

## Doing God's Will

What does obedience to God's will look like? The [Fourth Sunday of Advent](#) readings show us that it requires emptying, completely emptying oneself of priorities and worries and giving oneself to the will of God. Francis of Assisi surely was inspired by Mary's example of obedience when he shocked everyone in his community by renouncing his worldly goods and family wealth to embrace a life of poverty and live the Gospel as best he could.



Doing God's will can be scary, uncomfortable, and countercultural. However, like Mary showed, as did Sts. Francis and Clare in their own time, we need not fear. Instead, we must make straight the path to God, as the prophet Isaiah urged, by letting go of that which deters us from following God's will and accepting the invitation to embrace self-giving love each and every day. In the gospel reading we have a wonderful example to follow in Mary. Upon being approached by the angel messenger, Mary let go of her previous understanding of what was possible, let go of concerns about how her community would treat her, let go of her own plans and her own wishes—all to trust in God's will.

In "[A Franciscan Spirituality of Discernment](#)," Thomas Nairn, OFM explains that discerning the will of God requires that we be silent in order to listen to God and others, in whom God dwells. What might be getting in the way of our own listening? What obstacles stop us short from truly listening to our sisters and brothers?

For if we open ourselves up to receive what our sisters and brothers are feeling and experiencing—drinking lead-contaminated water due to outdated infrastructure, waking up each morning in the crossfire of war, experiencing regular discrimination in their communities, being anxious about their safety at school or at the store, needing to uproot their families to seek safer conditions and better economic opportunities in another land, suffering at the hands of another—then it's not the end of the story. Deep true listening, as exemplified by Mary as well as Sts. Francis and Clare, means we have to *go forth*, we have to *act* because that is what genuine self-giving love does.

Fortified by Mary's example of not being afraid to do God's will no matter what others may think or the change in plans it may require, we must *go forth* doing God's will in our own lives. We are called to *act* in small and big ways by first listening to others and creation, discerning communally where God is calling us, then humbly doing the will of our good and gracious God with love, mercy, peace and good will.

Nora Pfeiffer  
Director of Franciscan Justice Circles

**Suggested Action:**

Take time on Wednesday, Dec. 20 to call the White House in support of a ceasefire and release of all hostages in Gaza. See information below.

**Suggested Petitions:**

For the wisdom to see God's will and the courage to act on it, we pray...

For all those in poverty and violent situations, may they find the love of God in those that minister to them, we pray...

**Prayer excerpt from "[A Prayer for the Holy Land](#)":**

**God of Justice, who calls us to uphold the dignity of every human being, every child of this earth, beloved of you: empower your Church to help you heal this terrible cycle of violence and revenge; give us courage to rise above our fear that nothing can be done in the face of the conflict and chaos of our own creating; grant us the conviction to advocate for change and to work for the establishment of your peace, your shalom, you salaam, in this broken world.**

**For your dream of justice and peace on earth, and for us, that we may take up your call to build it, Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

**Amen**

## **Tomorrow: Call the White House to ask for peace**

The December 16 killing of two women inside the compound of Gaza's only Catholic church has highlighted again the brutal nature of the ongoing war, eliciting from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops a [call](#) for an immediate cessation of violence. As people of faith, we are called not to turn away from horrifying human suffering, but to respond in the most loving way possible.



This busy week of Christmas, we ask you to take out time to [call the White House tomorrow, Wed. December 20](#) and ask President Biden to stop sending weapons such as bombs and tank rounds to Israel but instead support an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and release of hostages. [Click here for instructions and a sample script.](#)

The US Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph will host a **prayer** to accompany the Call In Day **Wednesday, December 20 at 12:30 pm ET (9:30 am PT)**. Join via this Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83547872013> or on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CSSJFederation/>.

## Support FAN's Young Adult Engagement

Please support FAN in building on the success of our first Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference this year. This [brief video](#) from Associate of Campaigns Gabby Martinez tells about the beautiful youthful energy in the room and our plan for another intergenerational conference in 2024. **We need your help to do it!**



We invite you to read more about the 2023 [Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference](#) and see photos from the weekend and a video made by one of the attendees. The experience was so positive and we want to keep it growing. **Please partner with us by [giving to our Year-End Appeal](#).**

## Join us January 5, 2024 for our 3rd Annual Faith in Democracy Vigil

As people of faith, we are called to act as peacemakers and bridge-builders. We will begin 2024 by calling on all Americans to respect and improve democracy as the best way to nonviolently resolve political differences in our country.



On **Friday, January 5, 2024 at 4-5pm ET (1-2pm PT)** Franciscan Action Network and Faith in Peace Concerts will co-host the 3rd annual [Faith in Democracy interfaith prayer vigil](#) with our cosponsors, which will bring together faith leaders from several traditions to reflect on how our sacred texts and culture can guide us as we begin this crucial year. The **event will be hybrid**, held in person on the U.S. Capitol grounds in Washington, D.C. and live streamed on FAN's YouTube channel for those across the country. Please [register](#) to join us to pray, sing, and reaffirm our commitment to live out our Franciscan values in 2024.

## Webinar: "COP28 Outcomes and Next Steps"

The two-week UN Climate Conference COP28 in Dubai has ended with an agreement for nations to transition away from fossil fuels. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns' Lisa Sullivan and Sr. Susan Nchubiri, MM, were in attendance. On **Wednesday, Dec. 20 from 10a-11a ET (7a-8a PT)** Lisa and Sr. Susan will be joined by Dr. Gina Castillo, Climate Policy and Research Advisor at Catholic Relief Services, for a webinar "[COP28 Outcomes and Next Steps](#)." Join in to hear a first-hand account of what happened at COP28 and



what comes next. [Click here to register.](#)

## “Faith Calls at Midnight” New Year’s Eve Worship Experience

On **December 31, 2023** at **6pm ET (3pm PT)** with a rebroadcast at **10pm ET (7pm PT)**, consider joining a service of lament, hope, and call to action sponsored by the Poor People’s Campaign, Repairers of the Breach, and the NC Council of Churches. The service will take place live at Union Baptist Church in Winston Salem, NC and will be broadcast on the [Poor People’s Campaign Youtube channel](#).



## Take Note: No Newsletter December 26

The offices of Franciscan Action Network will be closed from December 23, 2023 through January 1, 2024 to allow our staff to enjoy the Christmas and New Year holidays with their families. **Our next newsletter will arrive on Tuesday, January 2.**

We wish all of our network a blessed Christmas and Happy New Year!

