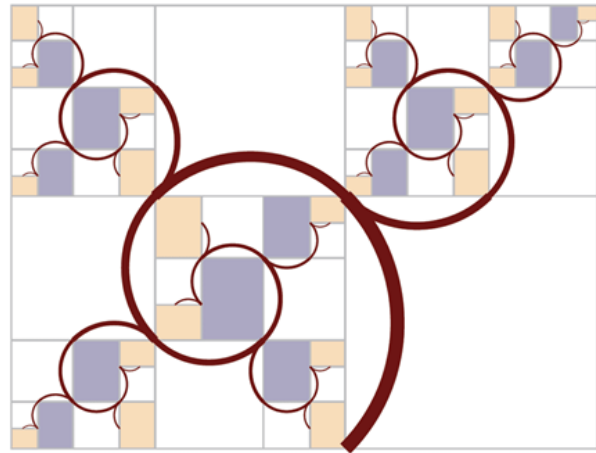


## The Challenge of Rationality and Grasping at Infinity

Harris Spiral

I love the challenging bits of the Bible. The reading for the [5th Sunday in Lent in the Episcopal lectionary](#) has one such challenge in John 12:3:

*Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. Judas asked: "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."*



Quite honestly, Judas' question makes sense. He is being totally rational. But it is a very limited form of rationality.

Our faith demands that we stretch ourselves to see and feel and understand in ways that are far beyond our limited view of creation and humanity. We can only do this with God's help, for God is the only one who has a view of infinity. God is the only one who sees the infinite connections and cause/effect relationships which are the web of life itself. Mere human rationality, however well intentioned, is not going to really help. Yes, it may help for a short time. Yes, it may help a few people. But God's perspective, which must become our perspective, is to grasp infinity. I have two points to elaborate upon based upon these initial musings. One, how do we use our God-given rationality correctly? Second, how do we grasp infinity so we can at least attempt to see truth as God does?

Pope John Paul II says the following in his encyclical "Faith & Reason":

*"Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth - in a word, to know himself - so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves."*

In other words, pure reason without faith will probably lead us astray. Faith is the "salt" that enlivens Reason and gives it a good taste. It may be invisible, like the salt that dissolves in a good soup, but without it, the soup - and the solution you find to any problem by Reason alone - has no flavor. Your solution will have either limited success or create unintended consequences which actually make things worse. An example of that is our current form of nuclear power: yes, it gives us lots of electricity without greenhouse gasses which is very good, but it also creates radioactive waste and huge clean-up costs for which we still have no long term solution.

As for trying to grasp infinity, I recommend geometry and poetry and flowers. I am teaching students the geometry of the infinite by having them draw shapes such as the Harris spiral shown in the photo – which is an example of an infinitely repeating basic form called a fractal. You can find infinity in poetry too, most famously in the lines of William Blake:

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour.*

Finally, you can grasp God's infinite mercy, wisdom and beauty in a flower. Stare into it. Be lost in it. Become one with it. And then you too will know, deep in your bones, that you too are part of the infinite. Then you too have a chance to appreciate what Mary did by wiping Jesus' feet with nard and do the same to those around you.

Gordon Kubanek, P.Eng.  
Third Order Franciscan & Writer

### **Suggested Action:**

Take some time to get lost in "God's infinite mercy, wisdom and beauty" by gazing at a flower. What message from the Divine might be revealed to you? And how will you translate that message into action? Visit FAN's [Advocacy Resources](#) page for ideas.

### **Suggested Petitions:**

For all those whose lives have been disrupted by the war. May they be comforted. We pray...  
For the beauty of all creation, we pray...

### **Collect Prayer from Episcopal Lectionary:**

**Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

## **Join Us on an Encounter for our Common Home**

We are excited to announce [Encounter for Our Common Home today](#), a new national campaign for climate solutions cosponsored by FAN and led by Catholic Climate Covenant.

This Spring, join Franciscan Action Network and people of faith across the country for this **weeks-long U.S. Catholic training and advocacy campaign** to encounter and urge our U.S. senators to support climate solutions now for the sake of our most affected neighbors, our future, and our common home. Our approach – one of both faith and reason – seeks to go to the heart of that shared concern, with the hope of



**Encounter**  
FOR OUR COMMON HOME

manifesting a change of heart.

When you [click to join today](#), you will be the first to hear of campaign events, including:

- Community-building events
- Webinars on our faith and climate action
- Young Adult materials and engagement
- Trainings
- Resources
- Action alerts

... All of this will culminate in several rounds of virtual or in-person meetings with U.S. senators beginning the week of May 2-6, 2022. [We hope you will join us in this journey.](#)

## Take Action: Fight Trafficking during Lent

Each year during the Lenten season, given the increased focus for Catholics on eating fish instead of meat on Fridays, the [US Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking](#) (USCSAHT) lift up the connection between seafarers and human trafficking and encourages us to [take action](#) to help prevent trafficking in the seafood supply chain.



Illegal fishing has been described as one of the most severe problems affecting world fisheries, threatening ecosystems, economic security, and natural resources. The [Illegal Fishing and Forced Labor Prevention Act](#) (HR 3075) addresses seafood slavery and combats illegal, unreported, or unregulated fishing, and other purposes. This Lent, we ask you to [click here and contact your](#) representative and urge them to co-sponsor the bill. Ending slavery is everyone's work.

## Holy Voices Event: Gender Inequality and Climate Displacement

The Holy Days & Holidays Working Group of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, in which FAN participates, is excited to announce a new event series called [Holy Voices](#).

Each month you are invited to hear from faith leaders, directly-impacted individuals, experts, and other advocates on various topics related to immigration. These virtual gatherings are an opportunity to learn, pray, and take action together as an interfaith community.



The next event is coming up on **Thursday, March 31 at 7pm ET (4pm PT)**. [“Holy Voices: Gender Inequality & Climate Displacement”](#) will be co-hosted by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and Pacific Lutheran Seminary. Speakers include Krish O'Mara Vignarajah (LIRS), Cynthia Moe-Lobeda (Christian ethicist, Pacific Lutheran Seminary), and Rabbi Jennie Rosenn (Jewish ethicist, Dayenu). [Click here to register.](#)

Additionally, please save the date of **April 13** to join us for a celebration of Ramadan, Passover, and Easter with **Holy Voices: Prayers of Liberation & Hope for Immigration Relief**.

## Faiths United Series on Guns in Houses of Worship

As a member of the Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence, we announce the first in a 3-part series hosted by the coalition on "Guns in Houses of Worship."

The first panel, "[Sharing a Faith Voice](#)", will be held on **Wednesday, March 30 at 1pm ET (10am PT)** and will touch on the topics of fear, community, and resilience. The panel will feature a discussion on what people in houses of worship fear: mass shootings, increased police presence, threats from within and without, and so much more. [Click here to register](#).



## Save the Date: EAD Early Bird Registration is Open

Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2022 will be held virtually from Monday, April 25-Wednesday, April 27. The theme for this year's virtual EAD is "[Fierce Urgency: Advancing Civil & Human Rights](#)." As people of faith, we know each person to be created in God's image, imbued with dignity and having a voice that demands to be heard, heeded, and treated justly.

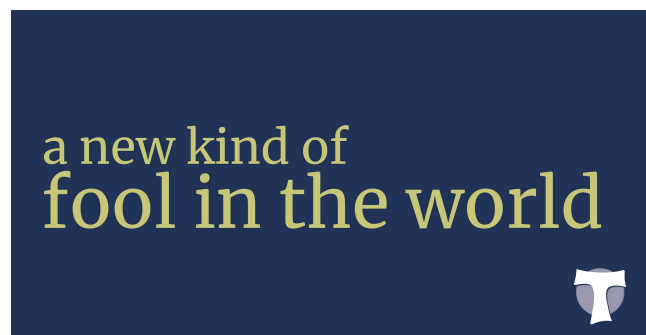


EAD 2022 calls us into solidarity to restore, protect, and expand voting rights in the United States and to realize human rights around the world. Using the training from EAD, we will arise in unity, holding up a mirror to leaders of nations, putting injustice on display and tearing down the veil of oppression that obscures the beautiful, God-born light shining from within us all.

Early bird registration is only \$50 and is available now through April 1st. [Click here to register](#) today.

## Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi were people who challenged the status quo. They did so from a fervent desire to live ever more faithfully to the Gospel, no matter how radical it seemed to those around them. St. Francis is noted as having said, "The Lord has told me that he wanted to make a new fool of me," filling him with courage to follow God's will into a new way of living.



The Franciscan Action Network wants to support anyone who, like Francis and Clare, wants to bring the Franciscan charism alive in the world through action for justice and peace. Please [contact us](#) if you'd like to join with others in your area, to focus on connecting Franciscan spirituality with your commitment to justice, aligning what we do with Kin-dom values through Franciscan Justice Circles!