

## Info Alert 222

December 10, 2024

*"If you want to keep Christ in Christmas: Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, forgive the guilty, welcome the unwanted, care for the ill, love your enemies, and do unto others as you would have them do unto you."*

Steve Maraboli

### Advent/Immigration

In the midst of Advent preparations, we can focus on many social justice themes. The homeless, the poor, those fleeing violence, the immigrant, the refugee, and the mistreatment of our earth are just a few. On November 14, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a Statement on how we as American Catholics should respond to our immigrant brothers and sisters. Our Bishops are saying we must speak out on behalf of those whose safety and well-being may be compromised during the next administration. We must ask our government for fair and humane treatment while creating a meaningful reform of the current immigration system. You may read the entire statement here: <https://www.usccb.org/news/2024/we-stand-firm-solidarity-our-immigrant-brothers-and-sisters>

If there is more you would like to do for immigrants, join Ignatian Solidarity Network's Light in the Darkness: Uniting in Prayer for Immigrant Families. Learn more here: <https://ignatiansolidarity.net/light-in-the-darkness-vigils-for-immigrant-families/>

### Human Rights

The month of December is dedicated to upholding human rights across the globe. Several notable days during December fall under the umbrella of human rights.

December 3 – International Day of Persons with Disabilities

December 6 – Day of Remembrance and Violence Against Women

December 9 – Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide

December 10 – Human Rights Day

December 18 – International Migrants Day

December 20 – International Human Solidarity Day

December 31 – Universal Hour of Peace

### Poverty

**FRAC** (Food, Research, and Action Center) has presented us with facts that are hard to ignore.

1. 47.7 million people live in households that struggle to put food on the table.
2. Federal nutrition programs are essential to feed America's poor.

FRAC has led efforts to advance policies that would end hunger in America. In the past year, FRAC has:

- a. Secured full funding for WIC (women, infants, and children)
- b. Provided a mechanism for the first year of Summer EBT (electronic benefits transfer);
- c. Advocated to protect and strengthen SNAP (supplemental nutrition assistance program) in the Farm Bill; <https://p2a.co/P2Zm8Mj?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=8e6b5a18-1325-4d40-9221-1e939c848081>
- d. Built awareness of the role of nutrition programs during disaster recovery
- e. Advocated for Healthy School Meals for all.

This progress may now be at risk. Some policymakers aim to reduce program benefits, limit who is eligible for the programs, and make the programs more difficult to operate.

This will make it **harder** for children to learn; **harder** for mothers to have a healthy pregnancy and raise healthy babies; and **harder** for families to keep food on the table and build a better future for themselves and our country. Look for ways to support legislation that seeks to fund these services to the poor who live among us.

## **Human Trafficking**

The vicious cycle of human trafficking is complex and challenging. It is a global issue that affects many peoples' lives, particularly that of vulnerable populations: women and children, young people, migrants, and refugees, and therefore, it demands a global response. Pope Francis hopes to shine a light that pierces the depths of human trafficking. Talitha Kum has been tasked to coordinate this year's International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking. Learn about it here:

<https://preghieracontrotratta.org/files/documenti/EN- 2025 IDPAAHT C5tbelF.pdf>

## **Standing Strong with Haiti: Fonkoze's Indispensable Role in Times of Crisis**

For over 30 years, the Fonkoze Bank has provided microfinance to women, across the Haitian countryside. The tools these women have received from Fonkoze have helped them feed their families, send their children to school, and improve other aspects of their lives. The current situation in Haiti makes Fonkoze's work indispensable. Every loan that allows a woman to keep her business running, every literacy class that teaches someone to manage their finances better, and every gesture of accompaniment that helps a woman begin to lift her family out of extreme poverty strengthens the foundation of the families that Fonkoze serves.

## **Christmas Reflection: Shepherds and Magi**

*Instead of a Prayer and Action, I share with you a Christmas Reflection that may inspire action.*

Both of our Gospel accounts of Jesus's birth include visitors to the manger: shepherds in Luke and Magi in Matthew. Why?

Scripture scholar Luke Timothy Johnson points out that shepherds in first-century Palestine were "among the lowest-esteemed laborers." That they are Jesus's very first companions in Luke's Gospel sets the stage for Christ's later ministry, during which he consistently accompanied those who were poor and marginalized. As disciples, the way Jesus spent time is a model for how we might spend time; his priorities should be our priorities.

While the Magi aren't poor or vulnerable the same way the shepherds are, they come from outside the Jewish community and reveal how the love of God made flesh in Christ embraces all people. The boundaries we build up to separate groups based on race, religion, class, age, ability, and more are not of God. Fr. Gregory Boyle, SJ, cuts to the heart of this idea in his book *Tattoos on the Heart*. "No daylight to separate us. Only kinship. Inching ourselves closer to creating a community of kinship such that God might recognize it," he writes. "Soon we imagine, with God, this circle of compassion. Then we imagine no one standing outside of that circle, moving ourselves closer to the margins so that the margins themselves will be erased."

If our Christmas season is filled with radical hospitality, respect for the dignity of life at every stage, and kinship with the marginalized, our celebration will surely look a lot like the very first Christmas. Or, in G.K. Chesterton's words, "Christmas is built upon a beautiful and intentional paradox; that the birth of the homeless should be celebrated in every home." May every heart prepare Him room! Merry Christmas!

*Taken from [Ampersand/Diocese of Camden Life and Justice Ministries 2018](#)*

