

A Mother's Concern

Image by [Gerd Altmann](#) from [Pixabay](#)

In our Gospel for the [Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God](#), we read that the shepherds have arrived in Bethlehem to find Mary and Joseph caring for the infant Jesus who is lying in a makeshift bed. We hear that all are “amazed” when the shepherds share what the angels told them: a child has been born this day, lying in a manger, who is the Messiah. Is it any wonder that Mary, recovering from the birth of her first born son, journeying in a strange land, and hearing the message of the shepherds, “treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart”?



In addition to the astounding news that her child is the Messiah, the Son of God, what else might Mary, likely a teenager, have pondered in her heart that holy night? Perhaps she struggled with questions common to other mothers looking upon their newborn children. How will she and Joseph care for this child, given their few resources? Will they find a safe place to raise their child? Will their new family be welcomed given the strange circumstances of Jesus' conception and birth?

I think of mothers who might identify with Mary's concerns. Mothers from Guatemala living on the streets of El Paso, Texas, waiting for the opportunity to seek asylum. Mothers who fled Afghanistan and currently live in the U.S., hoping for the right to apply for permanent residency. Mothers living in “sacrifice zones,” such as Cancer Alley in Louisiana, who are concerned about the impact of pollution from the nearby petrochemical plants on their children.

The concerns of these mothers are why FAN called on President Biden to lift a public health measure (Title 42) that allowed the U.S. government to deny asylum to those waiting at our southern border. Their concerns are why we advocate for the Afghan Adjustment Act, which will allow those who fled Afghanistan to apply for permanent legal status. Their concerns are why we call on the 118th Congress to pass environmental justice legislation that would vastly expand the power of communities to reject projects that cause long-term pollution.

Mary opens her heart to let in the Son of God – spiritually and physically. She moves beyond her doubts and fears to trust the message that the angels shared with the shepherds. May we too give birth to the God of peace and justice in our time.

Sr. Louise Lears, SC
FAN Creation Care Advocacy Associate

Suggested Petitions:

Grant safety and aid to refugees, migrants and immigrants, we pray.

Unite people of faith to provide food, education and health care for all children, especially those living in poverty, we pray.

Help us to connect with all of creation and attune us to nature's cries, we pray.

Suggested Action:

Learn about groups, such as [RISE St. James](#) in Louisiana, that are working hard to bring light to the environmental injustice happening in "sacrifice zones."

Prayer by Rachel McCarthy, Catholic Agency For Overseas Development

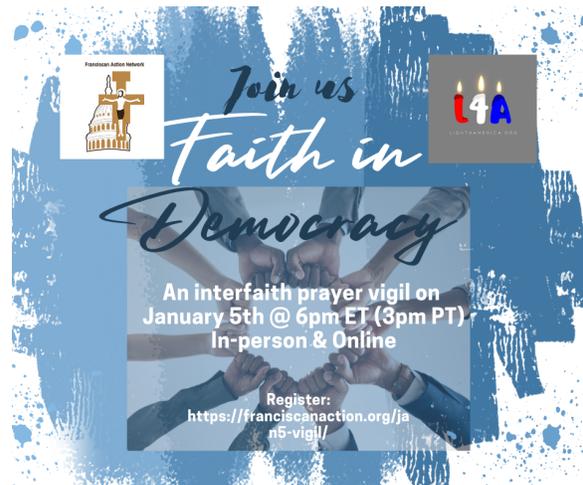
**Mary, Mother of the Poor,
watch over migrants and refugees
holding their families close on fearful journeys.
Comfort and protect them, we pray,
as they walk beneath the shining stars.
Bless our communities, loving Mary,
fill our hearts with compassion,
help us to shelter the stranger,
and share the goodness
of God's consoling love
with all our neighbors.**

Amen

Join us January 5th to Pray for Peace

As Franciscans, we are called to act as peacemakers and bridge-builders. The events of January 6, 2021 continue to divide Americans and create concern about the health of our democracy as well as our ability to resolve political differences without violence.

On **January 5, 2023 at 6pm Eastern (3pm Pacific)**, Franciscan Action Network and our friends at [Light4America](#) will host an [interfaith prayer vigil](#) to commemorate the anniversary by reflecting together and praying for peace. The **event will be hybrid**, held in person on the Capitol grounds in Washington, D.C., and online for those across the country.



We are honored that two senior Catholic faith leaders—**Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv.**, and **Sr. Carol Zinn, SSJ**, Executive Director of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious—have agreed to lead our prayer vigil. They will be joined by several faith leaders from other traditions, with inspirational music provided by [Wordsmith](#).

Click here to [register to join us online or in-person](#).

Support FAN with a Year-End Donation

We hope you consider FAN your humble servant, working to make explicit our shared Franciscan values in Washington D.C. and around the country. It takes a lot of resources and we urge you, if you haven't had the chance, to [make a year-end donation](#). It is through your generous support that we are able to grow and find new ways to connect our Franciscan charism to our country's policies. [Thank you for your generosity.](#)



Please note: Franciscan Action Network's new mailing address is 1400 Quincy Street NE, Washington, DC 20017.

Historic Agreement to Protect Nature

From December 7-19, 2022, delegates from more than 190 countries met in Montreal, Canada for the Biodiversity Summit, popularly known as COP15. The delegates focused on stemming the loss of 1 million species of plants and animals that are at risk of disappearing forever.



At the conclusion of the Summit, countries signed a [ten-year landmark agreement](#), pledging to protect 30% of Earth's land and oceans as a refuge for the remaining plants and animals by 2030. At present, about 17% of the land and 10% of the oceans have some form of protection, according to the U.N.'s World Conservation Monitoring Center. The Montreal agreement also calls for cutting by half nutrient runoff from farms and reducing the risk of pesticides by 50%.

The United States is not officially a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the treaty underpinning the talks in Montreal. Former President Clinton signed the pact in the 1990s, but it never won ratification with a two-thirds majority in the Senate. Delegate Monica Medina, the U.S. special envoy for biodiversity, emphasized that the Biden administration has already made a "30 by 30" conservation commitment. Contact your Senator to ratify the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#).

Watch this [brief video](#) outlining the agreement.

Franciscan Friars Conventual Launch New Spanish Website

Two years after launching [FranciscanVoice.org](#), the Franciscan Friars Conventual have now launched a Spanish version at [VozFranciscana.org](#).



The new website, geared towards youth but appealing to people of all ages, offers a journey through the life and mission of the Franciscan

Friars Conventual. Viewers will discover more about who the friars are, what they do, and how to join the brotherhood.

Voz Franciscana features friar-produced videos, podcasts, and photo-essay blogs, all informed by the Franciscan spiritual and intellectual tradition. It speaks to the issues, events, and cultural reference points important in the 21st century. From the serious to the topical to the light-hearted, the connecting thread is the Joy of the Gospel.

Changemaker Youth Grant Applications Open

Applications for Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service's [Changemaker Youth Grant](#) are open! Youth ages 12-23 can receive up to \$1,000 for projects that provide a *creative solution that addresses violence in their community*. These projects can be creative, artistic, and out-of-the-box ideas. Ideally, they advance a nonviolent solution or alternative to the problem.



The deadline for all youth grant applications is February 10, 2023. Awards will be announced by February 20th. All recipients must be available to virtually attend a Final Showcase on Saturday, June 10th. Please [click here to apply for the Changemaker Youth Grants](#).

Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

Our times need grassroots, Franciscan inspired advocacy and action, which is why FAN started [Franciscan Justice Circles](#). Visit our site to see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) to learn more about our initiative connecting Franciscan-hearted individuals locally through prayer, action and advocacy in cities across the country.

