

The fruit of a tree shows the care it has had

My neighbor has a fruit tree that hangs over the fence of my backyard. Last spring was my first spring in this house so I was thrilled to follow the blooming of the tree. It slowly became full of magnificent white blooms. It was so beautiful that I took several pictures of it. Wondering what kind of fruit tree it was, I watched it closely.



With time small pears started to appear, but they were not growing. Then they started to fall, covering the ground under the tree, and after that even the leaves started to become yellow and were falling. By mid-summer the tree was sad looking...no fruits, no leaves. What happened? My neighbor who was sweeping everyday under it one day asked me what I thought. "It needs to be sprayed," I said, "or at least given a good pruning."

Fruit trees, like our hearts, are not easy to grow. They require care and time by people who know what to do. It does not just happen. Scriptures often use the image of trees and in particular of fruit trees. This week's readings for the [8th Sunday in Ordinary Time](#) are a good example. They are all about bearing fruit.

"The fruit of a tree shows the care it has had," we read in the Book of Sirach. "So too does one's speech disclose the bent of one's mind. Praise no one before he speaks, for it is then that people are tested."

This Word of God is challenging us to look at our heart, to take stock of what we do and do not do to take care of it. What care do we give to nurture, inform and grow our heart? We live in a world of fake news, of distortion of the truth for personal gain. It seems that our society has lost the capacity to acknowledge failure or defeat and so blames 'the other' for our fears and insecurities. We more readily volunteer to take the splinter from our brother or sister's eye while not noticing the wooden beam in our own.

Many of us are talking about bridging the divide in our society today, considering how to talk with those with whom we disagree. Maybe the first step in engaging with others is to give ourselves time to reflect and pray, to allow our heart to be in touch with God, inviting the Spirit to inspire us. A good second step, I believe, is to be honest with ourselves, humbly searching for the truth within us, so as not to be one of "the blind guides leading the blind" (Mat. 15:14).

[The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis](#) # 30 states: "As they announce peace with their lips, let them be careful to have it even more within their own hearts." Let us heed the words of our Father Francis and search for peace within us, holding judgment of the other until we walk in his or her shoes and making sure our lips speak from the fullness of our heart.

Sr. Maria Orlandini, OSF
FAN Director of Advocacy

Suggested Action:

Spend some time in contemplation, coming in touch with God in your heart.
Refrain from passing comments about someone you do not see eye to eye with.

Suggested Petitions:

For people who labor to provide fruits for our table, we pray...
Let us pray for people who are unjustly criticized, we pray...

Collect Prayer:

**Grant us, O Lord, we pray,
that the course of our world
may be directed by your peaceful rule
and that your Church may rejoice,
untroubled in her devotion.
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.

Join us for “RE-humanize this Lent”

Politically-motivated violence—whether against political processes, communities, or individuals perceived as enemies—has flared in recent years in the United States. Research shows that speech which dehumanizes or demonizes others is a precursor for committing or tolerating such violence. As people of faith and followers of St. Francis who reached across divides to work for peace, what role can we play in countering political violence? How should we examine our own speech about those with whom we feel at odds? How should we respond when we hear dehumanizing speech from others?



On **February 28th at 7pm ET (4pm PT)**, we invite you to join us for “[RE-humanize this Lent](#)”, where we will offer an hour of scripture, reflection, discussion, and prayer about how we can use the weeks of Lent to become “re-humanizers,” resisting the dangers of dehumanizing discourse to our fellow citizens, our country, and our souls. [Click here to register.](#)

We will benefit from the wisdom of several speakers, including **Carolyn Townes, OFS** (JPIC Animator for the Secular Franciscan Order), social psychologist and spiritual director **Robert**

Ferrell (Contemplative Interbeing founder), and political violence researcher **Rachel Kleinfeld** (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace).

FAN will follow up with all registrants by email weekly throughout Lent with questions for reflection and opportunities to share thoughts and inspiration. There will be a listening session on Zoom to share reflections on the process shortly after Easter. We hope you will [join us](#).

Take Action for Climate: Send a Postcard to SCOTUS

Last week in this newsletter, we urged signatures on a petition to President Biden saying [Climate Can't Wait](#). The Senate needs to immediately pass the \$550 billion in investments for climate, justice, jobs and the other provisions which will help families and communities that the House of Representatives has already approved.



Additionally, the Supreme Court will hear arguments on February 28th on whether Congress constitutionally authorized the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to issue significant rules — including those capable of reshaping the nation's electricity grids and unilaterally decarbonizing virtually any sector of the economy — **without any limits** on what the agency can require so long as it considers cost, nonair impacts and energy requirements.

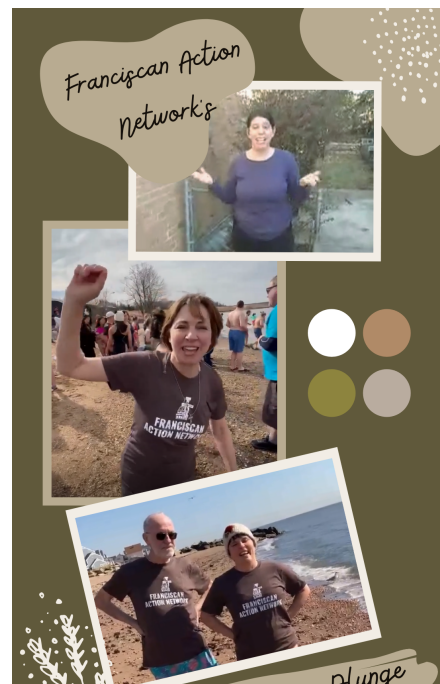
The [Climate Crisis Policy](#) campaign has developed [this postcard](#) to print and send to the Justices to advocate for the EPA to retain the power to restrict greenhouse gas emissions. As people of faith, our primary duty is to protect all creation, as we are but temporary custodians for the future of humanity. We urge you to [print out these postcards](#) and **send them to the Supreme Court**. Alternatively, you can use this [intake form to send a direct message](#) or make a call using this phone number: 202-479-3000.

Polar Bear Plunge Wrap-up

We work to educate, inspire, and mobilize a nationwide community to advocate for clean energy policies. One way we accomplish this is by joining our friends at Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) at their annual Polar Bear Plunge. On February 12, 2022, we did it!!

Executive Director Michele Dunne jumped with the rest of the CCAN plungers at National Harbor. Our teammate, Kate Stewart-Gerry took an ice bucket challenge from her home. Communications Coordinator Janine Walsh jumped into the Long Island Sound in East Haven, CT along with Patrick Carolan, former ED and FAN supporter. Here is a [compilation video of the FAN team plunges](#).

A heartfelt thank you to all those who donated and helped us reach our \$5,000 goal! We split these funds with CCAN to help both organizations continue the important work of caring for God's creation.



If you missed the opportunity for charitable giving, you can still send in donations to Franciscan Action Network at P.O. Box 29106, Washington, DC 20017 or electronically on [our website](#).

Freedom for Fisherman Webinar

During the Lenten season, we Catholics eat a large amount of seafood products. But how many of us know where it comes from and how it got to our table?

Human trafficking is in almost every corner of the world. The USCSAHT will host "[Freedom for Fisherman](#)" on **Feb 23, 2022 at 4pm ET (3pm CT, 1pm PT)**. The presenter on the webinar will be Martha Mendoza, an Associated Press reporter and writer and part of a team whose investigations into slavery in Thailand's seafood industry led to the freedom of more than 2,000 men.



You will hear the stories of the men who were captives, in some cases for decades, whipped with stingray tails if they asked for rest, risking murder by captains if they failed to please. And you'll hear how Martha's investigation resulted in a dozen people jailed, new legislation, and consumers worldwide forced to confront the cruelties of slavery in this century. [Register to attend by clicking here](#).

The Nonviolence of St. Francis and St. Clare

In 2019, John Dear and Ken Butigan led forty people on an inspiring, powerful Pace e Bene pilgrimage to Assisi, Italy to study and pray in the footsteps of St. Francis and St. Clare.

The Beatitudes Center and John Dear will host Ken Butigan as he teaches us about "[The Nonviolence of St. Francis and St. Claire](#)" on **Saturday, March 12th** (11am Pacific/12 pm Mountain/1pm Central/2 pm Eastern Time).

As the world rushes toward destruction with global systemic violence, we are invited to reconsider the saintly lives of Francis and Clare through the lens of nonviolence for new inspiration.



The session will last 90 minutes and there is a cost of \$30 to attend. Get [more information and the link to register by clicking here](#). **Registration closes on March 7th.**

Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

As a member of the [Franciscan Justice Circles](#), you will receive a monthly action alert digest that lists several ways to advocate on multiple issues. This digest serves as a one-stop-shop for our members to access information and

called to
“WALK THE TALK”

opportunities to take action via petitions, letters, and toolkits for social media posts. Subscribe today by [clicking here and submitting the “Interested in Learning More” form](#).

Do you live in the NYC Area, Northeastern Georgia or Western Wisconsin / Eastern Minnesota? There will be Circle meetings for folks in all of these locations this **Wednesday, February 23 at different times**. Please [contact us](#) if you'd like to get connected!