

“Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men”

As we proceed into Ordinary Time and while our New Year's resolutions are still in our minds, the readings for the [Third Sunday of Ordinary Time](#) are unambiguous in their attempt to focus us. Previous readings offered us a gentle start into Ordinary Time; we were reminded that our bodies are Temples of the Holy Spirit. We saw Samuel, John the Baptist, and Simon Peter all come to understand that we must listen to the voice of God within us and in turn proclaim God's goodness.



In the gospel, Jesus says: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). However, the passage does not end with just remembering the call for repentance. The conclusion of Mark's narrative is the image of Jesus approaching four fishermen and unexpectedly commanding them to follow him. To me, as a disciple, the last part is the crux of the message during these early weeks of Ordinary Time: it's not enough for us to individually recognize the presence and goodness of God nor is it enough to individually hear the call to repentance and reform our own lives. Jesus' message to Simon, Andrew, James, and John, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Mark 1:17), makes clear that God calls us to do more than just hear the Good News; God desires us to share and proclaim it.

Looking at the first reading from the Hebrew Scriptures, there is clear evidence of the potential that comes with proclaiming God's power and mercy - thanks to Jonah's ministry the entire city of Nineveh was saved from God's just anger. As Christians, we believe that Jesus' ministry offers salvation for the entire world. The final words from Mark's gospel tell us that those fishers followed Jesus and we know the rest of the story: countless disciples have followed and that has led to our own repentance and discipleship.

At the end of each Eucharist, since antiquity, the priest or deacon says, "Ite, missa est" (translated from Latin, "Go, it is sent"). Pope Benedict XVI offered an alternative phrasing of this dismissal that beautifully teaches the purpose of coming together to celebrate the Eucharist and re-emphasizes the message of these readings. In English, one way we disciples are sent out from the Eucharist on a mission is with the words, "Go and announce the gospel of the Lord." Hearing God, becoming disciples, and repenting are only part of what God is calling each of us to do. Jesus invites us (perhaps even "commands" us) to follow him and, having been fed by Word and sacrament, each Eucharist sends us out as missionary disciples with the task of proclaiming God's goodness and mercy to the world.

As followers of Jesus—missionary disciples—in a pluralist, democratic society, we are called to find appropriate ways to proclaim the gospel as active citizens. These readings challenge us to go beyond the quiet isolation of the voting booth. Our own conscience, our own repentance, our

own votes are not enough. Followers of Jesus in our society must find ways to proclaim the gospel through our words and deeds as we seek to inspire our society to respond to God's power and mercy. It was through Jonah's words and deeds that people of Nineveh were able to change their society and be saved and we believe that it is through Jesus' Gospel that our world is saved.

Our own acceptance of God's presence in our lives and His immense love for us must compel us to be prophets like Jonah, John, Jesus, and the Apostles who hear, follow, and go out to announce the gospel to the world. As this year's election process heats up with the first caucuses and primaries, I believe we must commit ourselves to studying the issues and finding meaningful ways to be missionary disciples who proclaim the Good News with our fellow voters, while holding faith and hope in God's mercy that once saved Nineveh's citizens.

Tobias Harkleroad, OFS

Secular Franciscan, FAN supporter, and Director of Mission Advancement for the Religious of Jesus and Mary

Suggested Action:

Read [Interfaith America's "Faith in Elections" Playbook](#) and join the work already happening across America to help the 2024 elections run smoothly.

Suggested Petitions:

May we respond to Jesus' invitation to follow him with open hearts and minds, we pray...

May we have the courage to proclaim the gospel through our words and actions, we pray..

Collect Prayer:

**Almighty ever-living God,
direct our actions according to your good pleasure,
that in the name of your beloved Son
we may abound in good works.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.**

Amen

Webinar: Building a world without nuclear weapons

FAN is cosponsoring an [online forum](#) organized by Pax Christi USA focused on the grave concern regarding the increasing threat of nuclear war and what ordinary citizens can do to prevent it. Join us on **Saturday, January 27 from 2-4pm ET (11am-1pm PT)**.

Speakers are:

John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe,

Pax Christi Massachusetts in association with Pax Christi USA presents

**Building a World Without Nuclear Weapons:
An Urgent Imperative**

Saturday, January 27, 2024, 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm ET



NM, who in 2022 led the way in the U.S. Catholic Church with his groundbreaking pastoral letter on nuclear disarmament

Dr. Ira Helfand, past president of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War

Marie Dennis, a Secular Franciscan and senior director of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy, Center for Nonviolent Solutions, will serve as moderator

The presenters would like to engage in live conversation with selected members of the audience. Please [register](#) and write to paxchristima@gmail.com by January 25 with your comments and/or questions. Get [more information and register by clicking here](#).

FAN takes the Polar Bear Plunge again; join us!

Franciscan Action Network (FAN) staff and members will participate once again in the annual “Keep Winter Cold” Polar Bear Plunge organized by our friends at Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) on February 10.

Please show your support for creation care in one of two ways:

1. If you'd like to stay dry, simply [pledge a donation](#). You pledge, we freeze, and together we raise money to continue the work of caring for God's creation.
OR
2. If you are willing to join our FAN team and take the plunge where you live, you can [sign up to do that here](#) and collect your own pledges for FAN. Register as an individual and join the Franciscan Action Network team! Help videos are [here](#) or contact us for support..



Any contributions to the FAN team will be split evenly between Chesapeake Climate Action Network and FAN. Help us out by joining our team and sending us your polar plunge video or donating \$50, \$100, or any amount you can afford to sponsor us. Thank you so much for supporting us in our plunge into Sister Water to care for creation!

Faith Voices Call for Ceasefire in Gaza

FAN is active with other groups in raising the faith voice for peace in Gaza. On Saturday, Jan. 13, FAN cosponsored a candlelight prayer service outside the White House coordinated by [Churches for Middle East Peace](#) urging a ceasefire as well as release of hostages. Fr. Jacek Orzechowski, OFM spoke at the vigil, reading a passage from a letter to Congress from faith leaders urging diplomatic solutions to the violence.

Watch the [live stream recording on YouTube](#).



FAN Shows Up in 2024

January has been a busy month for peace and justice actions. So far, FAN staff and Justice Circle members have organized, cosponsored, or attended many prayer vigils and other actions. See here [photos from the Martin Luther King Jr. Day civil rights march](#) in Washington DC as well as an Interfaith Immigration Coalition vigil to save asylum.

Find more information, photos, and links to live streams on our [2024 FAN Shows Up](#) webpage.



COP28 & Next Steps from Two Faith Groups

On **Tuesday, January 23, 2024, at 3pm ET/12pm PT**, Interfaith Power and Light will host faith leaders who attended COP28 for a discussion of the actions and agreements that were announced in Dubai and the pivotal role that the faith community played in pushing for greater ambition at these climate talks. [Click here to register to attend.](#)



Last month, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns offered a first-hand account of what happened at COP28, and what comes next, from three representatives of Catholic organizations who were in Dubai for the UN Climate Conference. Watch the [recording on YouTube here.](#)

Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

In an effort to contribute to dialogue with state legislators around measures to promote community safety and prevent gun violence, two members of the Richmond, VA-Area [Franciscan Justice Circle](#) joined the Virginia state Advocacy Day hosted by Moms Demand Action. They took advantage of the General Assembly's 60-day session to meet in person with their legislators seeking areas of common ground while sharing their stories and concerns rooted in their faith and Franciscan values.



If you are looking to join other Franciscan hearts in your area who are motivated to act together in advocacy and action, please contact Franciscan Justice Circle director, [Nora Pfeiffer](#), to learn more.