

Harden not your MINDS

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As we begin another day in another undoubtedly busy week, I invite you to take a deep breath, slow your heart, and feel the existence of God around you.

The psalm response for the [fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time](#), “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts,” (Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9) is always inspiring. Especially as we enter another tumultuous and anxiety-ridden election year, we hear the call to step back and listen to the silence of our hearts.



Many of us know that God’s timeline or path for us is never what we expect, but usually results in a better outcome than we could have imagined. We are warned, however, that to be God’s servant means to be a constant listener, not to listen only when we are feeling especially anxious. To do this, we must open our hearts to be guided by a God bigger than ourselves and to let our own thoughts and opinions be influenced by God’s priority - a better world for *everyone*. I’m sure that He knows how difficult and frightening it is to be this vulnerable with anyone, let alone our Maker, and to let our egos melt into the background. In the Second Reading (1 Cor 7:32-35) we are told that this anxiety is the very last thing God wants us to feel! However, it serves as a reminder of how our need to turn and listen to Him, lifting up our struggles, and allowing a “lightening the yoke,” can be a sort of eustress - a healthy stress. The first reading (Dt 18:15-20) tells us that we cannot be positive agents of change in this world unless we listen to God’s constant pull at our hearts.

It is (rightfully) difficult to jump to the challenges God gives us. We all feel busy and rushed to achieve our goals and maintain the status quo, yet here He is calling us to do better than “our best” and to go into the world and actively call for the change needed to end suffering, hunger, homelessness, violence, and injustice. It can be inconvenient! I’ve heard from many people that “nothing easy is ever worth working for,” and in this context, I take this to mean literally that God is asking us to take the time out of our already stressful lives to listen to Him, rise to these challenges and, in the end, rest in the sleep of peace, knowing that we listened and acted when it was difficult or uncomfortable, and did the most to give our world the peace it deserves. We are called to rise to the challenge of our God and what a noble one that is!

Gabriela Martinez
Associate of Campaigns, FAN

Suggested Action:

Take some time this week to listen without prejudgement to where God pulls your heart. Do some research on how you can become involved in your community and then do some more listening. Rinse and repeat. Listening yields action.

Suggested Petitions:

For the courage and peace of mind to be the change needed in the world, we pray...

For open minds and hearts eager to listen to God, we pray...

Prayer~Adapted from Linsay Tedder

God, I pray that you equip me with your strength that can carry me into action, and I pray that, through listening to you, I can build a community of your people, to end war, suffering, hunger, and injustice.

Thank you, Lord, for designing and challenging me to be exactly who I am.

Thank you for Your strength that leads to action, especially in such uncertain times.

Amen.

Join FAN to take the Polar Bear Plunge!

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 or need 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!

Urge Congress to Save Asylum

Sacred scripture and Catholic Social Teaching compel us to welcome and serve newcomers, a core ministry of many Franciscan communities. People seeking safety in the U.S. are not political pawns and policies that directly impact

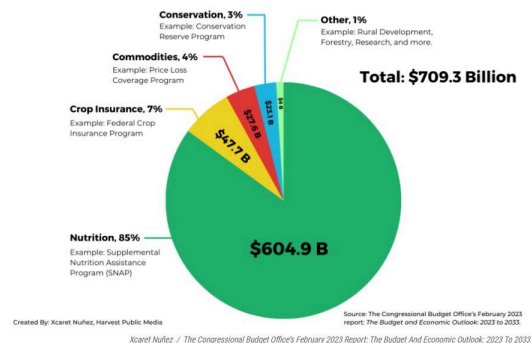


them need to prioritize their humanity and dignity. Please [urge Congress to reject the anti-asylum policies](#) being considered in ongoing funding negotiations on foreign aid packages. [This editable letter template](#) comes from Justice for Immigrants of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Only when we see our shared humanity in those who seek better lives for themselves and their children can we adopt a border policy that enshrines our national values. Inequality Media Civic Action developed this video to debunk the five biggest myths about the border. You may want to [watch it on YouTube](#) to help change the narrative about migrants.

Take action for the Farm Bill

The Farm Bill is the largest piece of federal legislation for food and farming, impacting access to nutritious food for millions of people in the United States. Congress approved a temporary extension of the 2018 Farm Bill in November 2023 and is now considering full reauthorization. [Urge your congressional representative](#) to pass a Farm Bill that increases funding for TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program), simplifies eligibility and enrollment in SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), and protects the purchasing power of SNAP so that benefits align with grocery prices. Farm bill support can help U.S. agriculture to lead the world in climate-smart innovation and to build cleaner and more reliable energy solutions for rural America. [Ask Congress to Pass a Strong Farm Bill](#).

Farm Bill Projected Funding, In Billions
2024-2028



Webinar TODAY: Human Trafficking through the Lens of Catholic Social Teaching

Please join the USCCB's Justice for Immigrants **TODAY Tuesday, January 23, 2024 at 1pm ET/10am PT** for a webinar titled "Fighting to End the Issue of Human Trafficking through the Lens of Catholic Social Teaching." This webinar will provide an in-depth overview of the issue of human trafficking while using the See-Judge-Act methodology for participants to learn, reflect, and act on this issue. Presenters from the USCCB will discuss efforts by the Vatican and U.S. Bishops to combat human trafficking, identify practical aspects of social ministry, and share resources and advocacy actions for social action directors and collaborators. Please register in advance for the [English](#) and [Spanish](#) version.



Nuns Against Gun Violence Lenten Fasting

As people of faith, we are called to protect life, and yet our country continues to be plagued with an epidemic of gun violence. In response, [Nuns Against Gun Violence](#) is coordinating a fast against gun violence during Lent. The fast will be a prayer to God and an opportunity to publicly appeal to our civic communities for action to reduce gun violence.



Nuns Against Gun Violence will gather virtually for prayer and provide resources on a Zoom community service on **Ash Wednesday, February 14 at 1pm ET/10am PT**. To undertake this fast, please [complete this form](#).

Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

It's never easy to have to share bad news. The staff of FAN is mourning the tragic loss of Ryan Realbuto (*pictured*), age 23, who was fatally shot last week in Washington D.C. in an attempted robbery. Originally from Pittsford, New York, Ryan was a participant in FAN's [Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference](#) last October. A 2023 St. Bonaventure University graduate, Ryan moved to D.C last year as part of the [Capuchin Franciscan Volunteer Corps](#) and was assigned to work at a local high school helping at-risk students in a work-study program.



This week is [National Gun Violence Survivors Week](#). Gun violence in any form can leave a lasting impact, hurting not only the victim, but as Ryan's mother [put it](#), "It shatters a community." Mrs. Realbuto remembers her son as someone "who was passionate about giving back." During this time of grief and loss, we join our hearts with all those mourning a life lost to gun violence as well as those who have survived and carry the trauma with them. In honor of Ryan's life and all the souls whose light was cut short, we recommit to being channels of peace, love and justice. We join our prayers with those of Ryan's family, friends, coworkers, Cap Corps family, and St. Bonaventure community. Prayers of support can be sent to capcorps1226@gmail.com and will be shared with the Cap Corps Volunteers and Realbuto Family. You can also make a donation to Cap Corp as they prepare a [Memorial Fund](#).