

Transformative Faith

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

The gospel for the [20th Sunday in Ordinary Time](#) is a powerful statement of faith, transformative faith. My young cousins and I were often reminded of faith at the homes of our maternal grandmother, Adrienne, and our paternal great grandmother Virginia. We witnessed their faith, the faith to endure prejudice, racism and violence. Theirs was a faith to move mountains, a faith to instill and teach valued lessons to all those in the family who would come after them.



Theirs was a faith of survival, breaking the chains of racist doctrine and southern ways of life through their prayers and their fortitude to make life different from their own; “making a way out of no way!” There is a Mendi (African) saying: “When you summon the spirit of the ancestors, they will never leave you. Their strength inspires and they will come to your aid. They must come, for it is the very reason I am alive!” Who we are is who we were.

The Canaanite woman of faith in the gospel passage knows who she is. In her faithful knowing she summons Jesus to help her. She is not afraid. Even in her circumstances: she is an outcast, a woman subjected to segregation and a first century brand of racism. The Canaanite woman confronts the One who, she knows, will save her daughter. Hers is a faith and hope that will move mountains; it moves the Messiah.

This Canaanite woman is not intimidated by rejection and racist terms used. She simply stands her ground. She is called a lost sheep, a dog. She is not deterred; the woman is determined. More than Jesus’ own disciples, she understands that He is the one, He can save her daughter.

The Canaanite woman knows abject racism. Like the Canaanite woman, Virginia and Adrienne stood tall confronting Jim Crow Laws, not in Tyre or Sidon, but in Broussard, LA and in their own Catholic Church. Like the Canaanite woman, they knew “nobodiness,” the untruth that there are some human beings who are just not as human as the rest, human beings who are never valued or respected because of gender and color.

My great grandmother and maternal grandmother knew that segregated Jim Crow Laws existed in all aspects of their lives just as the Canaanite woman knew. In Broussard, LA, their beloved Catholic Church sequestered black people to the “Colored Section.” They received Holy Communion after white Catholics received and, as a continual reminder of their unworthiness, Father put on his white gloves before dispensing Holy Communion to Black Catholics out of the belief that he might soil his hands touching Black people!

There is a spirit in the Canaanite woman; despite being a pagan and an outcast, she refuses to be sent away. Her faith sets her free and heals her daughter. The resiliency of the woman

sustains her. Faith and resiliency also inspired my ancestors. Despite everything, these women never gave up. This faith inspires us to continue to advocate for those on the margins and sustains us when we face setbacks. Faith in the One who heals changes everything! Remarkable faith moves mountains, and nothing is impossible!

Sr. Melinda Pellerin, SJ
Board Member

Suggested Action:

Take time this week to ponder your faith in silence. Ask God's help to sustain you in dark times.

Suggested Petitions:

In humble thanksgiving for the inspiration shown by the faith of a Canaanite woman and all our ancestors. We pray...

For all those who struggle with their faith, may they find inspiration and never give up. We pray...

Give us courageous voices to hold our leaders accountable to how their decisions affect the vulnerable and those on the margins. We pray...

Prayer:

Lord our God, may our hearts remain unshadowed, even when our lives seem to grow difficult and the future looks dark. Let us rest in the grace of knowing that you are always with us, no matter what sorrows or joys we experience. Help us to focus on you alone and not our trials and enemies. Protect us whenever we are tempted and have battles to fight. Help us to believe that through our prayers and acts of love and compassion, you can change the hearts of all. Bestow on us true faith and belief that justice will overcome.

Amen

Register Now for October Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference

Please join FJCs and other Franciscan-inspired justice-seekers from across the country for the first [Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference: Preserving God's Planet Together, 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 the challenges facing our communities and common home.

With the urgency of climate change compounded by disproportionate effects on people of color and those in poverty, the conference will focus on an advocacy response to these interconnected issues through the



lens of the Franciscan tradition. All are welcome. **Early bird [registration is open](#) and spaces are limited!**

Updates on Ukraine Nonviolent Peacebuilding Initiatives

Some updates to encourage us as work continues on this issue.

- FAN joined more than 200 others in signing a [Religious Leader letter](#) sent to Congress and the White House supporting Pope Francis and diplomatic initiatives. Meetings with the National Security Council and Congress regarding the letter are being scheduled. A committee has been created to mobilize the religious community for diplomacy and peacebuilding on behalf of a just peace. If you would like to join, [let us know](#).
- FAN Just Peace Fellow Eli McCarthy recently provided [nonviolent communication](#) training to Russians in diaspora who are working on an anti-war messaging project to impact the perspectives of civil society in Russia. The project is coordinated by Andre K. who lives in Kyiv, Ukraine and works with [Nonviolence International](#).



A **Global Week of Action for Peace in Ukraine** is set for Sept. 30th-Oct. 8th. More details forthcoming. Consider planning some local actions.

Want to take action? We invite you to contact your Congress members through this [Action Alert for Congress](#) to call for Diplomacy and Peacebuilding in Ukraine. Thank you!

FAN Shows Up - Actions, Vigils, and Events

Last week, FAN staff joined the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Commemoration Peace Witness at the Pentagon and White House organized by Art Laffin of the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House. This year marks the 78th anniversary of the United States dropping the atomic bomb on these cities. Pope Francis has said “the use of nuclear weapons, as well as their mere possession, is immoral.” As of 2021, 68 countries have ratified the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which the United States has yet to sign. We continue to pray for the abolition of nuclear weapons, especially as the Biden administration commits to modernizing the existing nuclear arsenal of 5,244 warheads. Go to [FAN Shows Up Action Tracker page](#) on our website for information and photos from all the actions we have participated in so far in 2023.



We would also like to share what you are doing. 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.

Annual Conference of U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking

This year's conference, "Breaking Barriers to End Human Trafficking," will be **Sept. 28-30 at the Doubletree by Hilton Chicago North Shore Conference Center**. Features this year include keynote speakers Angela Reed, RSM, and Christopher Thompson, a dinner cruise, exhibitors, the Sister Margaret Nacke Bakhita Award Dinner, a meditation session, and more. Nationally renowned speakers will share their expertise on many topics that relate to human trafficking. [Register here.](#)



Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

The Northern California Franciscan Justice Circle met last week to continue a conversation around state legislation and [policies](#) affecting mental health services and also those who are unhoused. After reviewing the [Disability Rights suit opposing CARE Court](#) and the [pending bills](#) in the California state legislature, [one funding CARE Court](#) and another [changing the definition of mental health disability](#), the Circle members started talking about how to connect more Franciscans with our unhoused sisters and brothers in mutual relationships.

If you are interested in connecting with other local Franciscan-hearted individuals who feel called to engage in social and environmental justice advocacy and action rooted in Franciscan values, please [contact us](#) to see about joining or forming a [Franciscan Justice Circle](#)!