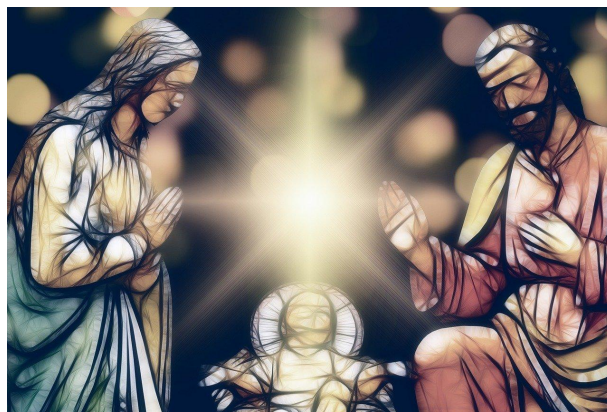


## Rejoice, the Lord is Near

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

The [Third Sunday of Advent](#) is also known as Gaudete Sunday. The Latin word Gaudete (“rejoice”) is taken from the Entrance Antiphon: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near” (Phil 4:4-5). On this Sunday, we are reminded that the time of Advent waiting is drawing to a close; the joyful feast of Christmas is near.



All of our scripture texts for the third Sunday of Advent point to joy. Isaiah says that he was sent “to bring glad tidings to the poor.” Mary proclaims that “My soul rejoices in my God.” St. Paul challenges the Thessalonians to “rejoice always.” John the Baptist cries out with joy that he was sent by God to testify to the light of the world.

How can we feel joy during these polarized, divisive, often violent times? What would make us believe that the light of Christ can overcome the darkness that we see around us, in our neighbors, our nightly news, our social media sources? Yet, we are people of faith who believe, in the face of little evidence, that the light of Christ can overcome darkness and that we are messengers of that light. [Sr. Norma Pimentel, MJ](#) asks, “Shouldn’t we all be a voice that proclaims to everyone that the only path that really matters is the one inspired by the light of the Holy Spirit?”

Our light depends on how deeply, clearly, and beautifully we reflect the light of Christ. The more we embrace that light in our lives, the more we allow God to illuminate our hearts, and the more prepared we are to be the light of Christ to others. As former poet laureate Amanda Gorman said in her [inaugural poem](#), “There is always light, if only we’re brave enough to SEE it, if only we’re brave enough to BE it.”

We are called to shine the light of God’s presence into the shadows of our human brokenness: to bring good news to those struggling with poverty, to extend care to those whose hearts are broken by gun violence, to offer safety to those seeking refuge, and to advocate for those without homes. Like John the Baptist, we are sent to see even the tiniest glimmer of light and boldly proclaim, “Behold, the light of the world!” Let us choose to walk in that light and bring that light to everyone and everything we encounter this week.

Sr. Louise Lears, SC  
Creation Care Advocacy Associate

**Suggested Action:**

Choose one action for this week (from an Advent resource you are using; an action in the FAN newsletter; another source for you) that intentionally shines the light of Christ for others, creation, yourself.

### **Suggested Petitions:**

May the joy we find not be a commodity to be hoarded, but a gift to be shared with one another. Gracious God, hear our prayer.

May we be mindful and take action on behalf of those for whom joy is hard to find because they don't have enough food, clothing, shelter, or justice. Gracious God, hear our prayer.

**Prayer – adapted from text by [Henri Nouwen](#)**

**Lord Jesus, you are both the light and the darkness.**

**Send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.**

**We, who have so much to do, seek quiet spaces to hear your voice.**

**We, who are anxious about many things, look forward to your coming.**

**We, who are blessed in many ways, long for the joy of your kingdom.**

**We, whose hearts are heavy, seek the joy of your presence.**

**We, who feel the pain of injustice, long for harmony across creation.**

**We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.**

**To you we say, Come, Lord Jesus!**

**Amen**

## **Please continue your generosity to our Year End Appeal**

Thank you for your generosity so far during our Giving Tuesday and Year End appeals, which has put FAN well on our way to raising the support needed to continue our work in 2024!

During this season of Advent, we meditate on the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love, and your generous gift reminds us how each member of the FAN community brings these into the world through prayer and action. If you haven't yet been able to give, there is still time. [Please give generously.](#)



## **Gun Violence Prevention Update**

Franciscan Action Network [sponsored](#) and attended the [National Vigil for All Victims of Gun Violence](#) in Washington, D.C. on December 6. This annual event brings together survivors of gun violence, victims' family members, faith leaders, lawmakers, and activists from across the nation for prayer and

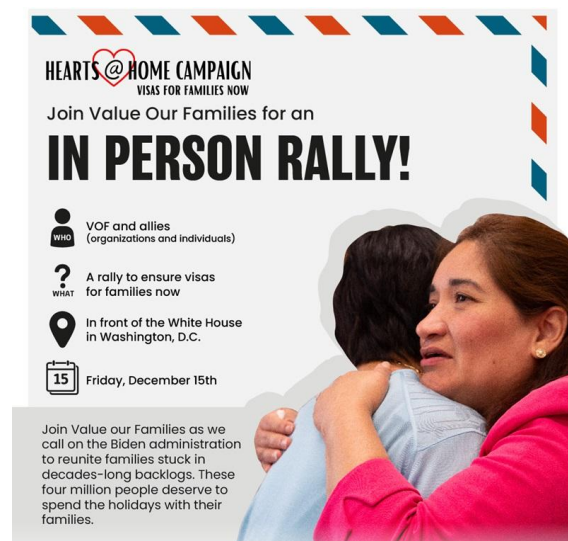


reflection. Find photos of the event on our [FAN Shows Up webpage](#).

In related news, the Wall St. Journal [reported](#) last week that four religious congregations of women with a stake in Smith & Wesson have sued the gun maker over AR-15 Rifles. The congregations—which include FAN institutional member the **Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia** based in Aston, PA—maintain a small portion of Smith & Wesson shares allowing the group to raise governance questions as shareholders. The Sisters have used the strategy of owning shares to raise concerns on a range of issues with other large companies, including Hyatt Hotels and General Electric. The lawsuit alleges that company leaders are putting shareholders at risk and are exposing the company to liability by the way they have made and sold the assault rifle, which has been used in mass shootings in recent years. This type of shareholder derivative action is a nonviolent way of creating change in national policies.

## Hearts at Home Rally - Dec. 15

The Hearts@Home campaign has planned a “Visas for Families Now” Rally in front of the White House to honor families who are separated by our family immigration system and who need the Biden Administration to take action to reunify them. FAN staff will join the in-person rally this **December 15th at 10:30am ET (7:30am PT)** to show support for millions of people waiting indefinitely to reunite with family, and for hundreds of thousands of family members already in the United States who because of the backlogs are at risk of losing status or being deported. **The event is also being live streamed on the [Hearts@Home Facebook page](#).**



## Journeying Together from the Crib to the Cross

Begin 2024 journeying together with your Franciscan sisters and brothers at this unique [Franciscan Federation virtual retreat](#) designed to inspire, connect, and transform.

The speakers include Murray Bodo OFM, Eunice Park, and Darleen Pryds and each will bring their Franciscan wisdom to the themes of Greccio (the crib), Journeying, and Francis' Stigmata (the cross) on this special day of reflection and sharing. Attendees will discover together, how events that occurred 800 years ago continue to transform us today.



There are **two dates to choose from**: January 14, 2024 from 1pm–5pm ET (10am–2pm PT) OR February 4, 2024 from 3pm–7pm ET (12pm–4pm PT). [Click here to register for either date](#).



## Catholic Leaders Speak on Immigration

On **Thursday, December 21, 2023 at 1pm ET (10am PT)**, the [Center for Migration Studies](#) of New York will host a [webinar](#), "Catholic Leaders Speak on Immigration." The webinar will feature Catholic leaders speaking on the current immigration situation in the United States and offer recommendations and perspectives based on the teaching and the work of the Church.

Get more information and register by [clicking here](#).

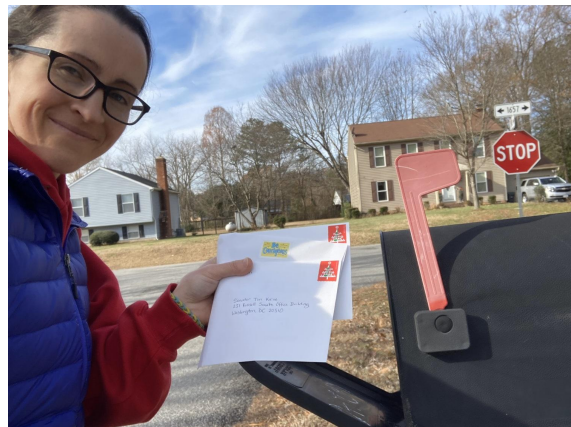


## Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

*FJC Director Nora Pfeiffer mailing her Christmas Peace Advocacy Cards*

The purpose of [Franciscan Justice Circles](#) (FJC) is to connect prayer and action in local communities. One way to do this is to engage with FAN and other faith based organizations this Advent in building peace through nonviolent advocacy. We encourage you to join us in sending a [Christmas Peace Advocacy](#) card to our senior elected officials, urging U.S. support for a lasting ceasefire in Gaza and a just peace for the Holy Land.

Find the instructions for folding and mailing the card by [clicking here](#). We encourage you to print and **send these as soon as possible** because physical mail to government offices takes extra days to be processed.



Upcoming FJC meetings:

**Cleveland-Area FJC:** Tues. Dec. 12 at 7:00pm EST on zoom

**DE Valley FJC:** Tues. Dec. 12 at 7:00pm EST on zoom

**Monthly National FJC Call:** Wed. Dec. 13 at 1:00pm PST / 4:00pm EST on zoom

**Northern CA FJC:** Wed. Dec. 13 at 7:00pm PST on zoom

**Virtual FJC** (for those w/ limited accessibility): Thurs. Dec. 14 at 11:00am PST / 2:00pm EST on zoom

**Rochester, NY FJC:** Thurs. Dec. 14 at 3:30pm EST on zoom

**SoCal FJC:** Thurs. Dec. 14 at 6:00pm PST on zoom

If you'd like more information about joining or starting a [Franciscan Justice Circle](#) in your area, please [contact Nora](#).