

## Reflection on the Feast of Christ's Ascension

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

The Feast of Christ's return to his Father during his [Ascension](#) is the mandate for all efforts on behalf of justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

As he was about to take his leave, Jesus said to the disciples, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth". And at that dramatic moment as they watched him fade from their sight, they heard the words of angels: "Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?"



That says to me, now Jesus' work is in our hands and those of all who will come to believe in Christ.

That work then and now is summarized in the principal message of Christ's teaching: engagement in building the reign of God on earth. He insisted over and over that he had come to inaugurate the new creation of justice, peace and love and that would be the task of all who came after him.

In our times this teaching has taken on a greatly expanded meaning. We have come to a new consciousness as modernity has unfolded. The challenge now is to teach and witness to the message of Christ in a globalized world, in a world which is intimately connected for better and for worse.

The Ascension Day message in our time involves not only an invitation to individual conversion but a call to all nations, all peoples, all cultures. Bringing about God's Reign now means the establishment of justice in a world of systemic inequities; achieving nonviolence in a world of armed conflicts; and stemming the destruction of our common home, planet Earth.

Providentially, we have received a new grace from the Holy Spirit, guidelines for this expanded dimension of witness to Christ. That is [Catholic Social Teaching](#). It has addressed virtually every aspect of human activity through the lens of Jesus' teaching and stands as an invaluable resource for today's disciples of the risen Christ.

An outstanding example of fulfilling this new meaning of witness is in organized responses to institutionalized poverty, violence and destruction of Mother Earth – such as the work of Franciscan Action Network. Organizations such as FAN point to the conviction that the enormous challenges faced by Christ's followers today are best faced by groups of good people dedicated to these common purposes.

Returning to the words of Jesus and the angels as he concluded his historical time on earth and ascended to his Heavenly Father, let our guidance be witnessing to Christ's message to the ends of the earth and acting on the command to take our eyes off the skies and act in the world around us.

Fr. Joseph Nangle, OFM  
FAN Supporter

**Suggested Action:**

Take a look at the [Catholic Social Teaching Principles](#) and see if the Lord is calling you to action on a particular issue.

**Suggested Petitions:**

For all those who feel unheard, may they find people willing to listen and stand in solidarity with them, we pray...

May our faith in the risen Christ deepen and become the strength on which we are able to act in the world around us, we pray...

**Prayer: (adapted from [Our Catholic Prayers](#))**

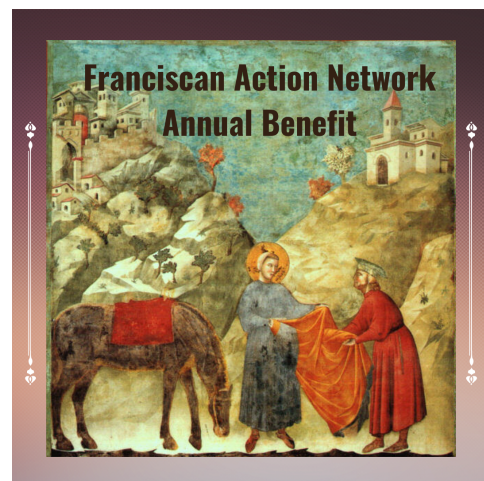
**Dear Lord Jesus Christ, Right before your Ascension into heaven you told your apostles to be your witnesses to the ends of the earth upon receiving the Holy Spirit. May I be similarly inspired to spread your gospel message in word and deed, according to your will for me. And may I do so prudently and joyfully, with your help, your guidance, and your grace!**

**Amen**

## **Support our Benefit Online Program June 28**

Ticket sales began last week for [FAN's annual benefit](#). This year, we are doing something different.

Instead of hosting a dinner for our supporters, FAN will sponsor and serve a dinner for roughly 150 impoverished or unhoused people at the Franciscan Center in Baltimore. We will also host an online program on **Wed, June 28 at 7 pm ET (4 pm PT)** to explore Franciscan care for and solidarity with the poor, featuring Fr. David Couturier, OFM Cap. as well as a panel of advocates for the poor moderated by FAN board member Sr. Melinda Pellerin, SSJ. Please join us to support all of FAN's work! Find [more information and purchase your ticket here](#).



## **Gun Violence Prevention Toolkit and Stories**

Religious congregations can help Americans voice their concerns about the national epidemic of gun violence while also holding space for grief and trauma. The DC Area Interfaith Gun Violence Prevention Network (Interfaith Network) is offering a [toolkit](#) for clergy or individual congregants to use in promoting gun violence prevention (GVP) efforts in their religious congregations.

Several examples of parishes involved in gun violence prevention have been in the news. A Catholic parish in the [Chicago, IL Archdiocese](#) collected 166 guns at a recent drive-thru gun buyback event. A Mennonite Church in Houston, TX held a [Guns2Gardens](#) event where guns were disarmed and turned into garden tools. FAN Just Peace Fellow Eli McCarthy is quoted in one [article](#), saying events like these offer opportunities to introduce "nonviolent skill trainings and preaching and teaching about Jesus' way of nonviolence."

We urge you to continue to advocate for gun violence prevention in your community. Nationally, [contact your members of Congress](#) and urge them to [sponsor the Assault Weapons Ban](#).



## Immigration News and Updates

Last week saw the end of Title 42 at the U.S. southern border and the release of the final version of a new rule which went into effect the same day. This new rule restricting access to asylum is the one on which many of you submitted comments to the Administration earlier this year. In all, the administration received 51,952 comments on the rule, and noted in their final document that **the majority of the comments expressed opposition to the asylum ban rule**—thanks in part to you. FAN continues advocating for policies that respect the dignity of all and monitoring the impact of the asylum ban on migrants.



The Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC) released a [statement](#) in which FAN's associate director Sr. Marie Lucey is quoted, saying "Overemphasis on deterrence and enforcement run counter to our belief that migrants are our sisters and brothers, and to this country's moral value of welcoming people fleeing violence, persecution, oppression, or extreme poverty for which this country bears no little responsibility."

FAN has [joined other Catholic organizations](#) in opposition to the [Secure the Border Act of 2023 \(H.R. 2\)](#), which is an extreme anti-immigration bill that would fundamentally weaken our nation's decades-long commitment to humanitarian protection if enacted. Please consider [contacting your representative](#) to let him/her know that you support meaningful access to humanitarian protection and respect for the God-given dignity of migrants.

## FAN Shows Up - Actions, Vigils, and Events

An important part of advocacy for justice, peace, and creation is showing up for in-person actions, such as rallies, marches, and prayer vigils. Along with many other forms of advocacy, FAN staff and FAN members often participate in actions that align with our gospel and Franciscan values, and sometimes FAN plans or cosponsors such events.

We encourage you to check our [FAN Shows Up page](#) (under the “ISSUES” tab of our website) which is continuously updated with information and photos from all the actions we have participated in so far this year. Please check it out and tell us what you think!



FAN would also like to share what you are up to. Have you participated in an action in your community to advocate for an issue you care about? [Send us information and a photo](#) so we can share with our Network.

## Publication of List of Catholic-Operated U.S. Native Boarding Schools

Last week, a list of Native boarding schools affiliated with the Catholic Church was published on a newly constructed [website](#). The list offers details about 87 Catholic-run Native boarding schools across 22 states. It includes the name of each school, the location, the dates of operation, the Catholic diocese in which it operated, the tribal nations impacted (as listed in historical documents), and the religious order(s) that ran and/or staffed each school. Some of these schools were run and staffed by Franciscan communities.



A collaborative group of archivists, historians, concerned Catholics, and tribal members compiled and refined this resource to help facilitate access to information for survivors of Native boarding schools, their descendants, and Tribal Nations. We invite you to [take a look at the information](#) in an effort to seek the truth of the past and reconcile with our Native sisters and brothers.

## Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

While the gravity of suffering and injustices around us can at times feel like too much to take on, connecting with and being supported by others makes all the difference in our ability to say our daily ‘yes’ to the invitation to engage in building the reign of God on earth (see reflection above).

Last week’s monthly national call for folks participating in or considering





a [Franciscan Justice Circle](#) was full of connection, sharing and encouragement. To provide just a glimpse of the many actions and efforts happening across the country which you collectively are taking, we share some here:

- Participating in Ecumenical Advocacy Days (“Swords into Plowshares: Achieving Enough for All & Pursuing Peace”) and advocacy visit with senators
- Studying and reflecting on *Engaging Nonviolence, Activating Nonviolent Change in our lives and our world* by Pace e Bene
- Learning about the Farm Bill and preparing for advocacy with their members of Congress
- Doing advocacy in the state of New York around the Predatory Marketing Prevention Act
- Watching [The Letter](#) film, in English and Spanish, and collaborating in [screening the film & discussion](#) with other groups and churches
- Reading Laudato Si’ in Circle or parish groups, with openness to actively responding and making changes
- Going to the desert at the southern border, walking the trails, accompanying asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, to better inform advocacy around immigration policies

Please [contact FAN staff](#) to find out more about connecting with a Franciscan Justice Circle near you.