



# Franciscan Action Network

Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

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## America the Beautiful: Interdependence Day

### Reflecting on the readings and reality

*This land is your land, this land is my land  
From California, to the New York Island,  
From the Redwood Forest, to the Gulf Stream waters  
This land was made for you and me*

Independence Day challenges us this year. Woody Guthrie's lyrics remind us that when the conviction that "this land was made for you and me" leads us to exploitation rather than grateful care, both the Redwood Forest and now the Gulf Stream waters witness destruction. As we continue to watch the toxic mess unfold and brace ourselves for hurricane season, the event becomes more and more overwhelming. We do not know how to respond.

The readings for the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Sundays in this ordinary time offer guidance for facing life's challenges. Luke's Gospel on July 18<sup>th</sup> reminds us of the primacy of prayer through the witness of Mary, "who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak" (10:39). Jesus responds to the anxiety of Martha, "burdened with much serving" (10:40), by reassuring her that "[t]here is need of only one thing" (10:42). Each of the psalms selected for July 11<sup>th</sup> elaborate on this "one thing," which is to listen attentively to the Lord: "Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live" (Ps. 69:33); "Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life. They are more precious than gold, than a heap of purest gold; sweeter also than syrup or honey from the comb" (Ps. 9a, 11).

Imitating both Martha's desire to serve and Mary's appreciation for prayer, we can respond to the oil spill disaster in the Gulf by sharing honestly and openly our questions and emotions at Christ's feet and then listening to discern what God can teach us through this event. As Moses explained, God's law is not distant and inscrutable but "is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; you have only to carry it out" (Dt. 13:14). The scholar who questioned Jesus about how the law leads to eternal life reminds us that what we have to carry out is total love of God and our neighbor (Lk. 10:27).

Thankfully, the Scriptures also offer us models for living out this love. Both the Samaritan traveler and Abraham's approach to the angelic travelers teach us the justice by which we "will live in the presence of the Lord" (Ps. 15:1). Hospitality and collaboration characterize their neighborly love. The Samaritan is "moved with compassion at the sight" of the robbers' victim (Lk. 10:33); he tenderly addresses the victim's wounds and then seeks the assistance of both his own animal and the innkeeper to continue caring for the injured man (34-35). Abraham greets the three travelers with a gracious bow (Gn. 18:2) and then solicits the help of a servant and his wife Sarah to attend to their physical needs (18:6-7).

In both cases, this extension of love leads to new life: the robbers' victim recovers from being "half-dead" (Lk. 10:30), and Sarah conceives and bears a son (Gn. 18:10). Abraham and Sarah find it difficult to believe the prediction that "about this time next year...Sarah will then have a son" (18:10). What do we imagine will have changed in the Gulf, in our lifestyles, and in our nation's collective approach to natural resources a year from now? What might be born in and through us if we seek the Creator's guidance to restore and renew Creation?

We often hear the call for "energy independence." With gratitude for the ways in which petroleum has supported the human community and courage for penance in our relationship with it, let us embrace the hospitable and collaborative interdependence modeled in the Scriptures as we respond with love to the needs of all our neighbors. Then we can pray as we sing:

*America! America!  
God shed His grace on thee,  
And crown thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea!*

### **Wonderful Witnesses: praying with the Franciscan Fellowship**

In addition to Independence Day, **July 4<sup>th</sup>** marks the memorial of St. Elizabeth of Portugal, a Third Order Franciscan whose fidelity to the Divine Office testified to the importance of prayer and whom we call "the peacemaker" for her perseverance in reconciling family members. As we work collaboratively, *St. Elizabeth of Portugal, pray for us!*

On **July 10<sup>th</sup>**, we remember St. Veronica Giuliani, a Capuchin Poor Clare whose vision of her heart of steel transformed her religious practice from dictatorial scrupulosity to compassionate devotion to the Cross. As we embrace the suffering of the Gulf, *St. Veronica Giuliani, pray for us!*

On **July 15<sup>th</sup>**, we celebrate St. Bonaventure, the great Franciscan Doctor who committed his scholastic gifts to the service of the Gospel and whose deeds manifested Divine Love. As we seek creative solutions to present challenges, *St. Bonaventure, pray for us!*