

## Repaying to God what Belongs to God

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

In some gospel passages, motives have to be deduced. Not so in the gospel from Matthew 22 for the [29<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time](#).

There is no mistaking that the Pharisees were aiming for entrapment of Jesus. Scholars note that Jesus did not respond with a clear answer to the “either/or” question, one going so far as to draw attention to the fact that Jesus asked them for coin in response because he had none himself, no image of Caesar on his person. The narrowness of Jesus’ response, “repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar,” doesn’t answer their



question, but merely reflects the narrowness of their aim in this query of Jesus. The next verse reads that they were amazed by what Jesus had said and went away. It doesn’t read that they were amazed and believed. They would continue with questions to entrap Jesus, missing entirely his message of repaying to God what belongs to God.

In the second reading, at the very beginning of this, the oldest preserved Christian writing, we see how Paul conveyed to the church of the Thessalonians an appreciation for all that is our faith by referencing God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as well as the gospel in word and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Their work of faith and labor, of love and hope, in Christ is all-consuming. Paul lovingly reminds the Thessalonians that all belongs to God.

This Sunday is World Mission Sunday. At Mass this Sunday, we recommit ourselves to our common vocation, through Baptism, to be missionaries, through prayer, participation in the Eucharist, and by giving generously to the collection for the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. World Mission Sunday reflects Paul’s call to the Thessalonians to commit to the work of the faith and speaks to the gospel reminder that repaying to God what belongs to God is our mission.

How does World Mission Sunday mesh with the work of FAN? Many concerns on which FAN focuses are interconnected. Changing climates result in food insecurity and famine is a driver of migration. By bringing the Gospel to the entire world, people in developing countries not only learn about Jesus Christ, their human dignity is upheld by offers of food, shelter and education. They in turn can become leaders in their country growing in their capacity to tend to the common good. They can in turn be prepared to become more self-sufficient, provide for their families, stave off discord, conflict and war, and care for their common home. Being generous with prayer and donation on World Mission Sunday means that more can realize justice for themselves.

Deacon Kent E. Ferris, OFS, MPTh, MS  
Director of Social Action & Catholic Charities

**Suggested Action:**

Using the information in the newsletter below, take action for the world's climate by [contacting your members of Congress](#) on several important pieces of environmental legislation.

**Suggested Petitions:**

For all the dioceses and orders undertaking mission work all around the world, may their work be adequately funded, we pray...

For the participants of the Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference, may they be inspired to continue their advocacy efforts at home and abroad, we pray...

**Prayer: from [World Mission Rosary](#)**

**O God, you will your Church to be the sacrament of salvation to all peoples. Make us feel more urgently the call to work for the salvation of our human family until you have made us one people. Inspire us to continue the saving work of Christ everywhere until the end of the world.**

**Amen**

## **Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference Action Alert**

We are thrilled with the turnout for our first Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference Oct. 13-16. We had more than 100 people—including more than 60 students from several Franciscan universities—join us in person for a great weekend of connection, prayer, listening to each other and engaging speakers, learning more about St. Francis, and building our leadership and advocacy skills. [Take a look at some of the photos from the weekend here.](#)



On Monday, October 16, more than 60 conference participants went to Capitol Hill to tell our members of Congress how much we care about our common home and environmental justice. We met with 15 offices in the House and Senate, and now **we need your help to broaden the outreach to many more.**

We have developed an [Email Action Alert](#) for you to contact your elected officials about the two pieces of legislation raised in our meetings: the **Justice for Black Farmers Act** of the **Farm Bill** (S. 96, H.R. 1167) and the **Environmental Justice for All Act** (S. 919, H.R. 1705). Each of these bills reflects our moral principle that all people have the right to good nutrition, pure air, clean water, and a healthful environment.

Pope Francis' October 4 apostolic exhortation, [Laudate Deum](#), reminds us that we are far from doing what is needed to deal with the climate crisis. The time is now to make our strong, loving, faith-filled voices heard! [Click here to take action](#).

## Webinar: Working for Environmental Justice in Louisiana

Please join us on **Tuesday, October 24 at 4pm ET (1pm PT)** to learn how environmental activists in Louisiana are challenging the petrochemical industries in the area named "Cancer Alley," an 85-mile stretch of land along the Mississippi River that has more than 150 petrochemical plants and refineries in areas where the majority of residents are both Black and lower income. The rate of cancer and respiratory illness is far higher in "Cancer Alley" than the national average.

*FAN Staff with Sharon Lavigne, 2022*



Our speakers will be **Sharon and Shamyra Lavigne**, mother-daughter activists of RISE St. James, a faith-based, grassroots organization in Louisiana that works to defeat the proliferation of petrochemical industries in St. James Parish, Louisiana, where 32 petrochemical plants are currently located. [Register to attend here](#). This event will be recorded and all registrants will receive a link.

## Plan to Join the Franciscan Border Encounter

The Franciscan Network for Migrants, with whom FAN has partnered on immigration advocacy webinars, will host a Franciscan Border Encounter Nov. 2-6, 2023. Participants will have the opportunity to meet migrant people and hear their stories, see and assist at a shelter, and participate in the annual binational border mass, a cooperative effort of the dioceses of El Paso-Texas, Juarez-Mexico, and Las Cruces-Mexico.



Join this encounter experience to witness first hand the impact of US and state policies on our migrant sisters and brothers. Click here for [more details and to apply](#).

## Take Action and Pray for Peace in Israel

Violence and chaos in the Middle East have left many around the world feeling hopeless and helpless. The staff of FAN has joined in lamenting the ongoing violence in Gaza and Israel.



As followers of St. Francis, we work for peace. It is critical that members of Congress hear from their constituents who support a de-escalation of violence and for restraint from all parties. Urge Congress to support a cease fire and a peaceful resolution to this conflict. [Click here to take action.](#)

As followers of St. Francis, we also pray for peace. Churches for Middle East Peace has begun [Prayers for Peace \(P4P\)](#) each Wednesday from 12:30pm - 1pm ET (9:30am - 10am PT). [Register to join](#) other Christians for a time of focused prayer for peace in the Holy Land and around the world.

Additionally, the Bishops of the Holy Land have [called for](#) a **day of fasting and prayer today, October 17**, dedicated to peace and reconciliation. This is a time when it is important to come together as a global community, praying together for a world where peace prevails over violence, justice over discord, and reconciliation over hatred.

## Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

On October 7 & 9, the Cincinnati FJC and other religious communities in the area collaborated on two interactive lectures on "Following Faithfully in the Footsteps of Francis." They welcomed ecotheologian Dr. Catherine Wright (*pictured*) to give talks relating to acting locally in light of the themes of Laudato Si'. Dr. Wright was entertaining and enlightening to the audiences at the two in-person events and 75 people on [livestream](#). She noted the interconnecting paths and messages of St. Francis and Pope Francis and detailed the human path where humans have strayed from oneness with creation. She noted that Pope Francis' message, while containing a note of urgency, is also grounded in simplicity and unity with creation, as St. Francis taught. As Pope Francis speaks of Integral Ecology, Dr. Wright asked her audience to reinvigorate our imaginations and be storytellers as we try to motivate our family and friends into action.



For more information on starting or joining a Franciscan Justice Circle, please [contact us](#).