

Publication Date: April 16, 2024

Reflection Date: April 21, 2024 - Fourth Sunday of Easter

Laying Down our Lives

What Jesus says about himself and his purpose in the passage from John's Gospel (10:11-18) for the [Fourth Sunday of Easter](#) commands my attention: "This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again." I lay down my life in order to take it up again; what a statement! And it was extremely controversial at the time. The Gospel relates that Jesus' Jewish audience was divided in their reactions, some of them saying he must be insane.



Certainly, Jesus' statement could be understood after his death and resurrection as a simple statement of what was going to occur, and that it applied to him only. Yet I wonder if it is meant to apply to us as well. A bit later in John's Gospel, after Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he said something strikingly similar: "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit..." (John 12:24). This is generally interpreted to apply to all of us, not just to Jesus.

What does it mean for me to lay down my life...in order to take it up again? An image that comes to my mind was suggested by a Franciscan friar during a talk I heard about the meaning of profession as a Secular Franciscan. He suggested that on profession day, each of us imagine laying our body across the altar as a symbol of preparedness to make any sacrifice God would ask of us. Here is my life, God; do with it what you will. I will take it up again as a new life, not mine alone anymore but mine in you and given over to your will.

It was not easy for Jesus to lay down his life—remember the Garden of Gethsemane - even if he knew that he would take it up again. Laying down his life involved enduring public humiliation, excruciating pain, and abandonment by his friends. Yet, as Peter says in the reading from Acts of the Apostles (4:8-12), it was exactly because Jesus was rejected by the leaders of his time that he was able to become the cornerstone of the new Incarnational reality that God was building. How impossible it must have been to see that paradox at the time of the Crucifixion, and how the miracle of the Resurrection and descent of the Holy Spirit transformed Jesus' followers. Clearly the Peter of Acts—boldly delivering the good news of Jesus despite the cost, feeling the Spirit coursing within him and calling him to continue Jesus' healing ministry—was a transformed person. He had laid down his life and taken it up again.

There are so many ways in which I might be called to lay down my life. I might be called to lay down my life by surrendering my narrow concerns, time, comfort, and even perhaps short-term freedom to [stand in solidarity](#) with people thousands of miles away in Gaza (or Sudan, Somalia, Ukraine, Yemen...), who are being killed, maimed, and starved by the thousands. I might be called to lay down my life by making a personal sacrifice from my abundance to lighten the load

that my neighbors enduring poverty are bearing. On this Earth Day 2024, perhaps I am called to lay down my life by taking off my blinders to learn about [environmental injustice](#) in my community or by taking inconvenient steps to [stop consuming plastics](#) that are choking the earth, our beautiful home. And when I have laid down my life, I will take it up again in Christ, following God's will.

Michele Dunne, OFS
Executive Director, Franciscan Action Network

Suggested Action:

Check out FAN resources to take action for peace, environmental justice, poverty alleviation, compassionate immigration policies, or other issues, as you feel called by God.

Suggested Petition:

That God may guide each of us to see how we are to lay down our lives for the building of God's kingdom among us on earth, we pray....

For an end to the wars in Gaza, Israel, Somalia, Sudan, Ukraine, Yemen, and other countries and that we might be guided to what each of us can do to alleviate suffering of the victims of war, we pray....

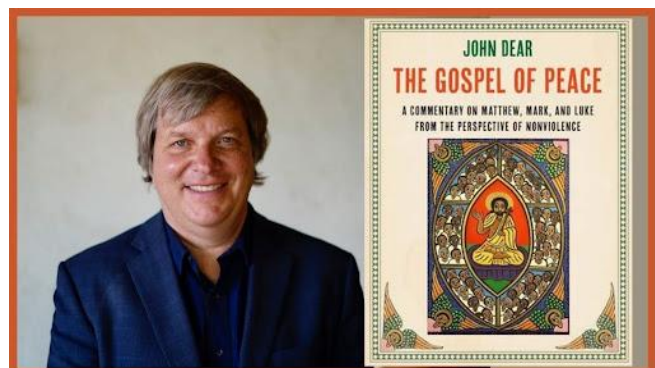
Prayer - St. Teresa of Ávila (attributed)

**Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which He looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which He blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are His body.
Christ has no body now but yours.**

Amen

John Dear Book Launch and Signing

Please join Franciscan Action Network and the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land for a launch of [The Gospel of Peace: A Commentary on Matthew, Mark, and Luke from the Perspective of Nonviolence](#) by Rev. John Dear on **Wednesday May 15 at 7 pm in person** at the Franciscan Monastery in Washington, DC. [Read a review of the book here.](#)



Don't miss this opportunity to hear John Dear's compelling teaching of Jesus' essential message of nonviolence, as presented in his new commentary on the synoptic Gospels. There will be an opportunity for discussion with Fr. John and copies of the book will be available for purchase. [RSVP to attend in person by clicking here.](#)

Continued Advocacy for Peace in the Middle East and Ukraine

Iran's retaliatory missile strike on Israel, following the Israeli assassination of two Iranians at a diplomatic facility in Lebanon, has sharply escalated the possibility of broader regional warfare. Meanwhile, the war in Gaza continues, with thousands dead, injured, or facing starvation and nearly all the inhabitants displaced from their homes. This week, please continue to [call the White House](#) and contact your members of Congress to urge that the United States take urgent steps to quell the conflict and end the massive suffering as soon as possible.

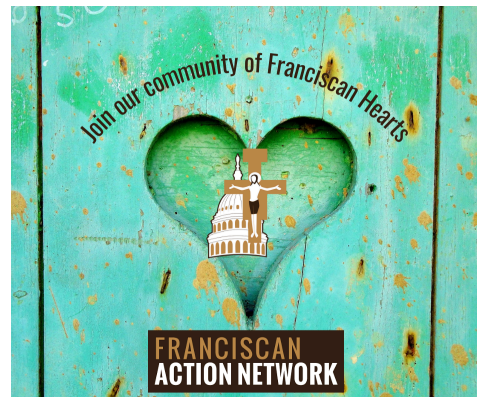


Regarding Ukraine, please [contact your representative](#) and encourage them to focus on diplomacy and strategic peacebuilding rather than continuing the current methods of the war.

Heartfelt Thanks to our Sustaining Donors

Giving monthly is the best way to support FAN's work, which channels and unites the cries of our Franciscan hearts for peace and justice.

We are so grateful for all of you who are monthly sustaining donors to FAN! You provide the consistent support that allows us to inform, inspire, and mobilize Franciscans and the Franciscan-hearted through advocacy, Justice Circles, and outreach efforts to youth. If you are not a sustaining donor, please consider [joining our community of Franciscan hearts](#) to ensure that our collective Franciscan voice is heard in our capital and across the country.



Thank you Franciscan Sisters of Allegany

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 [Franciscan Sisters of Allegany](#), a congregation of Catholic women religious and their Associates serving the poor and marginalized of Bolivia, Brazil, Jamaica, Mozambique and the United States for over 160 years. This community has

deep roots at Franciscan Action Network, as Allegany Sr. Margaret Mary Kimmins served as our first board president and Congregational Minister Sr. Margaret Magee is a board member and former board president.

Final Webinar: Breaking the Cycle of Human Trafficking

The Alliance to End Human Trafficking and the National Advocacy Center (NAC) of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd will host the third and final webinar in their "Breaking the Link" series: Work Authorization for Asylum Seekers Protects them from Trafficking. Registration is free for this one-hour webinar tomorrow **Wednesday, April 17, 2024 at 12:30p ET / 9:30a PT**. [Click here to register](#).

Visit NAC's [homepage](#) to view recordings of our first two webinars: "How Immigration Courts Can Protect Vulnerable Children from Trafficking" and "Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act."

WEBINAR

Breaking the Link:
Work Authorization for Asylum Seekers
Protects them from Trafficking

SPEAKERS

Wednesday, April 17, 2024
At 12:30 - 1:30 PM EDT

Cristian Eduardo
Advocate, speaker and educator for anti-trafficking initiatives, immigrant and labor rights.

Ronnate Asirwatham
Government Relations Director, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Sr. Tracey Horan, SP
Associate Director of Education and Advocacy for the Kino Border Initiative

Asylum seekers in the U.S. are at risk of sex and labor trafficking when not allowed to find legal work and provide for their families.

Join Catholic Sisters and people of goodwill on Wednesday April 17 from 12:30 - 1:30 pm EDT for a webinar to encourage Congress to fix this vulnerability and also to eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic red tape by passing H.R. 1325, the Asylum Seeker Work Authorization Act.

REGISTER TODAY TO LEARN MORE

Learn more about the ASHT / NAC shared project at Human Trafficking & Forced Migration - Alliance to End Human Trafficking

Franciscan Justice Circles Updates

At the monthly national FJC call, Cincinnati FJC member, Bob Gedert, an adjunct professor at Xavier University on climate change gave an informative and inspiring talk about the impact of plastics on the planet and what we can do. Here is the recording of Bob Gedert's 15 min. talk on [Plastics: Climate and the 3 R's](#).

Upcoming Franciscan Justice Circle meetings:
Cleveland-Area FJC: Tues. April 16 at 7:15pm Eastern via zoom
Richmond, VA-Area FJC: Mon. April 22 at 7:00pm Eastern via zoom
E. Wisconsin FJC: Thurs. April 25 at 4:00pm Central via zoom
CT-RI FJC: Thurs. April 25 at 7:00pm Eastern via zoom
SoCAL FJC: Thurs. April 25 at 6:00pm Pacific via zoom
Chicagoland FJC: Sat. April 27 at 10:00am Central In Person

To find out more about any of these FJC meetings or to start one in your area, [contact Nora Pfeiffer](#).

