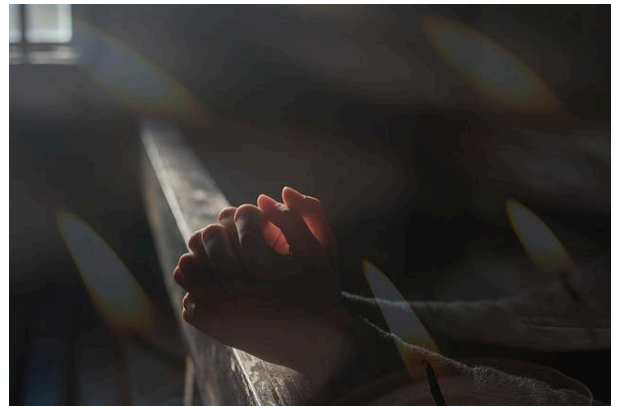


## Seeing and Praying in Darkness

The sun may have been shining brightly that day on the Jericho road, but blind Bartimaeus could not see Jesus who was passing by. In the darkness of his blindness, however, Bartimaeus cries out, "Son of David, have pity on me." Though physically blind, he sees interiorly. In giving this blind man his eyesight, Jesus tells him, "your faith has saved you." In his public ministry, Jesus gave sight to many blind people, so why is this man named? In Bartimaeus' darkness he recognized who Jesus was; his faith saved him; and after being healed, he followed Jesus.



Bartimaeus is a model of seeing truth in darkness and then following Jesus in light. This story offers us an opportunity to reflect on seeing in the darkness of our personal and communal lives. I am uncomfortable with the line in the hymn, "City of God": ". . . in him (God) there is no darkness." In wisdom, God created the day and the night, light and darkness. Would we want a world without darkness? In which there were 24 hours of daylight? I doubt it. We welcome hours of sleep in darkness. Seeds need darkness to begin to grow and take nurture from soil. So does the child in the mother's womb. Only in darkness can we see the stars. Scripture narrates that Jesus was born in the darkness of night, and in his public ministry he often withdrew to the mountains to pray in the dark.

Times of soul darkness are difficult. Times when a beloved person dies; when illness and pain hold in their grip us or people we love; when the violence of war and guns and political rhetoric fill the news; when massive storms, floods, and fires intensified by climate crisis strike fear and despair. In such times, when we most need to pray, we may feel spiritually dry, discouraged, and empty. Prayers seem futile. In a recent reflection by Sr. Joan Chittister OSB in "Give Us This Day," she writes: ". . . one thing I'm learning but may still not believe. Just because I do not feel God's presence does not mean that God is absent. The challenge is to learn to trust darkness as well as light."

Francis of Assisi exemplified trusting darkness. He prayed in the darkness of caves. In his suffering after receiving the Stigmata, he began his "Canticle of the Creatures," and the final verses of this beautiful prayer-poem were added when he was dying and nearly blind. Trusting darkness does not come easily, but when I do, when I "remember that God is energy, not solace," I have learned to pray.

**Sr. Marie Lucey, OSF**

**Associate Director of the Franciscan Action Network**

### **Suggested Action:**

In this last week before critical national elections, go deep within to pray for all candidates for office on federal, state, and local levels, especially for those with whom we

disagree, and to ask for the grace to be nonviolent in our own speech and actions.

**Suggested Petitions/Intercessory prayers:**

That our faith in God's presence in darkness as well as light may be strengthened, *we pray to the Lord.*

That we always remember our Franciscan values and the need to act for the common good as we carry out our civic responsibilities, *we pray to the Lord.*

**Prayer (from Tais Gea on Catholic.Net):**

**My God, in the deepest darkness of my soul, I look for you.**

**The desert has invaded my heart and I meet and need your presence.**

**Dark does not let me see you and touch you, God.**

**Grant me the faith to believe that you enlighten with your light my darkness.**

**I do not want to leave this darkness to go to the light of the world**

**because I prefer the darkness which is filled by your mysterious light**

**that comes from the intimacy with you.**

**You are my light, Lord; I do not want any other.**

**Amen**

## **Advocacy during FJLC 2024**



From October 12-15, we hosted more than 100 in-person participants in Washington, DC for our annual Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference (FJLC), including groups from 7 Franciscan colleges! Fifty more participants joined via hybrid programming. We are so grateful for everyone's energy, openness, and passion for Franciscan values.

During the weekend, our intergenerational group prayed, learned, and had fun together. We learned about how work for justice, peace, and creation is rooted in our Franciscan tradition, how love is essential to community building, and how to communicate nonviolently. After extensive advocacy training, we held 21 meetings with U.S. congressional offices on October 15, during which we advocated for the Assault Weapons Ban and the Asunción Valdivia Heat Illness, Injury, and Fatality Prevention Act (mandating protections for farm workers from heat-induced illness). Stay tuned for updates on the legislative results from those meetings.

If you were not able to make it to the conference but want to join in this advocacy

campaign, see below for an opportunity to join our advocacy workshop!

## Advocacy Training Workshop: October 23, 7 PM ET

Couldn't take part in the Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference, but still interested in joining your voice to others in our advocacy action? Please join FAN for an advocacy skills workshop on **Wednesday, October 23 at 7 PM Eastern / 4 PM Pacific**. This workshop will provide training on how to advocate around the bills that were the focus of congressional meetings during the conference. You will gain further skills and guidance to effectively meet with your representatives and advocate for workers' environmental protections and gun safety. You can register [here](#), and a Zoom link will be provided upon registration.

[Button: Register here](#)



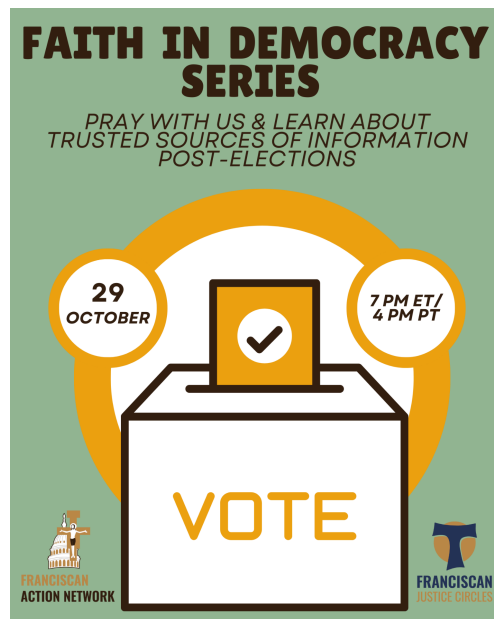
## Pre-Election Prayer Vigil on Oct 29

As we enter the weeks immediately before our national elections, FAN invites you to join us for prayer on **Tuesday, October 29 at 7 pm** eastern/4 pm pacific time for a Pre-election Prayer Vigil and discussion on finding trusted sources of information in the post-election season.

[\[\[Zoom registration button\]\]](#)

This webinar will be the next in our series of "Faith in Democracy" webinars and in-person events over the coming months, ending with our annual vigil on January 5, 2025 in Washington, DC. These nonpartisan events will be committed to reminding ourselves of our commitment to nonviolent resolution of political differences through a properly functioning U.S. system of democracy.

Using our Franciscan values as a guide, the vigil will be a moment for prayer and reflection as the busy and contentious elections period begins.



## Ask US Delegation to Fund Climate Hope



This week, FAN staff will join members of the Washington Interfaith Staff Community's Energy and Ecology Working Group to deliver [a faithful citizens' petition](#) to the U.S. delegates to COP 29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, the most important global climate gathering of the year. **The petition urges U.S. officials to make bold climate commitments to fund climate hope**, especially for those countries that disproportionately bear the brunt of climate impacts.

[Click here to add your name](#) - we need your help! **We are 1,000 signatures away from our goal.** Ask our U.S. delegates to COP 29 to fund climate hope for our common home.

## Urge Legislation on the Dignity of Stateless Persons

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Migration and Committee on International Justice and Peace formally endorsed the "Stateless Protection Act of 2024", which was introduced by Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD) and Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD). This law would address statelessness in federal law for the first time in U.S. history.



The USCCB committees affirmed the political right to a nationality, stating, "motivated by our belief that each person is endowed by God with an inherent dignity that confers certain 'universal, inviolable, and inalienable' rights, the USCCB is deeply concerned for those who have been deprived of the most basic of political rights—their national identity."

Learn more and **join us in supporting their cause by taking action at the link below:**

BUTTON: [Take Action Now](#)

## Franciscan Justice Circles Updates

Would you like to join with others in your local area to engage in social and environmental justice actions rooted in Franciscan spirituality? A [Franciscan Justice Circle](#) connects Franciscan-hearted individuals looking to do just that. Conversations are happening across the country. Contact FAN staff [Nora Pfeiffer](#) to find out more or to connect with any of the meetings mentioned below.



Upcoming Franciscan Justice Circle meetings:

**Connecticut - Rhode Island FJC:** Tues. Oct. 22 at 7:00 pm EDT over zoom

**Cleveland-Area FJC:** Tues. Oct. 22 at 7:15 pm EDT over zoom

**Nashville-Area FJC:** Tues. Oct. 22 at 7:00 pm CDT over zoom

**E. Wisconsin FJC:** Thurs. Oct. 24 at 6:00 pm CDT over zoom

**Reading, PA-Area FJC:** Sun. Oct. 27 at 3:00 pm EDT In Person & over zoom

**Richmond, VA-Area FJC:** Mon. Oct. 28 at 7:00 pm EDT over zoom

**Denver-Area FJC:** Mon. Oct. 28 at 7:00 pm MDT over zoom