

Who Will Speak For the Earth?

DC Franciscan Justice Circle Members on Earth Day 2023

In the readings for the [24th Sunday in Ordinary Time](#), Jesus tells the parable of the unforgiving servant. This story illustrates the importance of forgiveness and mercy. In the parable, a servant owes an enormous debt to his master, and when he pleads for forgiveness of the debt, the master forgives him. However, the same servant refuses to forgive a fellow servant who owes him a much smaller amount. The master's response is stern: "Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?"



This is a very telling parable. Not only does it speak of the forgiveness of God, but also the forgiveness and compassion in our relationships, including with our Sister Mother Earth. Looking around and seeing the environmental degradation, it should be our planet who needs to do the forgiving. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis writes: "This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will." Because of our irresponsible use and abuse, we are the ones who should be asking forgiveness and mercy from our common home.

In the parable, the unforgiving servant is held accountable for his actions. It is his fellow servants who "rat on him"! The other servants tell the master because they see the unfair treatment and know they could be the ones who are mistreated. Likewise, as stewards of creation, we are accountable for the way we treat the environment. We need to call out the mistreatment of the environment, knowing that we too share this earth. We cannot keep silent when we witness the dumping of fossil fuels or even the littering of sidewalks. We must speak out against the harm done, just as those servants spoke out against their fellow servant. FAN's series on [working for environmental justice](#) is a good example of speaking out in a peaceful way.

This reminds me of the words of Martin Niemöller, a prominent Lutheran pastor in Germany during the Third Reich:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

If we do not speak out against the hurt and the harm of our common home, then who will speak out when our home is gone? As Pope Francis reminds us in *Laudato Si'*, "The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil,

in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor...”.

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS
Former FAN Board Member
Member of Virtual Franciscan Justice Circle

Suggested Action:

Consider joining FAN’s webinar this week on environmental justice needed in New Mexico. Details and a link to register are below.

Suggested Petitions:

May we gain a deeper appreciation of the beauty and diversity of all that God has created, we pray...

May we live the vision and values of Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’*, we pray...

Prayer (from Season of Creation [Laudato Si Catholic Mass](#))

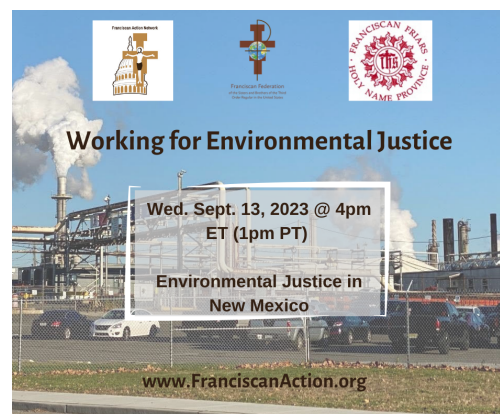
**All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
We ask this through Christ the Lord.**

Amen.

Working for Environmental Justice: New Mexico Webinar

Please join us this **Wednesday September 13, 2023 at 4pm ET (1pm PT)** to learn about environmental justice in the Permian Basin and Chaco Canyon regions of New Mexico. We will hear local advocates from Citizens Caring for the Future and NM/EI Paso Interfaith Power and Light discuss the need for stronger methane and water quality regulations, and an end to new oil and gas leasing on public and ancestral lands. Attendees will learn how advocates outside the state can amplify local efforts.

Speakers will include **Sr. Joan Brown, OSF** from NM/EI Paso Interfaith Power and Light, and local advocates **Kayley Schoup, Terry Sloan, Jozee Dominguez Zuniga and Arcelia**



Isais-Gastelum. FAN Creation Care Advocate Sr. Louise Lears, SC will moderate the conversation and welcome your questions. [Register to attend here.](#) This event will be recorded and all registrants will receive a link.

This webinar is the first in a new series, "[Working for Environmental Justice](#)," cosponsored by the Franciscan Federation, following our "[Confronting Environmental Racism](#)" series in 2022. The Order of Friars Minor/Holy Name Province/JPIC office and the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia will also cosponsor this webinar. [Sign up here for updates and advocacy opportunities](#) related to Environmental Justice.

March to End Fossil Fuels, New York City this Sunday

This Sunday, tens of thousands of people will gather outside the United Nations in New York City as the Secretary-General hosts a first-of-its-kind Climate Ambition Summit to demand that nations stop fossil fuel expansion.



Climate change and the burning of fossil fuels disproportionately affects those communities least equipped to deal with this crisis. Our faith and Franciscan desire for justice compel us to act!

Join us this **Sunday, September 17 in New York City for the [March to End Fossil Fuels](#).** FAN staff, FJC members, and other Franciscans will join a large Catholic contingent and other people of faith to stand in solidarity for a future where the spiritual connection between humanity and creation can flourish. After participating in a brief Interfaith Blessing with Greenfaith, we will march to the United Nations, just three days before the [UN Climate Ambition Summit](#), to ask nations to commit to a fossil-free future. Click [here to let us know you'll be there](#).

Register now: Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference

[\[Link to video\]](#)

The [Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference: Preserving God's Planet Together](#) is just one month away on **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 embracing an advocacy response to these interconnected issues

through the lens of the Franciscan tradition. FJC and non-FJC members are welcome. **Please [register now](#) as spaces are limited!**

Ukraine: Nonviolent Peacebuilding Initiatives

Eli McCarthy prays with faith delegation in Ukraine, May 2022

FAN invites you to a [deep listening session](#) regarding the war in Ukraine on **Thursday Sept. 21**, the International Day of Peace, from **1-2pm ET (10-11am PT)** via Zoom. Using a synodal circle process, we will offer space for people to connect deeply with one another, to share stories, and hear about the thoughts and feelings participants have regarding the war. Through this practice, we hope to deepen empathy and connection so we may move forward together in the ways of a just peace. FAN Just Peace Fellow Eli McCarthy will lead the session. Register to attend by [clicking here](#).



The [Religious Leader letter](#) sent to Congress and the White House supporting Pope Francis and diplomatic initiatives in Ukraine is still being circulated. 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](#).

Finally, **save the date** and consider planning some local actions for the **Global Week of Action for Peace in Ukraine**: Sept. 30th-Oct. 8th. More details forthcoming.

Learn about Christians in Jerusalem

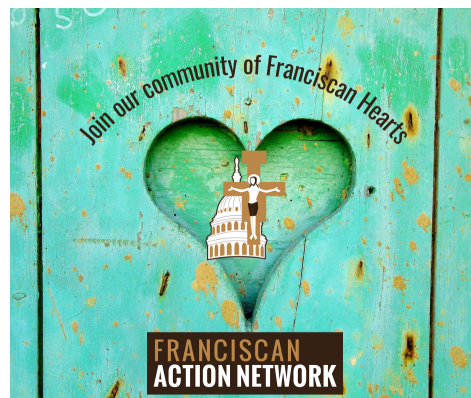
Franciscan Action Network Executive Director Michele Dunne recently joined [Terrestrial Jerusalem's](#) Evan Gottesman during an [Axis Mundi podcast](#) offering a deep-dive on one of Jerusalem's most overlooked communities: the city's Christians. Danny Seidemann, Israeli lawyer and expert on the city of Jerusalem, also discusses the implications of various new plans for Jerusalem, including for Christian sites on the Mount of Olives. [Listen to the episode by clicking here](#).



Franciscan Hearts make this work possible

Giving monthly is one of the best ways to support FAN's work. With your consistent support we are increasing [peacebuilding and nonviolent initiatives](#) on the war in Ukraine. We are uplifting local efforts for environmental justice in several states including [New Mexico](#). We are bringing young people to Washington, DC for our first intergenerational [Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference](#).

We are so grateful for all of you who are sustaining donors to FAN! If you are not a sustaining donor,



please consider [joining our community of Franciscan hearts](#) to ensure that Franciscan values are heard in our capital and across the country.