

Special Reflection: Bishop Stowe's Address at Interfaith Vigil

On January 5, 2023, Franciscan Action Network and Light4America hosted "Faith in Democracy," an Interfaith prayer vigil. Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faith leaders prayed with us for unity and hope in our country. The following reflection was offered by Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv., of Lexington, Kentucky.



While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in the darkness, brothers and sisters, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night nor of the darkness. [1 Thessalonians 5: 3-5]

Saint Paul frequently reminded the early Christians that they were to be always alert and ready for the Lord's return. When that second coming did not occur as soon as originally thought, the Christian community had to pay more attention to how they were living the present moment in anticipation of the coming Reign of God. They had to pay attention to the importance of right relationships with God and with each other and to order their lives by the values of God's kingdom.

Pope Francis used this text earlier in the week in his message for the annual World Day of Prayer for Peace, observed each January 1. His central message was that no one is saved alone, we are all in this together. And, as he reminds us rather beautifully in his letter *Fratelli Tutti*, we need to rediscover the bonds that connect us as a human family of sisters and brothers in order to survive.

While two years ago on this night there *were* hints and warnings of impending violence right here at the capitol, many of us could not believe that in the "land of the free and the home of the brave" the transition of executive power from one administration to the next would not be done in the usual peaceful way. We have since learned that our cherished democratic tradition of government of the people, by the people and for the people cannot be taken for granted. We must be vigilant and not caught off guard by those who work to undermine the right relationships necessary for democracy to flourish rather than decay into mob rule or the values of "might makes right".

[\[READ MORE\]](#)

Bp. John Stowe, OFM Conv.
Bishop of Lexington, Kentucky

Suggested Actions:

Watch the [recording of our Faith in Democracy vigil](#) and pray for the unity and healing of our country.

Suggested Petitions:

For all those elected to public office, that they may conduct their business with honesty, humility, and courage, we pray.

For ourselves as citizens, that we will always act for the common good and with special care for the impoverished and marginalized, we pray.

Excerpts from Prayer for Social Action by Rabbi Jack Riemer:

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end war:

For we know You made the world in a way

That we must find our own path of peace

Within ourselves and with our neighbor.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to root out prejudice:

For You have already given us eyes

With which to see the good in all people

If we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end despair:

For You have already given us the power

To clear away slums and to give hope

If we would only use our power justly.

Therefore we pray to You, instead O God,

For strength, determination, and will power,

To do instead of just to pray

To become instead of merely to wish.

Amen

This week: Join us for a Film Screening of “The Letter”

As Franciscans, we are called to care for all of God’s wondrous creation. Our Holy Father Pope Francis invites all people of good will to hear the cry of earth and the cry of the poor.

On **January 18, 2023 from 7pm-9pm Eastern Time / 4pm-6pm Pacific Time**, join us virtually to watch [The Letter](#), a new documentary about how spiritual values unite us in the face of the planetary emergency. After we watch the film, we’ll discuss what we can do to join the movement of people who are building a better

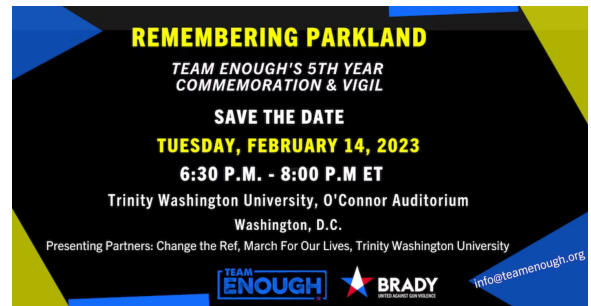


future.

The Letter tells the story of a journey to Rome of frontline leaders to discuss the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* with Pope Francis. [Watch the trailer on YouTube here](#). The exclusive dialogue with the Pope, included in the film, offers a revealing insight into the personal history of Pope Francis and stories never seen since he became the Bishop of Rome. **Join us for the virtual screening and discussion by [registering on our website](#)**. It'll be a great way to see if you might like to organize your own local in-person or virtual screening.

Save the Date: Parkland Commemoration Feb. 14

On February 14th, 2023, [Brady's](#) youth-led and youth-serving program, Team ENOUGH, will host a [commemoration](#) of the lives lost during the Parkland, FL shooting in 2018. Founded by students, including survivors from Parkland after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, Team ENOUGH aims to create a place of healing to gather during a day that is supposed to be full of love and joy, Valentines Day, but is somber for many others. FAN will cosponsor the event.



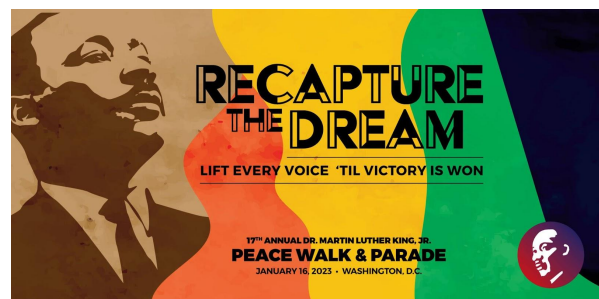
If you're in the DC metro area, please join us at Trinity Washington University in Washington, D.C. from 6:30pm - 8:00pm to remember the lives lost at Parkland, reflect on the 5 years of action in their honor since, and to discuss the work yet to come. Sign up to attend by [clicking here](#).

Because federal legislation has been difficult to pass, advocates are focusing their efforts on the state level. You may have seen that [Illinois](#) recently became the 9th state to pass an assault weapons ban. Educate yourself on [your state's gun laws](#) and consider mobilizing your community to urge lawmakers to ban assault weapons.

DC Poor People's Campaign Honoring MLK

Several members of FAN's staff will participate in the MLK Holiday Parade alongside members of the DC Poor People's Campaign. Check [here for photos](#) later on today.

The annual [Martin Luther King Jr. Day Peace Walk and Parade](#) continues a DC tradition that began in 1979 - 6 years before King's Birthday was a federal holiday - to honor Dr. King and keep his message alive. This year's theme is "Recapture the Dream: Lift Every Voice 'til Victory is Won". In honor of Dr. King, check for ways to join acts of service in your local area.



Strategic Nonviolence for Peace Advocacy Certificate Program

In order to prioritize peaceful interactions,



peaceful resolutions to conflicts, and nonviolent communication, we must prioritize peace education. To that end, the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center is providing a certificate program designed to introduce participants to the philosophy and strategic theories that undergird nonviolence while also providing practical tools to enable participants to engage in nonviolence on a personal, interpersonal, and community level.

[Learn more and register here.](#)

Students to Educate Youth on Human Trafficking in Video Contest

Students around the United States will have a chance to display their talent, earn cash prizes and educate other youth about human trafficking in a video contest, “[What Would You Do?](#)” U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT) is sponsoring the contest to raise awareness, educate and empower students on how to identify and prevent human trafficking.



WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

The deadline for submission is March 30. The video can be created by a group, individual or class and must be under 3 minutes in length. No video production experience is necessary to enter. Cash prizes include \$1,000 for first prize; \$750 for second prize; and \$500 for third prize. A panel of judges will review video submissions and vote on the winners. Videos may not include graphic material or foul language and should contain the National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888.

For more information or to register for the contest, or email Theresa Flores at Theresa@SistersAgainstTrafficking.org

Franciscan Justice Circles Updates

As part of our outreach to form Franciscan Justice Circles (FJC) among youth and young adults, we have been building a relationship with different Franciscan schools, such as campus ministry at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. We invite you to read [this reflection](#) from student leader Jordan Kiokee about the experience of forming a student-led Justice Circle on campus. *(Pictured)*

If you would like more information about joining a Justice Circle near you or forming one in your community, [please contact us](#).

