

Publication Date: March 18, 2025

Reflection Date: March 23, 2025 - [Third Sunday of Lent](#)

Tending our Fig Trees

The readings for [March 23, the Third Sunday of Lent](#) include scenes that are ripe for exploring historical context: *Who were the eighteen people killed at Siloam? What exactly was going on with the Galileans and Pilate?*



As interesting as that might be, right now I feel too tired to explore the context. In *this* historical moment, I need simple messages from Scripture. Hopefully, you won't mind if I take a different approach with this week's reflection. Pope Francis

often focuses on three main takeaways, and he has explicitly encouraged preachers to be brief.

1. We can recall St. Francis' *Canticle of Creation* and St. Bonaventure's description of the "Book of Creation" as a source of revelation. Our readings use imagery from nature, a bush and a fig tree. In the epistle, St. Paul references the clouds, the seas, the rocks, and the deserts. Perhaps, with spring advancing around us, we might do well to take a walk in our neighborhoods and consider God's presence all around us and ponder the beauty of the annual rebirth of nature.

2. Terrible things have happened in the past. We can be tempted to over analyze them. Paul gets to the point: "Do not grumble as some of them did ... These things happened to them as an example, and they have been written down as a warning to us." Perhaps we might simply take Paul's advice; sometimes the meaning of what we read and remember about the past is, "don't keep doing the same wrong things."

3. In the gospel's odd debate about Galilean sinfulness, Jesus also gets to the point: "if you do not repent, you will all perish." Franciscans understand repentance as more than trying to make up for our sins. Our tradition views penance as a synonym for conversion. We don't need to wait to encounter burning bushes or to have committed grave sins in order to engage in repentance and conversion.

The name we use for this penitential season, Lent, comes from an Old English word for spring. Perhaps we should skip debating about sinfulness. We might simply sing with gratitude, "*The Lord is kind and merciful,*" as we focus on fertilizing the soil of our lives and being aware of God's presence. Our reality is that we have another springtime to appreciate. Let's try to use this season to tend our fig trees so that we might bear fruit.

Toby Harkleroad, OFS

Director of Mission Advancement for the Religious of Jesus and Mary

Suggested Action: Take a walk in your neighborhood or a nearby park, paying attention to the signs of spring around you. Reflect on God's presence in creation and consider one way you can fertilize the soil of your own life—whether through prayer or a small step toward personal conversion.

Suggested Petitions:

For hearts open to repentance and conversion, that we may nurture the gifts God has planted within us, we pray to the Lord.

For the grace to recognize God's presence in creation and in our daily lives, inspiring us to live with gratitude and faith, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer

**Loving God,
As spring awakens the earth,
renew our hearts with your grace.
Help us to turn toward you,
to nurture what is good,
and to bear fruit in love and mercy.**

Amen.

Nonviolence & Noncooperation - Tomorrow, March 19, 4PM ET

Join Franciscan Action Network and Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service for a one-hour webinar **tomorrow, March 19, at 4 PM ET**. *Using Our Power – Nonviolence & Noncooperation In History & Today* will feature **Maria Stephan**, coauthor of *Why Civil Resistance Works*, and **Rivera Sun** of Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service, with reflections from **Ken Butigan** on nonviolence in the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare and **Michele Dunne, OFS** moderating the conversation.

Learn about nonviolent strategies that have driven change throughout history and how they are used today. Register now to reserve your spot! A recording will be shared with registrants.

Button: [Click here to register](#)

Wednesday | March 19, 2025

Using Our Power:

Nonviolence & Noncooperation In History & Today

1-hour webinar with
Maria Stephan and Rivera Sun.

HUELGA
NFWA

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NFWA

PACE E BENE
NONVIOLENCE SERVICE

FRANCISCAN
ACTION NETWORK

Gun Violence Prevention Webinar - April 1

Franciscan Action Network is sponsoring the first in a series of webinars with Nuns Against Gun Violence highlighting efforts to prevent gun violence at the state level. On **Tuesday, April 1 at 7pm eastern**, we'll focus on Pennsylvania, hearing from speakers who are working to address gun violence and build safer communities. Together, we'll reflect on ways to take action and find hope for a more peaceful future.

[Click here to register](#)

**Making Connections & Building Hope:
Gun Violence Prevention in
Pennsylvania**

Tuesday, April 1
7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. ET

Join us for the first in a series of webinars featuring work for gun violence prevention at the state level. In April, our webinar will focus on the state of Pennsylvania. Together our speakers will reflect on ways people can be involved in gun violence prevention and community support as well as where they find hope for the future.

Register here:
<https://bit.ly/3Q5f6u6>

Lashara Council
Chester Community Coalition

Adam Galbraith
CeaseFire PA

State Representative
Lisa Brannock

**NUNS
AGAINST GUN
VIOLENCE**

Sisters of St. Francis
Franciscan Peace Center

**FRANCISCAN
ACTION NETWORK**

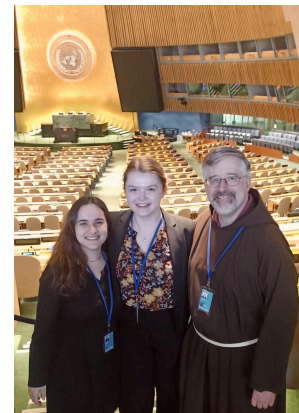
State Senator
Tim Keaney

UN Conference on the Status of Women & Walk Talk Listen Podcast

This week, our Legislative Director Eileen DeGuire and Communications & Development Coordinator Rosie Davila attended the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in New York City, invited by Franciscans International. They had the opportunity to learn from women around the world who are leading efforts in clean energy, care for creation, conflict resolution, immigrant justice, and more. It was an inspiring event, and they were grateful to help represent the Franciscan voice in these vital global conversations.

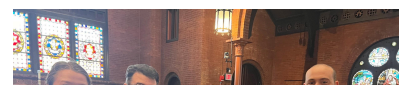
While at the UN Conference on the Status of Women, our legislative director, Eileen, recorded a podcast episode of Walk Talk Listen with Maurice Bloem, where she discussed the importance of faith-based work in today's climate, being a young advocate, and gender equality.

Button: [Listen Here](#)



Interfaith Immigration Coalition Vigil & Day of Action

On Tuesday, February 11, several members of FAN's staff and community participated in the Interfaith Immigration



Coalition's Vigil and Day of Action. After taking time to pray and hear testimony from different leaders, including Br. Ken Taylor, OLF, they met with the staff of Senators Kaine (VA), McCormick (PA), Fetterman (PA), Gallego (PA), and Collins (ME).

Join their efforts by calling or sending a message to your representatives today to show your concern for immigrants:

[Church World Service Action Alert to Restore Refugee Resettlement and Asylum Access as the Refugee Act Turns 45](#)

[USCCB Action Alert to Protect Dreamers and Mixed-Status Families](#)

Registration is open for FJLC 2025: Love in Action

Registration is now open for the **2025 Franciscan Justice Leadership Conference: Love in Action** from **October 18-20, 2025**, at the Yours Truly Hotel in Washington DC.

This inspiring event invites young and older adults to explore justice, peace, and care for creation together through thought-provoking speakers, communication and civic engagement training, and advocacy meetings on Capitol Hill. Together, we'll deepen our



Franciscan values and engage in meaningful action on the challenges our world faces today. We hope to see you here in Washington DC for this encouraging and empowering gathering.

[\[Register Now\]](#)

[\[Learn more here\]](#)

Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

Franciscan Justice Circles continue to show up and engage in the legislative process at the state level. A **New Mexico FJC** member joined other creation care advocates at the state capitol to speak up for water, land and wildlife and others have been writing to their state legislators through action alerts from groups like Sierra Club. The **CT-RI FJC** members have been both learning about how to give written testimony to bills before their state legislature as well as submitting their testimonies. Members of the **Central Indiana FJC** are contacting their state legislators on various bills currently being considered having to do with predatory lending, the death penalty and the cooperation of law enforcement with ICE.

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

Boston FJC: Tues. March 18 at 7:00 pm CT over zoom
Virtual FJC: Thurs. March 20 at 11:00 am PT / 2:00 pm ET over zoom
Phoenix-Area FJC: Thurs. March 20 at 11:00 am PT / 2:00 pm ET over zoom
Reading, PA FJC: Sun. March 23 at 3:00 pm ET in person
Denver-Area FJC: Mon. March 24 at 7:00 pm MT over zoom
CT-RI FJC: Tues. March 11 at 7:00 pm ET over zoom
Twin Cities Region FJC: Tues. March 11 at 7:00 pm CT over zoom
Texas FJC: Tues. March 11 at 7:15 pm CT over zoom
SE Wisconsin FJC: Thurs. March 27 at 4:00 pm CT over zoom

To find out more about any of the [FJC](#) gatherings coming up or for information about joining or forming a Circle, please contact Nora Pfeiffer at FJCinfo@franciscanaction.org