

## **“Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel”**

When I was a young sister in formation to be a missionary, I liked this quote from Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, the second reading for the [5th Sunday in Ordinary Time](#): “Woe to me if I do not preach it.” In my enthusiasm, I was dreaming of being sent to the forests of Brazil or the savannah of Africa to preach about Jesus’s love for each person. In fact, as young sisters we often encountered difficult moments and when we did, we found the need to remind each other that the reason we were there was to go around with the gospel raised and talk to anyone we met about God’s love.



As time went by, and after more classes, readings, and prayer, it became clear to me that the model of missionary life was not what I wanted to follow and not what the Church asked of me. The style needed to change, not the urgency of preaching the love of God.

In the scripture readings, both Paul and Jesus feel the urgency to preach to as many people as possible to make the Father’s love known. Paul feels it as an obligation imposed on him and that he accepts willingly, ready to become one with those he was sent to in order to win them over for Jesus. “To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some.” Jesus feels the same urgency: “Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come.”

So I ask myself: do I share the urgency of Paul and Jesus to proclaim God’s love? Is the enthusiasm of my younger years gone because I am not in a forest or a savannah? How do I preach today in the work I do for Franciscan Action Network (FAN), in this world which is at times so dark that it seems to have lost the sense of goodness and love of neighbor? I have to admit that sometimes it is not easy to keep my heart and mind open. At FAN, we advocate for justice and peace, a ministry where very often we do not see results because the work of building a better world takes a long time. We might not give food to the hungry, but we are working to assure that policies will be in place so that they will not be hungry again. We see struggle at the border and we speak out to urge that immigrants are treated humanely and are protected in their right to seek asylum. We are not there giving out clothes and helping them with papers and travel, but we are speaking in their favor, trying to make sure that they can have the just treatment and support they deserve.

Sometimes I feel that Jesus had it a little easier (in the moment) because he could see people being restored to health and demons being sent out of the possessed while he was preaching about the Father’s love. Yet woe to us if we do not continue to raise our voices in this society, because as Pope Francis says in *Fratelli Tutti*, a “globalized society makes us neighbors, but it does not make us brothers and sisters.”

Is raising our voices for justice preaching? I believe so. This is the call that you and I share because of our baptism, and when it is hard or unrewarding we can remember what Jesus teaches us to do: "Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed."

Sr. Maria Orlandini, OSF  
Director of Advocacy

### **Suggested Action:**

Help build God's beloved community here and now by getting involved in advocating for an issue important to you. See below for some ideas.

### **Suggested Petitions:**

For those who are unfairly treated by our broken economic and immigration systems, we pray...  
For reforms in the use of money in our politics, we pray...

### **Prayer from St. Hildegard of Bingen**

**O God, turn us into the arms and hands,  
the legs and feet of your beloved Son, Jesus.  
You gave birth to us on earth to become his living body.  
Make us worthy to be his limbs  
and so worthy to share in his eternal bliss.**

**Amen**

## **Limited time offer: Get Your FAN Sweatshirt Today**

Have you been wanting a FAN hoodie? Wearing one is a great way to keep warm while at events and actions during the cool weather. It's also a great way to show your Franciscan heart!

Franciscan Action Network is excited to announce a **limited time opportunity** to get a union-made FAN hoodie for yourself or someone you love. From now **until February 14** (Ash Wednesday) when you make a \$60 donation to FAN, we will send you a FAN hoodie as a thank you gift. We need to order at least 24 hoodies at a time, so please help us meet this goal.

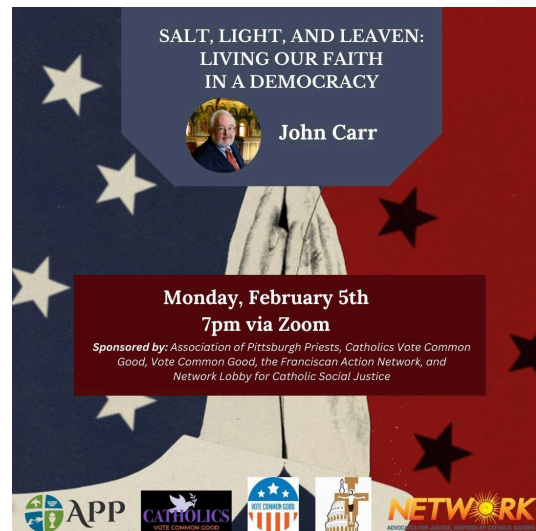
Simply [fill out this form](#) and a FAN staff member will contact you to confirm your donation details. If we meet our goal, you'll have your hoodie in hand by Easter.



## Salt, Light and Leaven: Living Our Faith in a Democracy

FAN will cosponsor a webinar on Monday, February 5 at 7p ET (4p PT) in which John Carr, founder of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University, will offer reflections on the mission of Catholics in public life.

Join virtually to hear John's presentation: "Salt, Light and Leaven: Living Our Faith in a Democracy." The event is open and free but [registration is required](#). For more information and questions, contact Fr. John Oesterle at 412-232-7512 or via email at [johnoesterle2@gmail.com](mailto:johnoesterle2@gmail.com).



## Raising Awareness on Human Trafficking

On February 8, the Feast Day of St. Josephine Bakhita, the Patron Saint for Victims of Trafficking, the USCCB will sponsor a live streamed Mass and an ecumenical prayer service led by various Christian faith leaders, where individuals will bring their collective wisdom, experiences, and ethical perspectives. Both services are available in person in Washington, D.C. and virtually:

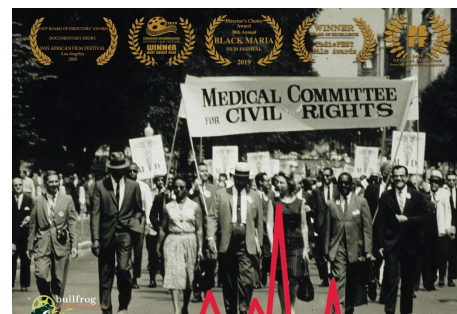
- Evening Mass at St. Vincent De Paul Chapel at Catholic University: Thursday Feb. 8th, 5:10p ET (2:10p PT) [Click here to register](#).
- Ecumenical Prayer Service at Caldwell Chapel at Catholic University: Thursday Feb. 8th, 7-8:30p ET (4-5:30p PT) [Click here to register](#).



Additionally, on Monday, Feb. 12 at 11a ET (8a PT), FAN Advocacy Director Sr. Maria Orlandini will be one of the speakers on the first of three webinars focused on advocacy to break the link between [human trafficking and forced migration](#). This webinar is being hosted by the Alliance to End Human Trafficking and the National Advocacy of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. [Click here to register](#).

## Power to Heal: Medicare and the Civil Rights Revolution

Tomorrow, Wednesday, January 31 at 7:30p ET (4:30pm PT) the Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice are hosting a 2-hour film screening and discussion with producer Dr. Barbara Berney. The film is ["Power to Heal"](#) which covers a poignant chapter in the historic struggle to secure equal and adequate access to healthcare for all Americans. Central to the story is the tale of how a



new national program, Medicare, was used to mount a dramatic, coordinated effort that desegregated thousands of hospitals across the country in a matter of months.

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

## Journeying Together from the Crib to the Cross

The [Franciscan Federation virtual retreat](#) is coming up on February 4. The speakers include Murray Bodo OFM, Eunice Park, and Darleen Pryds, each of whom 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.



Journeying Together from the Crib to the Cross

[Click here to register for the retreat](#), taking place on Sun. Feb. 4, 2024 from 3p-7p ET (12p-4p PT).

## Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

If you live in the Cincinnati tri-state area, we welcome you to join us for an online "Come & See" Franciscan Justice Circle meeting this Thursday, Feb. 1 from 7p-8p ET. A [Franciscan Justice Circle](#) is a local group of Franciscan-hearted individuals who feel called to engage in grassroots justice, peace, and integrity of creation advocacy and connect with other members of the wider Franciscan and ecumenical community. Please [register here](#).



Recently, members of the Richmond, VA - Area Franciscan Justice Circle (*pictured*) joined people of faith for a [Day for All People 2024](#), organized by VA Interfaith Power and Light and Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy. They met with state delegates and senators around issues such as health coverage for children, affordable housing, and expanding access to higher education for persons in prisons. Additionally they asked lawmakers to consider a Healthy Communities Bill, which would allow localities to consider environmental health impacts in their mandatory 5-year planning.

If you'd like to know more about Franciscan Justice Circles forming in your area, please [contact us](#).