

Publication Date: December 17, 2024

Reflection Date: December 22, 2024 - [Fourth Sunday of Advent](#)

---

## The only thing not to do is stand still

Fear or disappointment usually forces us to remain stuck; they block us. On the other hand, desire and hope make us walk, make us live. From a spiritual point of view, what immobilizes us comes from the evil spirit. Where there is no movement, it is difficult for God to be present.

[The gospel for the Fourth Sunday in Advent](#) presents us with two women who did not allow themselves to be blocked by fear and disappointment, which they could reasonably have experienced in their lives. Mary gets up and sets out; she does not stop to reason about what can happen—and she would have had reason to, given that an unmarried girl found pregnant was risking her life. Elizabeth continued to hope in silence that the Lord would make her life fruitful.



Here are two women who teach us, first of all, not to stop in front of life's obstacles. Mary, in fact, sets out toward the mountain, a symbol of what stands in our way as an obstacle. Mary does not let herself be frightened by the mountains she must cross. The text of the gospel presents her walking alone. Even if, from a historical point of view, that is unlikely, and it is conceivable instead that she joined a caravan to make that journey, the fact remains that the text, as it has come down to us, presents the image of this courageous girl who is not afraid to face a dangerous journey alone, which, through Samaria, would lead her to Judea. We could also interpret this to mean that there are journeys in life that only we can make, journeys that we must make alone.

Mary is certainly driven by the desire to share with Elizabeth what they are both experiencing: God working in their lives. On the one hand, Mary looks for a person who can understand her, a woman who is living a similar experience. On the other hand, Mary is also driven by the desire to serve, because she has learned that there is a person who needs her. Sharing and serving are the drives that allow us to go out of ourselves, not to withdraw into ourselves, not to close ourselves in worry or complacency.

Elizabeth, in turn, did not remain closed in the disappointment of a life that apparently passed without bearing fruit. She gives hope to that humanity which experiences sterility and the inability to generate. It is to the struggling person that Mary brings Jesus! Mary is the image of the Church, called to take the trouble to set out on a journey to bring Jesus where humanity is discouraged and disappointed.

These two women, walking in different ways, are presented to us by Luke as those who surprisingly move history. In the first chapter of his Gospel, Luke painted a precise and terrible picture of the history of his time. But now, he changes the perspective, as if he wanted to make us look behind the scenes, to suggest how history actually moves beyond appearances.

It is not the powerful and the great, but two simple women—who, for the culture of the time, were considered insignificant—who make history. Perhaps it is also an invitation to change our perspective on history, an invitation to discover how God intervenes and acts within history. Everything is, therefore, in motion. God, even with times and ways that mostly escape us, moves things, so we too are invited not to remain still, but to set out on a journey and awaken our hearts.

Hopefully, FAN weekly reflections awaken your heart to be open to discover the times and ways in which God acts in our lives, in our country and in the world. There is so much happening around us that prompts us to get up and set out on a journey to find ways to make a difference. Join us! Let us ask Mary to give us some of her courage!

***Sr. Maria Orlandini, OSF***

FAN Director of Advocacy

## Advent Action: Protecting the right to peace



FAN cosponsored the 12th Annual National Vigil for All Victims of Gun Violence on December 11. FAN's Michele Dunne, Sr. Marie Lucey, Sr. Maria Orlandini, and Gabriela Martinez joined others at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., to remember those lost to gun violence, including the children and educators of Sandy Hook, and to renew our shared commitment to creating safer, more just communities. We honored the memory of Ryan Realbuto (a Capuchin Corps volunteer, alumnus of St. Bonaventure U, and 2023 Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference participant who was killed by gun violence in January 2024) during the vigil.



As we reflect on the themes of Advent—hope, peace, joy, and love—we are called to work toward a world where all can live without fear of violence.

[Button: Watch the recording here](#)

**Suggested Action:** Organize a prayer vigil or community gathering to reflect on the impact

of gun violence and advocate for change. [Find resources and take action here.](#) Join the **Threats and Opportunities for Gun Violence Prevention** webinar on December 19 at 7pm ET / 4pm PT. [Click here to register.](#)

**Suggested Petitions:**

*For all victims of gun violence and their grieving families, that they may find comfort and peace, we pray to the Lord...*

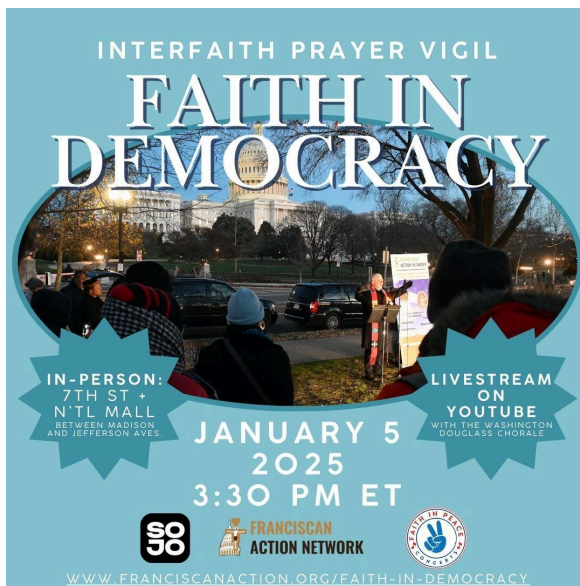
*For the courage to advocate for justice and safety in our communities, we pray to the Lord...*

**Prayer:**

**God of justice,  
in this holy season,  
may we be inspired by Your call to be peacemakers.  
Guide us to take meaningful action  
and to bring Your light to those in despair.**

**Amen.**

## **4th Annual “Faith in Democracy” Interfaith Vigil**



On **Sunday, January 5, 2025, at 3:30 pm ET/12:30 pm PT**, join us for our **fourth annual "Faith in Democracy" Interfaith Prayer Vigil**, a powerful moment of prayer, reflection, and unity as our newly elected officials take office. This hybrid event, taking place both **in person at the National Mall in front of the US Capitol** and via **livestream**, is a call for peace, democracy, and resolving our differences without violence.

We will be joined by faith leaders and believers who will share sacred texts that highlight the importance of peace and democratic values. Together, we will pray for a future where democracy is upheld and every voice is heard.

We invite you to stand with us, whether in person or virtually, as we pray for a peaceful, inclusive democracy. **Click below to register.**

Button: [Register here](#)

## Support FAN with a Year End Donation

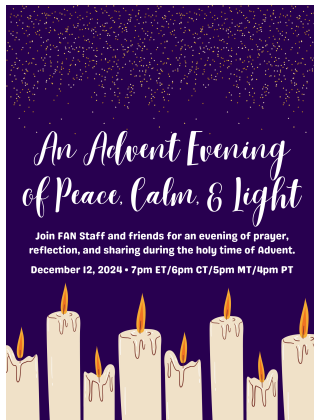
This Advent, join Franciscan Action Network in advancing peace, justice, and nonviolence inspired by St. Francis and St. Clare.

Button: [Donate Today](#)

Your contribution will support our work for human dignity, climate justice, and peace, as we work for changes in U.S. public policy in accord with gospel and Franciscan values in 2025. Every dollar helps; thank you for making a difference.



## Thank You for Joining Our Advent Meditation



A heartfelt thank you to all the members of our network who participated in our **Advent Evening of Peace, Calm, & Light** on December 12. Your presence and reflections helped create a space of hope as we look forward to the year ahead.

If you missed the event, you can still experience the prayerful meditation by watching the recording.

Button: [Watch the Event Here](#)

## Carlisle Indian School Becomes National Monument

Franciscan Action Network is grateful to President Biden for his Proclamation on





the Establishment of the Carlisle Federal Indian Boarding School as a National Monument in Pennsylvania. Established in 1879, the Carlisle Indian School was the first off-reservation boarding school for Native Children and youth in the continental United States.

This proclamation acknowledges the painful past of forced assimilation of Native children through the implementation of federal Indian boarding school policies. Unearthing the stories will allow us to reflect on and own the harm done as we listen to survivors still living and hopefully make steps towards healing and reparation.

Some of us Franciscan organizations who have been involved with boarding schools in the past, or today journey and minister with Native peoples, pray that it will be so.

Sr. Maria Orlandini OSF, Director of Advocacy, Franciscan Action Network

## Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

Are you interested in connecting with others to act and engage in issues related to peace, poverty and the planet, all from a rootedness in Franciscan spirituality? If so, we invite you to consider connecting with a [Franciscan Justice Circle](#) in your area. [Contact FAN staff](#) Nora Pfeiffer to find out more or to connect with one of our 25+ Circles.

Upcoming Franciscan Justice Circle (FJC) meetings:

**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

**Virtual FJC** (limited mobility): Thurs. Jan. 2 at 11:00 am PST / 2:00 pm EST over zoom