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Reflection Date: April 7, 2024 - [Second Sunday of Easter](#)

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## Living as Community

The readings for the [Second Sunday of Easter](#) are rooted firmly in *community*. The first reading from Acts of the Apostles begins with the literal words: “the community of believers” (Acts 4:32). Taken together, the scripture readings invite us, as a Church, to reflect on what it means to be a group of individuals who come together in a shared belief in Jesus Christ and for us to have a relationship with Christ as a community.



The first letter of John is addressed to believers who, like us, have not heard the good news directly from Jesus’ lips nor have we personally encountered the risen Christ. Our faith in Christ has come via a chain of witnesses and believers who have come before us. The epistle reminds us that love for Jesus Christ is carried out in the form of keeping Jesus’ commandments.

The gospel reading describes the community of believers who had personally heard the good news from Jesus gathered in fear behind a locked door. Jesus came to them and was in their midst despite this fact. Perhaps for emphasis to us who were not there in that locked room, the reading continues with the story of Thomas and ends with Jesus saying “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” He is speaking across time *to us*, those not present in the locked room.

This is where the idea of harmony among the scripture readings is so important. While at mass we hear the words of Acts of the Apostles first, but after the epistle and gospel are proclaimed, the message from Acts becomes clearer as it vividly shows the community of believers, the early Church, living out Jesus’ commands. The community described in the reading was “of one heart and mind” and, with the Apostles, proclaimed the Resurrection as they actively shared their possessions and resources so that “there was no needy person among them.”

These readings urge us to reflect on and consider how we are living out Christ’s teachings. Are we living Christ’s peace? Are we receiving the Holy Spirit? Are we forgiving sins? Are we sharing so that there are no needy ones among us?

This is what the quest for justice, peace, and integrity of creation is about, *living as a community of believers who take Jesus’ message seriously*. FAN offers us so many ways to be a dynamic community of believers who proclaim the hope of the Resurrection by working together and with others to put Jesus’ words in action in the world through political, social, and economic advocacy. FAN is about being believers who are also active citizens seeking the kind of unity and justice that the early Church was building when it worked to ensure that none of its members were in need.

As a community of believers, I pray that we will feel Christ’s peace and with one heart and one mind we will love Christ together by living out his commands to forgive and to take care of the poor and to proclaim the hope of the Resurrection, together!

Tobias Harkleroad, OFS  
FAN Supporter

### **Suggested Action:**

Learn about and consider joining a [Franciscan Justice Circle](#), FAN's local grassroots communities inspired by the Franciscan charism that unite to advocate for social and environmental justice.

### **Suggested Petitions:**

That we all strive to live as a community of believers in Christ and work to carry out his commands, we pray...

That those affected by systemic poverty are listened to and empowered to make sustainable changes, we pray...

### **Prayer:**

**God, be with us as we work for a flourishing community. Let us learn to love our neighbors more deeply so that we can create peaceful and just communities. Open our hearts that we may feel the peace of Christ and live out the commandments as Jesus taught, caring in Your name for those made poor and marginalized.**

**Amen**

## **LAST CHANCE: “Awakening to Environmental Justice” workshop series begins TODAY**

Beginning today, **April 2 and continuing next Tuesday, April 9 at 4pm ET (1pm PT)**, Franciscan Action Network is hosting a unique workshop opportunity. If environmental justice is one of your passions but you're not sure how to go about researching and getting involved with local organizers, this 2-part workshop is for you!

Join us to learn how to research cases of environmental injustice in your state and how to respectfully engage with local activists. [There is still time to register](#). Don't miss out!



## **Advocacy continues: Ceasefire Campaign**

As the Gaza war continues, there is mixed news in terms of U.S. policies. On Good Friday, news broke that the Biden administration had [authorized](#) another large transfer of offensive weapons to Israel, including many 2,000 lb bombs, which have caused mass casualties. At the same time, calls for a ceasefire from many quarters are increasing. On March 25, the United States allowed a UN Security Council [resolution](#) calling for a ceasefire in Gaza to pass (by abstaining from the vote). Catholic leaders have also been speaking out for peace. Archbishop Timothy Broglio, President of the US



Council of Catholic Bishops, issued a [statement](#) on March 23 calling for a ceasefire, protection of civilians, and release of hostages. Provincial Minister Br. Lawrence Hayes, OFM, joined more than [140 global Christian leaders in a call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and to halt the sale of weapons to Israel](#). The Society of Jesus issued a [statement](#) on March 28, saying it was “unacceptable that no-one has been able to stop the killing.”

**Please consider speaking out for peace—an immediate ceasefire, release of all hostages, and increased humanitarian relief—again this week. [Click here to ask your members of Congress to take action](#). Call the White House at 202-456-1111 to ask the president to send food, not bombs, to Gaza.**

These developments follow a broad protest movement in the United States for peace in Gaza. Part of this was the recent [Lenten Ceasefire Campaign](#) led by Christians for Ceasefire, a coalition of more than 20 national organizations and local partners in which FAN played an active role. The purpose was to draw on the power of active nonviolence to generate momentum toward a permanent ceasefire in Gaza.

The campaign included an Ash Wednesday liturgy at the White House with a risking arrest ecumenical witness ([photos](#)), support for a multi-faith pilgrimage from Philadelphia to DC, grassroots took-kits, support for a vigil at the White House with a faith delegation returning from the Holy Land with a risking arrest witness ([photos](#)), a webinar on reconciliation with bereaved family members from Israel and Palestine, and a pray-in near the Capitol with a witness inside a Senate building ([photos](#)) that disrupted a [Fox News interview with](#) a U.S. senator.

The campaign mobilized more than 1800 people with more than 40 people ultimately risking arrest, some for the first time. The campaign notably expanded organizational endorsements and key partnerships, both nationally and locally. The campaign generated press articles in media such as [Religion News](#), [National Catholic Reporter](#) (by Eli McCarthy), and [Fox News](#).

Christian work for peace will continue, including through actions during the week beginning April 8 by [Churches for Middle East Peace](#) and [Christians for a Free Palestine](#).

## **Thank you Conventual Franciscan Friars, Our Lady of the Angels Province**

Franciscan Action Network is extremely grateful for the ongoing support of its institutional members, the Franciscan communities who founded FAN to be a collective Franciscan voice for justice, peace, and creation and who continue to partner in its work.

This week, we honor the work of the [Conventual Friars of Our Lady of the Angels Province](#). The friars hold a special dedication to life in community, while participating in multi-dimensional parochial and non-parochial ministerial service. These include parish ministries, service programs designed to aid the poor and marginalized members of society, sponsorship of an organic farm whose produce serves a soup kitchen, secondary education, university campus ministries, shrine ministry, retreats, and evangelization, to name but a few. FAN is blessed to have two dedicated and active board members from this province, Fr. Paul Lininger, OFM Conv. and Fr. Michael Lasky, OFM Conv.



## Migrant Stories, Uplifting and Tragic

Photo courtesy of [Tepeyac Institute](#)

Recent stories from our immigrant brothers and sisters in the U.S. alternate between uplifting and tragic.

The uplifting story comes out of El Paso, TX where hundreds gathered on March 21 to support more just, helpful, and efficient immigration policies and reaffirm the city's welcoming borderland identity. FAN cosponsored the "[Do Not Be Afraid: March & Vigil for Human Dignity](#)," hosted by the Diocese of El Paso and the Hope Border Institute.

[Watch the recording here](#). The vigil, march and remembrance came amidst the ongoing legal fight over the Texas state law (SB4) and related [attempts](#) by the State of Texas to close down faith-based immigrant serving organizations like El Paso's Annunciation House.



The tragic story comes out of Baltimore, MD where six [immigrant workers](#) recently lost their lives when the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed as a result of a container ship which had lost power struck a support column. Several of the men were fathers to young children and our thoughts and prayers go to their families and loved ones. This incident is a painful reminder of the often dangerous and vulnerable working conditions immigrants endure to provide for their families.

The perils and risks faced by those who work at sea include physical danger as well as human trafficking. The experiences of sea workers will be the focus of the next [St. Josephine Bakhita Prayer Service](#) on **April 8 at 2pm ET (11am PT) on Zoom**.

## Tell Congress to stop the flow of illegal weapons to Haiti

The tiny Caribbean nation of Haiti is teetering on the brink of collapse. The illegal trafficking of arms combined with gang violence and looting have made everyday life punishing in the nation of 11 million, with food and medicine in short supply. Leaders in the Haitian diaspora are speaking out for diplomatic actions President Biden can take to create space for peaceful, democratic governance to grow in Haiti. Take action and [urge Congress to stop the illegal trafficking of arms from the U.S. to Haiti](#).



Amidst the worsening crisis in Haiti, the Interfaith Immigration Coalition is sending a [letter](#) to the Administration urging them to redesignate and extend TPS for Haitians, pause all deportations to Haiti, stop all plans to detain Haitian migrants interdicted at sea at Guantanamo Bay, and to expand key lawful migration pathways. This letter is open to faith leaders and faith organizations (local, state, national) and the **deadline to sign on is end of day on Thursday, April 4**. Click here to [read the letter and sign on](#).

## Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

The DE Valley FJC and the Richmond, VA-Area FJC have been focusing on topics related to peace-making so far this year, each sending letters to policy makers regarding state-level policies being considered. In April they will each explore the Mother Earth Day theme “Healing Our Throwaway Culture: Focus on Plastics.” As people inspired by Sts. Francis and Clare, and acknowledging the harm suffered by sister Mother Earth from plastic production to disposal, how can we actively contribute to fixing the plastic crisis our world is in? The Circles will pray, learn and take concrete actions supported by each other.



Upcoming Franciscan Justice Circle meetings:

**Mid-Hudson Valley FJC:** Tues. April 2 at 12:00pm EDT via zoom

**Kansas FJC:** Tues. April 2 at 7:00pm CDT via zoom

**Cincinnati Tri-State FJC:** Wed. April 3 at 7:00pm EDT via zoom

**Virtual FJC:** Thurs. April 4 at 11:00am PDT / 2:00pm EDT via zoom

To connect with any of these [Franciscan Justice Circles](#) or to find out more about joining one, please contact FAN staff, [Nora Pfeiffer](#).