

Reflections of Christ

Image by [Jeff Jacobs](#) from [Pixabay](#)

We have been hearing a lot about kings this fall! To our modern sensibilities, these kings may not have the awesome degree of power and authority that the Church envisions by declaring this coming Sunday to be the [solemnity of Christ as King of the Universe](#). Because we are most familiar with situations like Great Britain where the new king is largely a figurehead meant to promote a sense of loyalty and unity, we might not understand the truly awesome power to create the world anew that Jesus possesses.



And yet, we can still see the rule of autocrats in many nations who rule like the kings and emperors of old. We can sense how it might feel to live in a part of the world where the power of the state is controlled by a single ruler or small cadre of elites.

In times and places where justice and peace prevail, we can easily see a reflection of what it means for Christ to be King of the Universe, but if we are living somewhere that is shrouded in greed, oppression, or injustice then our sense of why we would call Christ our King may be warped because the power of the state is misused.

This week's gospel for the solemnity of Christ the King is not set in a throne room; instead it is set on a hill with Jesus hanging in weakness from the cross.

On the hill of Calvary, there was a thief hanging next to Jesus who could see with eyes of faith. When the other thief mocked Jesus, the so-called Good Thief, who tradition names Dismas, says: "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? ... but this man has done nothing criminal."

Dismas, after declaring the injustice of Jesus' death sentence, then said with great humility "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." To which Jesus replied: "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

This is the power Christ wields as King of the Universe. While the rulers of this world have the power to oppress and subjugate through brutality and fear, Christ offers his power to provide us with paradise based upon faith and love.

As Franciscans who are called to live the Gospel of Jesus, we must work to bring the world into conformity with the vision that the King of the Universe laid out during his earthly ministry. Throughout the liturgical year we have repeatedly heard that vision proclaimed from lowly stables to hillsides and lakeshores and finally to the cross. But even after the mighty Roman Empire executed Jesus, we see with the eyes of faith that Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, forever signaling to us that the message of the Gospel is right and true.

I recently returned from a Franciscan Pilgrimage to the Southern Border of the U.S. After listening and praying during my pilgrimage, I urge everyone to advocate for the migrants and desperate asylum-seekers, work to change the narrative, and elect lawmakers who desire comprehensive immigration reform that is rooted in human rights. [Read about my experience here.](#)

Let us not be discouraged by kings, autocrats, and elites of this world who rule in ways that oppress and brutalize. Instead, let us seek to make our nations and rulers reflections of Christ, the King of the Universe, who was willing to die for the love of each and every one of his subjects; a king who offers us paradise through his message of Good News.

Tobias Harkleroad , OFS
FAN Director of Campaigns

Suggested Action:

Take a moment to [read and reflect on Toby's personal reflection](#) about his time with the migrants at the Southern Border.

Suggested Petitions:

For all those oppressed by kings, autocrats, and elites of this world. We pray...
For the courage to speak on behalf of the marginalized and victimized. We pray...

Prayer: We Are God's Own Design

**God, remind us that we need not fear when we serve.
Your intricate design protects us completely
so that we can go be present with the voiceless, defenseless.
You created our baffling bodies to heal themselves,
so that we can be your hands and feet in the world to heal others.**

Amen.

Support FAN on Giving Tuesday

This year, FAN has sought to nurture our network in many ways, such as our "[Healing the Wound](#)" interfaith vigil in January and "[RE-Humanize this Lent](#)" process. We gathered in Washington with the [Poor People's Moral March](#) and began looking at "[Confronting Environmental Racism](#)" through a 4-part webinar series. Last week we hosted our first "[Election Eve Prayers for Guidance and Harmony](#)" in preparation for midterm elections.

If you attended one of these programs and value the advocacy that FAN does, please support us with a [contribution for Giving Tuesday](#) November 29 or any time before the end of 2022. Find more ways to donate by [clicking here](#).



NEW Advent & Winter Resources from IIC + Citizenship Week of Action

The Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC) Holy Days and Holidays working group, on which three of our staff members serve, has published two new resources for Advent and winter, which we share here.

- [Preparing Welcome: An Advent Devotional for Immigrant Justice](#) features scripture, reflections, stories, prayers, and opportunities to take action, weaving together the Advent themes of liberation and hope with the ongoing struggle for immigrant justice.
- The [Winter Holy Days & Holidays Toolkit](#) highlights various holy days, holidays, and special events occurring this winter and shares justice-themed resources for observing them. If you have any suggested edits, additional holidays, or resources or events you'd like added to the toolkit, please email Ellie Hutchison Cervantes at elliehutch@gmail.com.



Additionally, we urge you to participate in “[The Clock Is Ticking for Citizenship](#)” Week of Action from November 14-20 coordinated by Home is Here. DACA is dying and recent court decisions reveal that immigrant young people are in danger of losing their work permits and protections from deportations. [Join us in participating](#) by sending a message to President Biden and Congress to move forward a legislative solution for citizenship this year.

JFI Webinar: The U.S. Catholic Church's Efforts on Afghan and Ukrainian Resettlement

Tomorrow, **Tuesday, November 15 at 2pm ET / 11am PT** the Justice for immigrants campaign of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops will present a webinar on the Church's [Efforts on Afghan and Ukrainian Resettlement](#).



A panel of experts will share what Catholics and Catholic organizations have undertaken to resettle and provide welcome to the Afghans and Ukrainians who now have safety and security in the United States. [Register to attend by clicking here](#).

Franciscan Parish Hosts Gun Violence Prevention Vigil

St. Mary's in Pompton Lakes, NJ held a vigil last week to commemorate victims of gun violence. The *Way Of The Cross: A Vigil To End Gun Violence* included special text for the Stations of the Cross and was accompanied by the parish's music ministry. At the end of the Vigil, Confirmation Candidates un-scrolled a banner down the middle of the aisle listing the names of all the people killed in mass shootings from January to October 2022. (Pictured) People were invited, at the conclusion, to



take home slips of paper printed with names of a victim to pray for them. Many attendees remained to read the names on the banner. All who participated and attended were very moved, many to tears.

We offer our congratulations to the St. Mary's JPIC ministry for a beautiful and successful prayer vigil. If you'd like to share something happening in your community, [contact Janine Walsh](#).

Pax Christi Presents Webinar on White Nationalism

All are invited to join a discussion, "[Exploring White Nationalism](#)," on **Saturday, November 19 at 11am-1pm ET, 10am-12pm CT, 9am-11am MT, 8am-10am PT**. The webinar is hosted by the Catholic Racial Justice Collaborative, Pax Christi USA, and the Institute for Peace and Justice.

Rev. Joseph A. Brown, SJ, Ph.D. will lead the discussion. A priest, educator, scholar, artist and "drum major for justice," Fr. Brown received his Ph.D. in American Studies from Yale University. He is currently a professor in the Department of Africana Studies at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Find more information about the event and register to join by [clicking here](#).



Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

This past Saturday, Nov. 12, FAN hosted the first Franciscan Justice Circles National Gathering virtually with 18 Circles represented in addition to folks from all over the country who are considering joining/forming a local Circle. With the theme "**Franciscan Relationality and Change-Making**", we heard an inspiring talk from Ken Butigan, educator and advocate for nonviolent change. Brent Anderson led us in a compelling session on Franciscan-Clarian Skills & Attitudes for Engaging Across Divides. We grew in our collective understanding and individual transformation, connected with new and old friends from across the country and left with a renewed commitment to taking Franciscan-inspired actions together and alongside our sisters and brothers most impacted by injustices.

If you're considering joining a Franciscan Justice Circle, please [contact us](#)!

