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Reflection Date: October 1, 2023 - [26th Sunday in Ordinary Time](#); Final Sunday of Season of Creation

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## Are we still at Massah & Meribah, testing & quarreling with God?

In the Episcopal Lectionary for the [Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost](#), Exodus 17 describes the Israelites quarreling with Moses about the lack of water. Moses rebuked the Israelites for testing Yahweh and this account tells that the place where they were was called 'Massah', meaning testing, and the name 'Meribah' meaning quarreling. Has anything really changed? If so, how? Do we still test God? Do we still quarrel with God by not liking God's justice? Is there another dimension to testing and quarreling that would be fruitful to explore?

Image by [Jim McIntosh](#) from [Pixabay](#)



Most people don't test God, and that seems like a good thing, but is it? Yes, it can be a sign of spiritual maturity, but can it also be a sign that God is not part of our life? When we don't see God as an integral part of reality that is part and parcel of our existence, we don't test God, which is then, perhaps counter intuitively, a bad thing. Now, I am not saying that testing God often is a great idea - far from it - but certainly when we are testing the waters of our faith in times of turmoil it is understandable. To me, this state of non-being means that without God, we don't exist in the sense of being truly alive and connected with each other and life itself. Why? Well, one reason is that a healthy relationship with God creates the possibility for healthy relationships with other people and all living beings. This God connection can help us avoid the pitfalls of narcissism and being a sociopath - both quite common states in our modern, God-free culture. We may think we are free but without a period in which we test and quarrel with God we become lonely, self absorbed, existentially afraid and anxious, conditions that bullying and domination only serve to mask.

Of course testing and quarreling with anybody, especially God, can be a sign of spiritual immaturity and a lack of trust... And yet, the human heart is fickle and contradictory. We must remember that God wants our heart and desire to be for what is not me but the other, where God is the ultimate other. God doesn't desire our nice words; he wants a desire that acts, a desire that is incarnational.

With this mature faith in mind, the New Testament reading from Matthew puts a twist on this testing and quarreling. Matthew presents to us the picture of a man with two sons: "He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir;' but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" The first son, who did NOT do his Father's will, was not testing and not quarrelsome, but the son who DID his father's will was. Though this is odd, it is realistic. It's as if God knows what we humans are like - we often say the right thing but don't do it.

Is that the kind of faith God wants? Well, according to both Exodus and Matthew no. God wants our faith to incarnate – to ACT. Perhaps he understands our hearts better than we do. God can tolerate us testing and being quarrelsome, but is not willing to have us live without God living fully alive in our hearts. When we DO what God wants and needs from us then God is within us. This is why organizations such as Franciscan Action Network are so important. They encourage us to ACT, to bring our faith out into the world and advocate for policies that align with God's for the common good.

Gordon Kubanek, P.Eng.  
Third Order Franciscan & Writer

### **Suggested Action:**

Choose one way to put your faith into action this week: sign a petition, contact your member of Congress, make a call.

### **Suggested Petitions:**

For all those suffering the effects of climate change and natural disasters, may they be comforted by the hands and feet of Christ through actions from others, we pray...

For peace in our hearts, peace in our communities, peace in our country, and peace in our world, we pray...

### **Prayer of [Faith and Action by Fr. Goyo Hildago](#)**

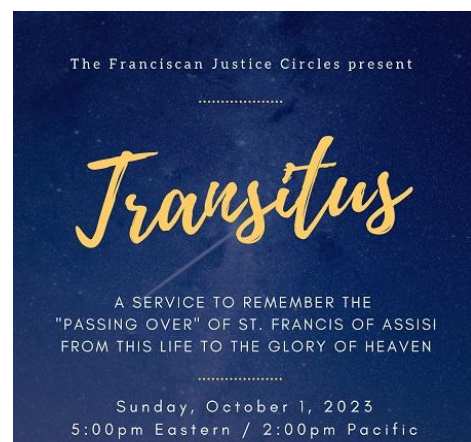
**Lord, help me  
be prepared, but not anxious.  
Be aware, but not desperate.  
Be vigilant, but not in fear.  
Be joyful, but not clueless.  
Be faithful, but not careless.  
Lord, be my hope and strength.**

**Amen**

## **Join us for a Virtual Transitus Service**

As the Feast of St. Francis nears, we are once again supporting a collective effort of our Franciscan Justice Circles to host a virtual Transitus service on **Sunday, Oct. 1 at 5pm ET (2pm PT)**.

If you are able to go to a live service on Oct. 3 itself, please do so. Some of us don't have that option and thanks to the initiative of our Circle members, together we offer this opportunity to unite from across the country in remembering Francis of Assisi's passing from this life to the next.



Register to join us by [clicking here](#). We will record the service and send it to everyone who has registered.

## Registration for Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference

We are thrilled with the response we have to our first-ever [Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference](#): *Preserving God's Planet Together*, happening in Washington, DC, October 13-16, 2023. While we are now at capacity for in-person overnight participation in the conference, there are still two options that remain open:

Attendance on Saturday, October 14 [single day in person](#) (no overnight stay), or

[Online attendance](#) for hybrid seminar 1:30-5:00pm ET (10:30am-2:00pm PT) on Saturday, October 14.



We are genuinely looking forward to coming together in person (and online) and building relationships to strengthen our collective Franciscan voice on creation care and climate justice. Please [contact us directly](#) if you have any issues or questions.

## Take action for peace in Ukraine

*Eli McCarthy prays with faith delegation in Ukraine, May 2022*

The majority of U.S. [public opinion](#) seeks alternatives to a military-centric approach in Ukraine. In addition to concerns about the massive human suffering, there is significant concern about how the war is escalating the climate crisis. We offer three actions to engage with our leaders and each other in promoting diplomacy and peace in Ukraine.



1. Join us in person for an [interfaith prayer and press conference](#) on Wednesday, **Oct. 4 from 9:30-10:30 am in Washington DC** near the U.S. Senate. We are building off the energy of more than 230 faith leaders signing a letter that calls for robust diplomatic initiatives to end the war and establish a just peace in Ukraine. This will be the focus of the interfaith gathering. **The gathering will be broadcast via Instagram live.** [Follow our page.](#)
2. Make plans to join the [Global Days of Action for Peace in Ukraine](#), Sept. 30-Oct. 4. Plans have been made all over the country for prayer vigils and other events. [Join one near you](#) or gather your family and neighbors to recite a peace prayer.
3. [Take action and urge your member of Congress](#) to promote diplomatic negotiations and other proven peacebuilding practices.



## Faith Organizations Call for Stop-Gap Funding Without Harmful Provisions

The U.S. Congress has until September 30 to pass a Continuing Resolution (CR) to avoid a government shutdown. Faith organizations urge bi-partisan action to pass a stop-gap funding measure without harmful provisions such as the anti-immigrant bill [Secure the Border Act of 2023](#) (H.R. 2). FAN signed an interfaith letter calling on Congress to pass a stop-gap funding bill which does not include any elements of H.R. 2.



We encourage our members to [contact their Representatives](#) to address border challenges with sustainable, compassionate solutions and focus on protecting unaccompanied children and keeping families together.

## Farm Bill Action from Midwest Franciscan Justice Promoters

In his landmark encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis makes clear that our care for one another and our care for the Earth are intimately connected, noting that humanity is not faced “with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis that is both social and environmental.”

The Midwest Franciscan Justice Promoters is a coalition of representatives from six Franciscan sisters communities, all of whom are institutional members of FAN. They have collaborated on [this action](#) urging Congress to reauthorize a just Farm Bill in 2023 that supports the dignity of all people, especially those in poverty, and offers safeguards for preserving Creation. [Click here to learn more](#) about priorities in the 2023 Farm Bill and take action now.



## White House Establishes Office of Gun Violence Prevention

The Biden-Harris Administration has established the first White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention. This office will be co-led by Rob Wilcox, [Everytown](#)'s Senior Director of Federal Government Affairs, and Greg Jackson, Executive Director of the Community Justice Action Fund (CJAF). FAN welcomed Greg as the main speaker at our



[issue briefing on gun violence](#) last year. Both men are survivors of gun violence and advocates for prevention measures including treating the trauma of survivors.