

Publication Date: December 9, 2025

Reflection Date: December 14, 2025 - [Third Sunday of Advent \(Gaudete Sunday\)](#)

Signs of the Kingdom Breaking Through

From behind thick prison walls, John the Baptist sends his disciples with a question that echoes through the centuries: "*Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?*" It is a question not from doubt, but urgency—the urgency of one who has proclaimed a coming uprising and who now languishes in chains, wondering when the mighty will finally be brought low and the lowly lifted up.

Notice that in responding, Jesus doesn't offer theological evidence. Instead, he points to what's happening right before their eyes: "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them." The answer was not in words, but in transformed lives and hearts.

On December 14, Gaudete Sunday, a day of rejoicing, the [readings](#) invite us into a paradox. Joy is rooted not in the absence of suffering, but in the presence of God's liberating work within it. Isaiah's vision speaks of deserts blooming and parched lands rejoicing, of strengthened hands and firmed knees, of fearful hearts made strong. This is the defiant joy of those who witness God's justice sprouting like flowers through concrete.



Photo by Ronald Felton on Unsplash

The signs Jesus names aren't random healings. They are the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, the tangible, visible proof that the reign of God is breaking into our broken world. Each miracle is an act of resistance against the powers that diminish human dignity. Each healing is a proclamation that every person matters, every voice deserves to be heard, every person excluded by society's boundaries is welcomed at God's table.

But here is the prophetic edge we must not miss: the poor have good news brought to them. Not vague spiritual comfort, but *good news*; the announcement that the systems keeping them poor are being overturned, that God's economy operates by entirely different rules, that their inherent worth doesn't depend on what they produce or possess. This is truly good news.

Today, John's question echoes through prisons still filled with the over-incarcerated, through communities still denied clean water, through neighborhoods still redlined, through bodies still denied healthcare, through children still going hungry, through immigration detention centers. Are you the one who is to come, Jesus? Or should we look for another? And Jesus's answer remains the same: Look at what's happening. Where do you see sight restored to the blind? Where do the lame leap? Where do the silenced finally speak? Where are the poor hearing good news?

The signs are there if we have eyes to see them: in community organizers securing living wages, in activists protecting voting rights, in neighbors creating mutual aid networks, in educators affirming every child's worth, in healthcare workers fighting for universal care, in those who refuse to let their joy be stolen even as they struggle for justice.

The Apostle James calls us to patient endurance, but not passive waiting. On this Gaudete Sunday of joy, let us rejoice not because the work is easy or finished, but because God is faithful to complete the work within us. Let us rejoice because deserts really do bloom, because the excluded really are being welcomed, and because death really does not get the last word.

How can you hear and heed the words of Jesus? The Franciscan Justice Circles are doing just that. They are established affinity groups all across the country ready to put Jesus' words into action. Join us and help proclaim the good news.

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS

Franciscan Justice Circles Animator, Virtual Justice Circle Convener

Suggested Action: Think about Jesus' prophetic response to John's disciples and consider living out those actions in the lives of the marginalized and forsaken that you encounter on a daily basis. Discern [joining a Franciscan Justice Circle](#) to help in living out those actions.

Suggested Petitions:

For those who are imprisoned, unheard, or forgotten, may they discover the good news that their lives matter, and may we stand beside them with courage and compassion.

For those denied health, safety, or dignity, may they receive healing in body and spirit, and may we work to transform the systems that wound them.

For all who labor for justice – community organizers, activists, educators, health workers, advocates, and peacemakers – may their strength be renewed and their joy protected, even in the struggle.

Prayer

God of Compassion, you open blind eyes, you lift up the weary, and you bring good news to the poor. Strengthen our hands, steady our steps, and set our hearts on fire with your liberating joy. Let your justice bloom through us, and make our lives a living answer to John’s question. We ask this in hope and gratitude. Amen.

Amen.

Walk with FAN in 2026

Throughout December, **the season of generosity continues**—and so does FAN’s vital work. Your year-end contribution helps sustain efforts to protect creation, advance climate justice, and support those most impacted by ecological harm. Through advocacy, formation, and the Franciscan Justice Circles, gifts made this month strengthen a growing network of compassionate leaders committed to healing our wounded planet. As we prepare for the challenges and opportunities of 2026, your support today ensures that our collective Franciscan voice can respond boldly and faithfully to the cries of Earth and the vulnerable. **You can donate [here](#).** Thank you for walking with us.



The Right to a Clean & Healthy Environment Series



**THE RIGHT TO A
CLEAN & HEALTHY**

The second webinar in FAN’s ‘Right to a Clean & Healthy Environment’ series took place on December 2. Focused on the Green Amendment movement, the effort to secure constitutional protections for this human right, the webinar featured the inspiring founder of the

movement, Maya K. van Rossum. **You can watch a recording of the webinar [here](#).**

On **January 27, 2026 (7:00p ET)**, please join FAN for our **third and final webinar** in this series. This webinar workshop will highlight state-level case studies and strategies where FAN's network might successfully work with state partners for a Green Amendment. Join us! **Register to attend [here](#).**

For those looking to **take action** today, the Franciscan Action Network is urging the U.S. administration to oppose a proposal to expand offshore drilling along our U.S. coastlines. **[Click here](#) to add your signature to this joint comment.**

Upcoming Advent Prayer: Welcome the Children



Please join FAN in an online **Advent prayer service on Tuesday, December 16 at 7pm ET**. As we draw near to the Feast of the Birth of the Christ Child, we will reflect upon the birth of Christ and join together to pray for the thousands of immigrant children impacted by our government's current policies and actions. Please join us as we pray to "Welcome the Children" on December 16. **Register [here](#).**

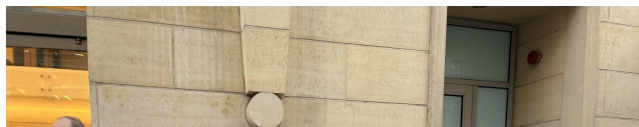
Vigils for All Victims of Gun Violence

Tomorrow, December 10, 2025, FAN will cosponsor the **13th Annual National Vigil for All Victims of Gun Violence** at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C.—held near the 13-year mark of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting tragedy, when a 20-year-old gunman armed with an AR-15 killed 20 first graders and six educators. You are invited to join us in this **#FreedomToLive** day of mourning,

remembrance, and action, as we join together in prayer, to support those harmed by gun violence, and to renew our determination and efforts to end the scourge of gun violence in the United States.



Christians for Ceasefire and Just Peace



Calling for more constructive corporate as well as U.S. policies towards Israel and Palestine, FAN participated in national

days of action around the U.S. on Nov. 22-24 to [expose, boycott, and divest](#) from Chevron. On Nov. 24, a coalition of Christian leaders and organizers engaged in a nonviolent action at the Chevron Government Affairs office in Washington DC. The organizers previously met with and shared a [letter](#) with their office on Oct. 7. They witnessed in the lobby with songs, prayer, and a Palestinian Christian speaker, and passed out flyers to more than 60 people about the campaign. See [video 1](#) and [video 2](#)—and an additional picture [here](#).

This week is a Christian week of action focused on Chevron. You can find more [details here](#), find or create a local event, and see caroling resources, a [petition](#), and more.

Franciscan Justice Circles

Currently in PA only three sites in Lancaster County have recycle sites, and the **Reading, PA FJC** has chosen to advocate for more recycling in their community. Members of the Circle sent letters to their PA legislators and to Berks County Commissioners re: recycling of styrofoam and banning its use. They've also contacted legislators regarding protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Fix Our Forests Act, and a PA bill for an Office for New Pennsylvanians.

The **Washington DC Area FJC** continues to partake in various national and local level actions, such as prayer vigils and walks in solidarity with their immigrant neighbors, for example the upcoming "Walk with Mary" sponsored by the Archdiocese of Washington on December 13.

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

DE Valley FJC: Tue. Dec. 9 at 7:00 pm ET via Zoom
New Mexico FJC: Tue. Dec. 9 at 6:30 pm MT via Zoom
CT-RI FJC: Wed. Dec. 10 at 7:00 pm ET via Zoom
Rochester, NY FJC: Thur. Dec. 11 at 3:30 pm ET via Zoom
Central Indiana FJC: Fri. Dec. 12 at 1:00 pm ET via Zoom
DC-area FJC: Sat. Dec. 13 at 11:00 am ET In Person
Driftless Region FJC: Mon. Dec. 15 at 6:00 pm CT via Zoom
Richmond, VA-area FJC: Mon. Dec. 15 at 7:00 pm ET via Zoom
NYC-area FJC: Tue. Dec. 16 at 7:30 pm ET via Zoom
Michigan FJC: Wed. Dec. 17 at 7:00 pm ET via Zoom
Virtual FJC: Thur. Dec. 18 at 11:00 am PT / 2:00 pm ET via Zoom
Boston-area FJC: Thur. Dec. 18 at 7:00 pm ET via Zoom
Phoenix-area FJC: Thur. Dec. 18 at 5:00 pm MT via Zoom
W. Pennsylvania FJC: Thur. Dec. 18 at 7:30 pm ET via Zoom

To find out more about any of the [FJC](#) gatherings coming up or for information about joining or forming a Circle, please sign up [HERE](#).