

Publication Date: July 17, 2023

Reflection Date: July 23, 2023 - 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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## Turning the World Upside Down

In the gospel reading for the [Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time](#), Jesus tells three parables from everyday life that reveal God's reign, God's way with the world, and God's will for His people. These down-to-earth stories mirror the down-to-earth ministry of Jesus.

There is a lot at stake when Jesus tells stories. His parables often turn our world upside down, directing our attention to a perspective we have missed, overlooked, or failed to see—though it is hidden in plain sight. Parables name something that requires our imagination, our participation, our commitment, and our repentance. They are not designed for entertainment; at times, Jesus' parables evoke anger, even a desire to harm him.



In one of the parables from Sunday's gospel, Jesus speaks of a farmer who sows good seed in his field. Sadly, adversaries come in the night and sow weeds all through the good seed. When the crop grows, the weeds appear among the wheat. Common sense says pull up the weeds immediately in order to save the wheat. Surprisingly, the farmer advises caution: *Wait. Be patient. Trust me. Let the weeds and the wheat grow together until the harvest.* The workers must have shaken their heads at what seemed to be the foolishness of the farmer. And yet, as Jesus often tells us in parables, our wisdom is not God's wisdom.

The work of justice is hard and patience can seem foolish, even irresponsible, because the needs are too great and the injustice too deep. We can only be so patient when people are hungry, unhoused, hurt, suffering. Yet, while we search for immediate answers, we are simultaneously called to trust that the arc of the moral universe does "bend towards justice" (MLK Jr.). Our call as people of faith is to trust in the slow work of God, remaining faithful in the struggle, even when it seems foolish. Bending the arc of the universe toward justice is the work of a lifetime.

Sr. Louise Lears, SC  
Creation Care Advocacy

### **Suggested Actions:**

Use this newsletter to look for an opportunity to engage in advocacy regarding an issue that seems intractable, difficult to change. Trust that your advocacy makes a difference.

### **Suggested Petitions:**

Loving God, feed and satisfy those who thirst for justice, so that all your children may enjoy the earth you have made, we pray...

Gracious God, guide us to enact just policies for those who are unhoused and experience food insecurity, we pray...

### Prayer by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's.

Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

Amen

## Tomorrow: Support PEPFAR Renewal

The President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is the largest commitment ever, from any nation, to address a single disease. With the PEPFAR Reauthorization hanging in the balance, grassroots activists have a critical role to play in urging the US government to continue the program's success. Grassroots advocates are being mobilized to **contact congressional offices tomorrow, Tues July 18.**

As one of 44 faith organizations that signed [this letter](#) to Congress, FAN encourages our network to [use this toolkit](#) and either call or email your [representative and senators](#) to support the reauthorization of PEPFAR.



**Meet up for the Aug. 26 March on Washington**

Please join FAN staff and members at the 60th Anniversary of the March on Washington on **Saturday August 26, 2023** in Washington DC.

As the nation reckons with historic levels of violent hate crimes and threats to its democracy, this anniversary march continues efforts to uphold civil rights, freedom, equality, and justice.

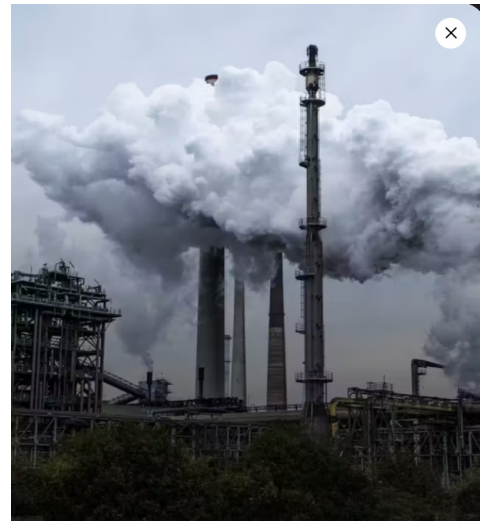
Click [here](#) for more information and [click here to register](#). Email us at [info@franciscanaction.org](mailto:info@franciscanaction.org) for meet-up information.



## Environmental Racism: Oppose Industrial Projects in Cancer Alley

As part of FAN's solidarity with communities suffering from environmental racism, please consider signing a [petition](#) to stop the shocking concentration of toxic industrial facilities in Louisiana. Often located next to school playgrounds, homes, or alongside critical water sources, these polluting plants pose horrifying risks to residents along the Mississippi River between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, LA. The area is known as Cancer Alley because people living there have a higher risk of developing cancer from air pollution than almost anywhere else in the United States.

Rise St. James, a faith-based environmental justice organization in Louisiana, has developed a petition urging a stop to two massive new industrial projects: DG Fuels and Air Products. [Read more and sign on here](#).



## Oppose U.S. Shipment of Cluster Bombs to Ukraine

As FAN continues to advocate a just peace for Ukraine, we are distressed that the White House has [announced plans](#) to send internationally-banned cluster bombs to Ukraine for use in its counter-offensive against the Russian invasion.

Consider [contacting your representatives](#) and telling them not to send cluster munitions to Ukraine but instead to support diplomatic efforts, including Pope Francis' Initiative, to reach a just resolution of this conflict.



## Call for a Federal Office of Gun Violence Prevention

The #1 cause of death for children in the USA is gun violence. A focused and intentional Office of Gun Violence Prevention at the federal level is one way to make a real difference in lowering the biggest scourge on our society today. The Peace Alliance has an email action alert to urge our federal legislators to support and co-sponsor [HR 1699](#) or [S 951](#) to establish a federal Office of Gun Violence Prevention.

[Click here to take action.](#)



## Franciscan Justice Circles: Sign up now for Oct Conference

Please join FJCs and other Franciscan-inspired justice-seekers from across the country for the first [Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference](#) **October 13-16, 2023 in Washington, DC!** FAN is pleased to join with the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities (AFCU) to create an exciting intergenerational gathering, where we will strengthen our ability to bring our authentic voices to bear on climate and environment issues.

With the urgency of climate change compounded by disproportionate effects on people of color and those in poverty, the conference will focus on embracing an advocacy response to these interconnected issues through the lens of the Franciscan tradition. [Let us know you're interested](#) and stay tuned as registration will open this week!

