

Fasting for Justice

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For many years, on the [First Sunday of Lent](#), we have heard the story of Jesus fasting in the desert for forty days and forty nights. Jesus's practice of fasting as a way to grow closer to God is rooted deeply in many religious and spiritual traditions. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset for the entire month. Jews set aside Yom Kippur as a day of fasting for personal reflection on the past year. For Catholics, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fasting and abstinence. Some tribes of Native Americans incorporate fasting as one of three core elements of a vision quest.



This year, I find myself pondering the words of [Isaiah 58:6-12](#) about fasting. The prophet tells us that God chooses the fast that actively pursues justice. A true fast is about living lives of right relationship and fairness.

*Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose:
releasing those bound unjustly,
untying the thongs of the yoke;
Setting free the oppressed,
breaking off every yoke?*

Isaiah continues: the fasting that pleases God requires that we “share [our] bread with the hungry, bring the afflicted homeless into [our] house, and cloth the naked when [we] see them.” Millions of children in the United States are homeless and living, involuntarily, with food insecurity. Our fast calls us to address the unjust wages and under-funded federal programs that keep people homeless and hungry. A just fast challenges us to use wisely and equitably the resources that God has given us to feed and house everyone.

The fasting that God wants seeks to “remove the yoke from among you, the accusing finger, and malicious speech.” Our country seems beset by division, polarization, even dehumanization. The fast that God asks of us reaches across divides to work for peace and re-humanizing actions. This season of Lent presents the opportunity to follow, ever more deeply, Jesus's example of fasting for God's justice, trusting, as Isaiah says, that the “Lord will guide you always and satisfy your thirst in parched places.”

Sr. Louise Lears, SC
FAN Creation Care Advocacy

Suggested Action:

Ask your Senators and Representatives to protect the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the Farm Bill, which will help families keep food on the table. In doing so, we can come a little closer to the kind of meaningful fast Isaiah instructs us to undertake.

Suggested Petitions:

God of justice, hear the cry of those who yearn for justice, are persecuted and oppressed.

God of justice, hear our prayer

God of peace, hear the cry of those who yearn for peace in war zones and damaged states.

God of peace, hear our prayer

Prayer:

God of All Peoples,
As we look ahead to our Lenten journey,
may our fasting be a hunger for justice,
our alms an offering of peace,
and our prayers a reflection of humble and grateful hearts.

We ask the Holy Spirit to accompany us
as we spend these 40 days reflecting
on what it means to be companions on the journey
to encounter our global human family.

How may this encounter with our neighbor transform our own lives?
How may our prayers, fasting and almsgiving support those worldwide
who are forced to flee their homes for safety or better opportunities?

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.

Amen

Tomorrow: "Seeking Asylum" Film Launch

Tomorrow, Tuesday, **February 21 from 7-9pm EST (4-6pm PT)**, we invite you to join the Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC), of which FAN is an active member, for an exclusive virtual screening of the new documentary film [Seeking Asylum](#), followed by a panel discussion with leading asylum experts and the film's creators.

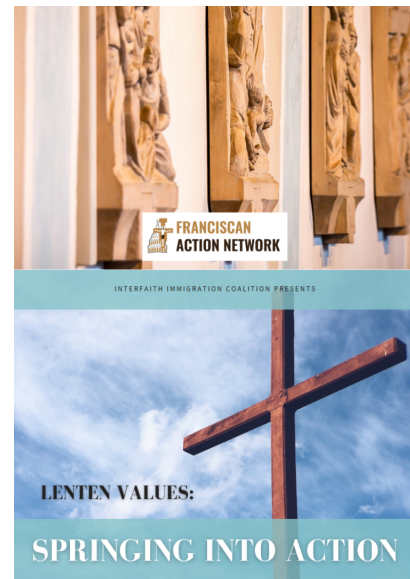
Created by [Honeypot Productions](#), *Seeking Asylum* bears witness to the endless deterrents migrants face when petitioning for asylum in the U.S. In a time of increased attacks on the rights and humanity of asylum seekers, this film follows one woman's journey as she searches for safety for herself and her children. [Reserve your spot here.](#)



Lenten Resources

FAN will shortly launch "Seeing Anew with the Eyes of the Heart," a series of stories, reflection questions, and prayers to foster continued conversion of our hearts around challenging issues during Lent. **Look for the first email on Ash Wednesday.**

The Holy Days and Holidays team at [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#) (IIC), in which FAN participates, has developed this [Lent prayer guide](#), designed to accompany individuals or groups through their Lent journey and inspire them to take action for immigrant justice. Two FAN staff members contributed to this guide. We encourage you to reference it as you journey through this special time of preparation.



Save the Date for Ecumenical Advocacy Days

Virtual [Ecumenical Advocacy Days](#) will take place April 25-27, 2023 with the theme "[Swords into Plowshares: Achieving Enough for All & Pursuing Peace](#)." Registration is now open.

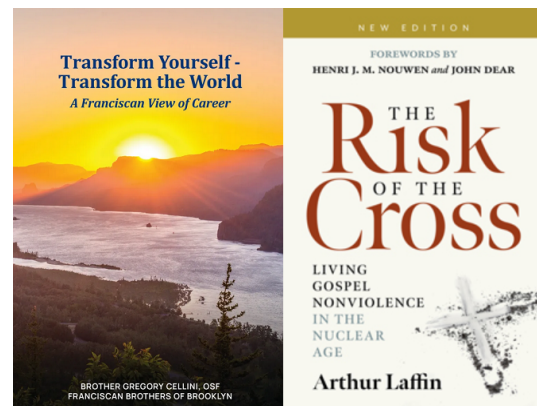
During a time of fear and uncertainty caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, military spending is up while every four seconds someone dies of hunger. EAD will provide a time to gather virtually as one body to discern how to reforge weapons of destruction into tools of growth, cultivate healing throughout God's creation, and pursue systems that empower each person to thrive. [Click here to register](#).



Books on a Franciscan View of Career and Living Gospel Nonviolence

Brother Gregory Cellini, O.S.F., a Franciscan Brother of Brooklyn, recently launched "[Transform Yourself - Transform the World: A Franciscan View of Career](#)," published by Tau Publishing. The book takes the reader through Brother Greg's incredible journey from a 29-year career in big pharmaceuticals to his vocation as a Franciscan brother. This book will inspire you to view your career in a Franciscan way. [Order by clicking here](#).

There is a new edition of [The Risk of the Cross: Living Gospel Nonviolence in the Nuclear Age](#) by Art Laffin. A timely resource for parish study and reflection during Lent, each small-group session focuses on Jesus' call to discipleship in Mark's gospel and offers inspiration for embracing the way of Gospel nonviolence. [Order by clicking here](#).



Webinar on Foreign-Born Religious Workers

The ABA Commission on Immigration and the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC) will jointly present a webinar on [Foreign-Born Religious Workers: Hot Topics, Updates and How You Can Advocate](#) on **Monday February 27 from 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. ET.**



For decades, nonimmigrant religious workers have been coming to the United States to provide essential services to our U.S. communities but in recent years, they have faced significant delays and challenges. In this webinar, the panelists will provide an overview of the R-1 visa process and discuss recent updates affecting religious workers. [Click to register.](#)

Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

If you live in the **Cleveland, Ohio region**, please join us and other local Franciscan hearts over zoom tomorrow, **Tuesday, February 21 from 7-8pm** for a meeting of the newly forming Franciscan Justice Circle! We will continue exploring some of the most pressing human and environmental issues we observe around us, and reflect on *The Letter* film ([link here](#)) to help in discerning how we'd like to respond with a Franciscan spirit. You are welcome! Please [contact FAN staff](#) to get the link.



Last week the **Rochester, NY Franciscan Justice Circle** met and invited a local gun violence prevention, mental health and youth advocate to join them and share about his community work and vision for the city of Rochester especially for the young people in the school system. Being a recently graduated young adult himself, he spoke from the heart about his and others' lived experience, the hurt they carry and suggestions for Circle members to collaborate with this vision of a safer supportive community: be a consistent presence for a young person and focus on retention and inclusivity of young people. Please [contact FAN staff](#) to connect with the Rochester Franciscan Justice Circle.