

Publication Date: December 10, 2024

Reflection Date: December 15, 2024 - [Third Sunday of Advent](#)

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## Let us go rejoicing

Next Sunday is Gaudete Sunday! On the third Sunday of Advent, we rejoice as we get closer to the coming of the expected Savior.

Although the first, second, and psalm [readings](#) are filled with the message of joy and rejoicing, the Gospel reading from Luke seems a bit grimmer. Yet, is it?

We find John the Baptist answering questions from the crowds about how to live a life of holiness. John's answers are stark and to the point. John was never one to beat around the bush or mince words. The last line of the gospel passage is very telling: "Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people." This is what should bring rejoicing—this good news; the good news of the coming of the One who is mighty; whose baptism will be of the Holy Spirit and fire.



The passages emphasize the importance of living a just and compassionate life. Zephaniah's prophecy speaks to the need for social justice and the restoration of the oppressed; Paul encourages the Philippians to live a life characterized by peace and love; and John the Baptist calls for repentance and a commitment to share with the needy. All three passages from the readings, including the psalm, highlight the theme of joyful restoration, peace, and justice, with each passage pointing to the call for collective renewal and social responsibility through faith and action. God's commitment to uplifting the broken and disenfranchised provides a powerful foundation for a community that values restorative justice.

John's teachings from Luke's gospel are intensely focused on practical actions that reflect justice and fairness. He instructs people to share with the needy, to act fairly, and to avoid exploitation. This call to action is about putting faith into practice in concrete, ethical ways that impact others. John's message insists that genuine repentance and faith are inseparable from active social responsibility, with an emphasis on dismantling structures of greed and inequity.

These readings express the importance of experiencing God's love and joy while also seeking to embody that love through concrete actions of compassion, justice, and concern for others' well-being. The intersection highlights how spiritual fulfillment and social uprightness go hand-in-hand and are not meant to be expressed independently.

My Virtual [Franciscan Justice Circle](#) has become a source of joy and rejoicing as we learn about nonviolent living and being. As we are learning and rejoicing, we are taking nonviolent action in our own corners of the world – in the form of peace walks, congressional visits, calls and mailings, working in our parishes, communities, or fraternities. Our everyday lives are informed by nonviolent living. I invite you to check out a justice circle in your area. If you have limited mobility or cannot get to a circle, please consider joining the Virtual Justice Circle. We welcome you!

## Carolyn D. Townes, OFS

Member of Virtual Franciscan Justice Circle  
Former FAN Board Member

## Join us for an Advent Meditation on Thurs. Dec. 12



On Thursday, December 12 at 7pm ET/4pm PT, we invite you to join us for an online Advent Meditation where we will reflect on the Advent journey and what we are called to do in the coming year. This one-hour online event will include a guided meditation followed by small group sharing. **Please join us** for this special time, an Advent Evening of Peace, Calm, & Light.

Button: [Register Here](#)

## Advent Action: Peacebuilding

At the lighting of the National Christmas Tree in Washington, DC, on Dec. 5, Christians for Ceasefire hosted a vigil nearby to honor the tens of thousands killed in Gaza. Joined by FAN's Peace Fellow Eli McCarthy and Executive Director Michele Dunne, the group prayed, sang, and bore witness to the suffering of the people of Gaza.

The group carried a tableau of the the baby Jesus wrapped in a keffiyeh, placed among rubble—a reminder, as Friends of Sabeel North America says, that “all the victims of this genocide are Christ in the rubble.”

Pope Francis [took a similar action on December 7](#), visiting a nativity scene in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall that showed the baby Jesus lying on a keffiyeh, a traditional Palestinian cloth. The Pope asked that all remember our brothers and sisters, including in Bethlehem, who are suffering from war now.

**Suggested Action:** Organize your own vigil or prayer gathering to call for peace in Gaza. Use [this prayer kit](#) for guidance.



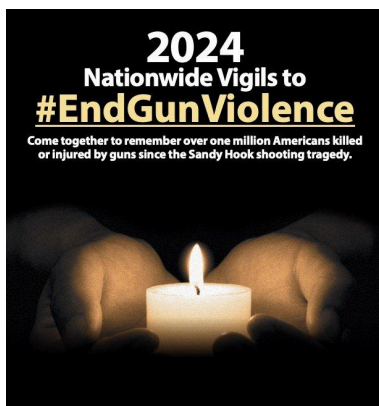
Watch clips from the vigil here: [Christians for Ceasefire at the National Christmas Tree](#).

**Prayer:**

God of compassion,  
in the cries of the suffering,  
help us to hear Your call to justice.  
In the rubble of destruction,  
help us to find Your presence.  
Guide us to be peacemakers in this holy season.

Amen.

## Join us for the Vigil for Victims of Gun Violence



FAN is honored to co-sponsor the 12th Annual National Vigil for All Victims of Gun Violence. This event, held in memory of the Sandy Hook tragedy, will take place on **Wednesday, December 11, 2024, from 7:00 – 9:30 PM ET at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C.** Please join by livestream via the link below.

The vigil brings us together to mourn those lost to gun violence and unite in our efforts for change. [Click here to learn more about the event](#). You can watch the livestream of the event [here](#). [Click here](#) to find an event local to you and to find resources on hosting your own event.

## Make a donation that really counts!

As the FAN staff close out this year, we reflect on the incredible work we've been able to do together with you, our Network. Thanks to your support, we've made significant strides in advocacy for environmental justice, Middle East peace, compassionate immigration policies, and intergenerational mobilization, but there is still much to be done. Your donation today will help us continue and expand our vital work in 2025.

We invite you to make a year-end contribution to FAN. Every gift helps us bring about lasting change.



Together, we can create a world rooted in justice, peace, and care for creation. Thank you for your generosity, your engagement, and your prayers.

[Button: Donate Today](#)

## Help us better support you

This week for our survey, we ask two questions about your involvement with advocacy activities:

On a scale of 1-5:

- How likely are you to sign onto a petition about an issue you care about?
- How comfortable are you going to an in-person action (i.e. vigil, peaceful march, nonviolent public witness)?

Button: [Answer Here](#)

## Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

[“Franciscans are called not only to change themselves but also to be \*agents of change\* in the larger community.”](#) **Virtual Franciscan Justice Circle** member Chris Kolb is living this out in his area of the country. In response to hearing from people looking for ways to put their faith into action, while perhaps limited in their mobility, he prepared and distributed materials on “how an idea becomes a bill and how a bill becomes a law in Texas” to fellow Secular Franciscans in his region in both English and Spanish. If you would like access to these materials to animate others to get involved in the civic process as it pertains to issues your Franciscan community identifies as worthy of support, [FAN staff](#) can connect you.

Upcoming [Franciscan Justice Circle](#) (FJC) meetings:

**CT - RI FJC:** Tues. Dec. 10 at 7:00 pm EST over zoom

**DE Valley FJC:** Tues. Dec. 10 at 7:00 pm EST over zoom

**Monthly National FJC Call:** Wed. Dec. 11 at 1:00 pm PST / 4:00 pm EST over zoom

**SoCal FJC:** Wed. Dec. 11 at 6:00 pm PST over zoom

**Central Indiana FJC:** Fri. Dec. 13 at 1:00 pm EST over zoom

**Metro DC Area FJC:** Sat. Dec. 14 at 10:00 am EST in person

**Denver Area FJC:** Mon. Dec. 16 at 9:00 pm EST over zoom

**Boston Area FJC:** Wed. Dec. 18 at 7:00 pm EST

**Texas FJC Advent Prayer and Reflection:** Thurs. Dec. 19 at 7:00 pm CST over zoom

[Contact FAN staff](#) Nora Pfeiffer to find out more or to connect with a Franciscan Justice Circle.

