

Publication Date: January 24, 2022

Reflection Date: January 30, 2022 - 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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## Balm for the Soul of the Weary

What a balm for the soul of the weary justice advocate is found in the readings for the [Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time](#).

Whatever issue compels you—climate, migration, peace, racial justice, democracy, the dignity of human life—there will be times of great discouragement. This might be one of those times right now. How can those in government not see how important this issue is? How can they ignore calls for change, even when polling suggests those calls are broadly supported? Why are we as a nation so deeply divided that we can no longer pass legislation on most issues?



Moreover, as individuals called to put our Gospel values and Franciscan charism into work for peace and justice, we have probably faced misunderstanding, criticism, and even ridicule. The small sacrifices we make of our time and funds on behalf of just causes might provoke dismissive comments or eyerolls from our friends. Larger sacrifices—for example risking arrest or undertaking travel to stand up for others—might bring objections from members of our families or religious communities. “There s/he goes again, trying to save the world,” they say.

We might even become traumatized by our actions in solidarity with those suffering grave injustice. During a pilgrimage to Assisi a few years ago, I met a woman seeking help for the exhaustion and rage she felt after several years on an international peacemaking team; “I have become a very angry peacemaker,” she said. At one point early in my career, I realized that the ugly details I was learning through field research into extrajudicial killings in the Middle East was putting me in danger of becoming seriously depressed.

The mass readings for next Sunday come as timely help. There is the poignant story from Luke’s Gospel of Jesus rejected by his own friends and neighbors in Nazareth, who liked his words but turned against him when his actions did not meet their expectations. “No prophet is accepted in his own native place”—what a lonely statement that is. Yet as followers of Jesus, should we expect any better treatment in our own native places?

Then there is St. Paul’s reminder to the Corinthians that no matter how right we might think we are, our actions are in vain if done without love. And even when we believe we are acting clearly on behalf of what is right, we are never seeing more than part of the picture, as we can only “know partially” and “see indistinctly, as in a mirror” in this life.

Nonetheless, God promises us unfailing support if we follow the divine call faithfully. How the heart warms to God’s tender reassurance to the prophet Jeremiah regarding his critics: “be not crushed on their account; as though I would leave you crushed before them.” Ultimately, let us hope that when dealing with frustration, discouragement, misunderstanding, criticism—or even

the threat of violence—we will be informed by the total nonviolence of Jesus, who that day in Nazareth “passed through the midst of them and went away” in peace.

Michele Dunne, OFS  
Executive Director

**Suggested Action:**

Is there someone whose work on behalf of justice inspires you? Reach out to that person with a word of encouragement and recognition of their sacrifice.

**Suggested Petitions:**

May our hearts be open to the love of the Lord and may we have courage to share that love with everyone we meet. We pray...

For all people who do not experience love the way God loves us; may they be especially cradled in the palm of God’s hand. We pray..

**Collect Prayer:**

**Grant us, Lord our God,  
that we may honor you with all our mind,  
and love everyone in truth of heart.  
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**

## Urge Your Senator to Support VAWA

COVID-19 has led to increased incidents of domestic violence and limited opportunities for victims to escape their circumstances. Long before the pandemic there were many legal loopholes for those committing violence against women; for example, non-indigenous persons who commit crimes (such as human trafficking or violence against women and girls) against a Native person in tribal territory cannot be prosecuted by the tribes. Since 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) has been the primary way that the federal government responds to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

VAWA comes up for renewal every five years; it lapsed in 2019 and *still has yet to be reauthorized*. Currently, a bipartisan group of Senators is



working to introduce a bill ASAP to reauthorize VAWA, and this 2022 version would include new provisions expanding tribal jurisdiction over gendered violence. **They need our [help to build support around the bill](#) so that it can be introduced with as many bipartisan cosponsors as possible.**

The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd has created [this action alert to easily contact your Senators and urge their support](#). We urge our members to take action.

## Lent 2022 Reflection Booklets from Pax Christi now Available

Our good friends at Pax Christi International have announced that this year's Lenten reflection booklet, [The Beauty We Must Hold Fast To: Reflections for Lent 2022](#), is now available. The booklet includes all-new reflections based on the daily liturgical readings for the entire season of Lent, from Ash Wednesday through Easter. Each reflection (as well as the photographs) was written by a former Pax Christi USA General Secretary, National Coordinator or Executive Director.

The print version of the booklet is available to order and the electronic version for your e-reader is available for immediate download. Find [more information and pricing by clicking here](#).



## “The Reunited States” Available on PBS

Based on the book of the same name by Mark Gerzon, [The Reunited States](#) is a documentary that follows four everyday heroes on the difficult journey of bridging political divides in the United States, available on your local [Public Broadcasting Station](#).

Susan Bro (who lost her daughter when a car drove through a group of counter-protestors in Charlottesville) and David and Erin Leaverton ( a Republican couple who traveled to all 50 states in an RV to find out what divides Americans) are just a few of the characters profiled in the film. Each of these bridge-builders has realized that while our divides run deeper than they ever could have imagined, so does the love and hope to bring our country back together.



As Franciscans who value relationships, we encourage our friends and members to [watch the film](#), perhaps with family and friends. We all need to practice the art of listening to those with opinions different from our own.

## Support FAN Staff as we Plunge 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.



## One Year After the End of the Muslim Ban, Families are Still Affected

It's been one year since the #MuslimBan was rescinded, but what does that mean?

This **Wednesday, January 26 at 10am PT/1pm ET**, our friends at [National Immigration Law Center](#) and [No Muslim Ban Ever](#) are hosting a panel on Facebook Live called *The Muslim and African Bans: One Year after Biden*.

Join in to learn more about the barriers that still exist, the impact the bans continue to have on communities, and the actions that the Biden administration should take.



## Franciscan Justice Circles Updates

Our [Franciscan Justice Circles](#) (FJC) are local affinity groups throughout the country in which Franciscan-hearted people come together to deepen their spirituality and convert their values into action for justice, peace, integrity of creation, and human dignity. Last week at the March for Life, we were joined by Bekah Galucki who is a member of the Washington, DC FJC. (Pictured, far right)

In addition to the many upcoming location-based FJC Meetings, this week the virtual (not location-based) Circle will gather via zoom on Wednesday, January 26 at 3pm Eastern/12



Pacific. Please [contact us](#) for more information if you'd like to join. Find the full list of upcoming FJC meetings on our [website](#).

For information about joining or forming a Franciscan Justice Circle, please contact Nora Pfeiffer at [FJCinfo@franciscanaction.org](mailto:FJCinfo@franciscanaction.org)