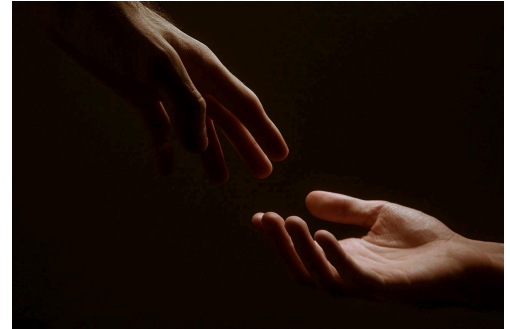


Actively Seeking Understanding and Wisdom

Image by 1857643 on Pixabay

In the reading from the Gospel of Mark for the [Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time](#), I find a Jesus who seems frustrated. The gospel opens with Jesus traveling and wanting to be alone with his disciples as he is trying to teach them about his impending death and resurrection. However, not only did the disciples fail to understand what Jesus was telling them, they were afraid to ask him questions or seek understanding.



This reading from Mark goes on to present Jesus as confronting the disciples about the fact that while they were traveling they had been arguing among themselves about which of them was the greatest. When asked directly by Jesus about their distraction, they remained silent. How disappointing this must have been for Jesus! These disciples had been accompanying him in his ministry for some time, they had been privileged to hear his sermons and see his miracles, and yet, when he set time aside to focus on helping them understand the full meaning of his ministry, they not only seemed uninterested in understanding, but they also actively focused on trivialities when they could have been asking him for clarity while he was still in their midst.

The epistle and the first reading from Wisdom paint even sadder pictures of our human tendencies. The Book of Wisdom describes people so annoyed with the way that the Just One sheds light on their wickedness that they actively plot to test the limits of his patience and gentleness, and they seek to condemn him to death. The Letter from James deals with the effects of jealousy and selfish ambition in the community. While James raises up the wisdom of choosing gentleness and mercy and promises good fruit from sowing righteousness in peace, he links disorder, conflict, and war to human envy and covetousness.

Jesus had to specifically gather the Twelve around himself and plainly tell them, “If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”

At this moment in time, even those of us who love and walk with Jesus need to be reminded that we must actively work to live the Good News and embrace God’s Wisdom. We must, like an innocent child, set aside our annoyances and embarrassments, our jealousy and envy, and we must seek understanding. We must be humble and attentive enough to ask questions and to really listen to God speaking to us. Rather than argue among ourselves or plot against those who remind us of our sins, we should be busy recognizing when God is with us and be busy actively welcoming and serving all.

As wars rage all over the globe and people engage in political fights over worldly power and selfish ambition, we are clearly admonished by these readings to actively seek understanding and wisdom as we sow righteousness and cultivate peace through the ways we attend to and serve our fellow human beings. FAN seeks understanding by working with a wide range of

faith-based organizations and engaging in actions calling for leaders to depolarize and work together on policies that protect and respect people who are marginalized and oppressed.

Toby Harkleroad, OFS

Councilor for the St. Margaret of Cortona Region of the Secular Franciscans

Suggested Action:

Learn more about efforts to engage in depolarization during this election season and find ways to practice active listening that seeks understanding, especially with those you might find difficult or who have views very different from your own.

Suggested Petitions:

In a time of such division and polarization, let us use Francis' patience as an example for how we interact with others. *We pray...*

May our leaders seek understanding and actively work to live the Good News, asking questions and actively listening in order to truly serve their constituents. *We pray...*

[Prayer for Unity, to Overcome Division from the USCCB](#)

**Christ Jesus,
who gave yourself for the good of all,
we come before you
as brothers and sisters
but we are divided
and at times, even hostile--
tearing one another down.
We approach the altar unworthily
and ask for your forgiveness.
Move us, instead, towards
Encounter, listening, dialogue, reconciliation, and
a commitment to build your kingdom
for the good of all.
Heal us, restore us,
unite your divided family, Lord.
Through the power of the Eucharist, overcome our divisions.
Give us sincere hearts that
make us open, not closed,
and willing to encounter,
ready to listen.
In your broken body, given for all, may we find unity
and peace in you.**

Amen.

This Thursday, Join Us for a Webinar!
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Protect Oak Flat: Preserving a Sacred Site in Arizona from Mining

Please join Franciscan Action Network (FAN) for the first webinar of our 2024 Environmental Justice series, "[Protect Oak Flat: Preserving Sacred Sites in Arizona from Mining](#)" on **Thursday September 19, 2024 at 7pm ET / 4pm PT.**

FAN will welcome Vanessa Nosie of Apache Stronghold for a discussion about the religious tradition in Oak Flat (AZ), her family's experience with the sacred, and how their nonprofit, Apache Stronghold, has built a legal case with religious communities across the nation to protect Oak Flat from extractive mining, a case which they are petitioning to the US Supreme Court. There will be time for Q&A and **we will provide advocacy actions** for you to take. [Click here to register.](#)



Registration for this event is free. If you are able, we ask that you please consider donating to help support the expenses of FAN's work. Thank you for your generosity! **The event will be recorded and sent to all who register.**

Attend FAN's Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference via Livestream

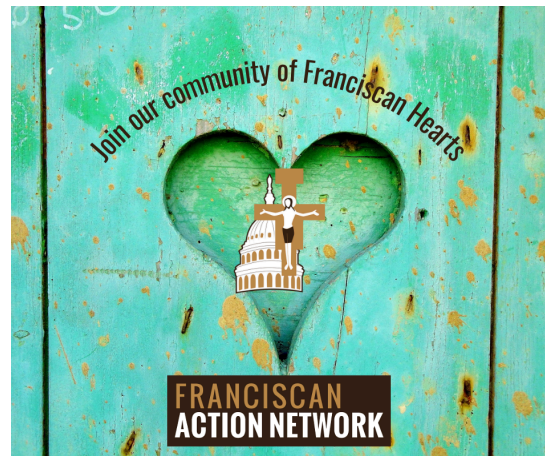
We are excited to share that Franciscan Action Network's [2024 Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference: Acting for Peace, People, Planet](#) includes a **half-day hybrid interactive program on Sunday, October 13** from 12:30-5:00pm EDT (9:30am-2:00pm PDT). The limited in-person conference spots have been filled in no-time and we're pleased to be able to offer a **live stream option** so that you too can join this gathering of people across generations, the country, and the larger Franciscan family October 12-15, 2024 in Washington, D.C.



Respectful dialogue, deep listening, peaceful action, and effective advocacy are all critical skills, but they are seldom taught or practiced in American culture. Luckily our Franciscan tradition has much to offer, and this conference will empower participants with formation, skills, and training to respond more effectively to the needs of our times through advocacy and interpersonal relationships. [Click here to learn more and register.](#)

Join FAN's Recurring Donors

Did you know that there are several dozen members of FAN who make a **monthly recurring donation**? We are so grateful for the donors who contribute in this consistent, reliable way that helps FAN to plan our education, advocacy, and youth engagement activities for the whole year. **Thank you!**



If you rely on FAN's work to help inform and motivate your Franciscan-hearted advocacy, please consider joining them. Whether you can afford to donate \$10, \$50, \$100 or more per month, your recurring donation makes it possible for FAN to bring a collective, distinctively Franciscan voice to the many public policy issues of our day related to justice, peace, integrity of creation, and human dignity. [Please consider supporting FAN with a monthly recurring donation.](#) It is an easy and very helpful way to keep our work going!

Gaza Peace Activities

FAN, in addition to several other interfaith organizations, will be planning and participating in an action to commemorate St. Francis' feast day (Oct 4) with a vigil in Washington DC for peace in Gaza. Please join us if you are able, and invite anyone else who might be interested! We will also have a livestream available for those who are not able to attend live, and we will send out the link once we have it.



Eli McCarthy and other members of [Christians for Ceasefire](#) in the U.S. are working with Palestinian Christian partners on another just peace delegation to Palestine in light of the mass atrocities taking place. This just peace delegation of accompaniment will entail encounters with key Church leaders, Palestinian nonviolent organizers and communities, as well as meeting with families of the hostages and offering some forms of basic protective presence in the West Bank. Two interfaith delegations traveled to Israel-Palestine in August and early September with similar missions (report from [delegation Aug. 13-19](#)).

The next delegation will be going from Sept 22-Oct 1, with future delegation opportunities likely for those interested. Please [complete this form if interested](#).

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Discover Urban Eco-spirituality with Dr. Rachel Wheeler

FAN is cosponsoring an exploration of urban ecospirituality with **Dr. Rachel Wheeler** with the **Franciscan Peace Center** in Clinton, Iowa on **Tuesday, October 8, 2024, at 6:00 PM CDT!**

More than half of humans alive today live in cities and this number is projected to grow throughout the century. We need to develop a healthy eco-spirituality that enables us to live well together and with neighboring species of all kinds. This presentation draws on the transition town movement and on familiar and less well-known stories of Francis of Assisi's life, in order to evoke an urban eco-spirituality that will help us shape our city lives into lives of creativity and compassion, ensuring a human-friendly future. Dr. Wheeler's presentation will be followed by time for Q&A. [Click here to register](#)



Franciscan Justice Circles Updates

Members of the **Rochester, NY FJC** continue to pray at the sites of homicides in the city, listening to the survivors' stories and seeing the excruciating ripple effects of gun violence in their community. The circle has invited several people to their meetings to learn more about immigration policies and their impacts on families, to explore how they may act in solidarity and promote just policies.



A member of the **Driftless Region FJC** (WI + MI) is volunteering to motivate voter turnout as well as participating in waste-management and recycling programs to address the plastic problem in their community. Some Circle members will be joining the Eco Spirituality Committee of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration for fellowship and a meal next month as they continue to build community while acting in favor of God's creation.

Upcoming [Franciscan Justice Circle](#) meetings:

Denver FJC Find Out More: Mon. Sept. 16 at 7:00pm MDT via zoom

Cleveland-Area FJC: Tues. Sept. 17 at 7:15pm EDT via zoom

Phoenix-Area FJC Find Out More: Wed. Sept. 18 at 7:00pm PDT via zoom

Virtual FJC: Thurs. Sept. 19 at 11:00am PDT / 2:00pm EDT via zoom

Chicago FJC: Sat. Sept. 21 from 10:00 - 11:30 am CDT In Person & Zoom

CT-RI FJC: Tues. Sept. 24 at 7:00pm EDT via zoom

Nashville-Area FJC Find Out More: Tues. Sept. 24 at 7:00pm CDT via zoom

SE Wisconsin FJC: Thurs. Sept. 26 at 4:00pm CDT via zoom

Central VA FJC: Mon. Sept. 30 at 7:00pm EDT via zoom

To find out more information, please contact FJC director [Nora Pfeiffer here](#).