypt. His family is in danger. So they flee to survive and to do the will of God. To leave for a safer life, for a better chance for the family to not just survive but thrive, takes a risk. Making a journey always has risks, but how else could you respond that would hopefully be better?

So this week, let us pray that our family, in spite of what state it is in, can be safe and nurture each other to see and know God's call.

Br. Paul Crawford, OFM Cap., MSW
FAN Board President

Suggested Action:

Set aside some time this week to think about and pray about your family. Offer God thanks for each of your family members, knowing they did their best, and pray for their happiness and health.

Suggested Petitions:

For all families, may they enjoy each other this holiday season. We pray...

For all those who feel they don't have a family, may they be strengthened in the knowledge that God loves them. We pray...

Collect Prayer:

**O God, who were pleased to give us
the shining example of the Holy Family,
graciously grant that we may imitate them
in practicing the virtues of family life and in the bonds of charity,
and so, in the joy of your house,
delight one day in eternal rewards.**

**Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.**

Amen

Invitation: WV Virtual Worship Service Tonight

As the days continue to lengthen and the weather grows more and more frigid, many religious traditions unify around the image of light and warmth in the midst of cold and dark times. Much like the ever-shortening days, it seems like darkness continues to descend upon our democracy; yet as people of faith, we cling to hope and the promise of light.



Join West Virginia Faith Leaders, TONIGHT December 20th at 7pm ET for a [virtual worship service](#) as we lift prayers and sing praises across the many different traditions that comprise the West Virginia Faith Table. Our democracy needs us to lift our voice now more than ever, and we as people of faith cannot be silent - we must shine in the midst of the darkness.

We will be having this event online and there will be a physical event happening at the Lewisburg, WV Green Space simultaneously. If you would like to join us online be sure to [register here](#) - and we hope that you will be with us for this special evening.

Take Action on Behalf of our Migrant Sisters and Brothers

Last week the Senate parliamentarian rejected the proposed immigration provisions in the Build Back Better Act. The parliamentarian's "no" is not binding; *it does not mean that the immigration protections in the bill are dead.*



Members of Congress have the ultimate decision-making power to determine what goes into the final reconciliation package.

While the decision is very disappointing, immigrant groups, advocates, and people of faith remain focused on holding our Senate members accountable for delivering on their promise. We urge you to take action by [signing this petition from We Are Home](#) and using this [toolkit to call or email your Senators](#).

70% of Americans strongly support creating pathways to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Find additional [message guidance here](#).

December issue of the Stop Trafficking Newsletter

The [December issue of the Stop Trafficking Newsletter](#) highlights human trafficking in the travel industry.

The travel and tourism industry is affected by trafficking daily as traffickers attempt to transport victims and even more so during major sporting events, conventions, and at vacation destinations.

Over the last decade, transportation, tourism, and hotel professionals have recognized the role they can play on the front lines of identifying potential trafficking victims. To read more [click here](#).

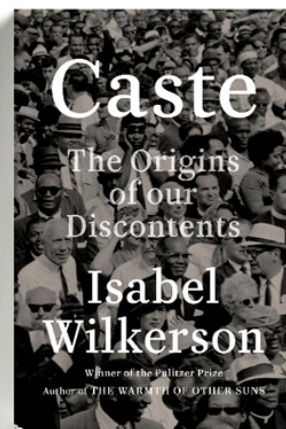
If you missed an issue, you can find the Stop Trafficking Newsletter archived on our [website](#).



Franciscan Federation Book Discussion Series

Caste—The Origins of Our Discontents is an eye-opening story of people and history, and a reexamination of what lies under the surface of ordinary lives and of American life today”.

Members of the [Franciscan Federation](#) will facilitate this unique opportunity for prayer, study, dialogue and discussion on racial injustice. Isabel Wilkerson’s book provides a guide to race and racial brutality in the US, told through the allegory of caste, the latter viewed as the skeleton under the flesh of black-white relationships in the 400-year history of what became the US. We offer several options for this three-part book discussion series. For more information and to register please [click here](#).



A Franciscan Renaissance: Needed, Costly and

Within Reach

You are invited to join in a [virtual dialogue](#) of Brian McLaren's "A Franciscan Renaissance: needed, costly and within reach."



A Franciscan Renaissance: Needed, Costly and Within Reach

Presentation for the 56th Annual Franciscan Federation Conference (AFC) June 12, 2021, a virtual experience.

Dr. Brian McLaren

Explore with other members of the Franciscan community the inspiration and invitation offered by Brian in his keynote address at the 2021 Franciscan Federation Conference. You may attend one of three sessions, which are the same. For more information and to register please [click here](#).

Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

Our [Franciscan Justice Circles](#) provide a space that allows people to grow in faith, deepen Franciscan spirituality, and based on a culture of encounter, we act.

MAKING SPACE
to invite grace



Sharing words of wisdom for the journey of constructing a culture of encounter:

"Never stop listening. You will change and you will learn, if you listen." ~Sr. Beth Davies, CND (organizer [This Land is Home to Me, Appalachian Pastoral Letter 1975](#))

Upcoming December FJC Meetings:

Nationwide Virtual FJC, for those with limited accessibility on [Wednesday, Dec. 29 at 3pm ET \(12p PT\)](#). Find the full list of upcoming FJC meetings on our [website](#).

For information about joining a Franciscan Justice Circle, please contact us at FJCinfo@franciscanaction.org.