Opinion

Guest Voices



Michele Dunne poses Jan. 6, 2022, in Washington during an event in observance of the first anniversary of the attack on the U.S. Capitol in 2021. Dunne, a lay Franciscan, took part in the "Fight Fire with Light" interfaith candlelight vigil in Washington, calling on others to defend truth and democracy. (CNS/Courtesy of Franciscan Action Network)



by John Dear

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

July 28, 2025

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

This week on "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," John Dear speaks with Michele Dunne, director of the Franciscan Action Network, a national mobilization of lay Franciscans working for justice and peace.

Dunne is a professed Secular Franciscan (there are more than 200,000 in the world) who has had a long career as a diplomat in the Middle East and then a scholarly researcher focused on the Middle East and U.S. foreign policy.

From 2006 until 2021, she headed programs focused on peace, human rights, and democracy in the Middle East at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Atlantic Council. Over the years, she's been a regular commentator on NPR's "All Things Considered."

Before that, she served for nearly 20 years in the U.S. State Department, including assignments in Jerusalem and Cairo. She holds a doctorate from Georgetown University and lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband.

Advertisement

The Franciscan Action Network has 17,000 individual members, 50 Franciscan religious communities, and 30 Franciscan Justice Circles in the U.S.



Michele Dunne (Courtesy of Franciscan Action Network)

"We deal with justice issues that are related to immigration, the treatment of migrants and refugees in the U.S., poverty and economic injustice, as well as teach nonviolence and advocate for the U.S. to play a peaceful role in the world," Dunne said. "The Franciscan Action Network helps me to express my Franciscanism on issues I care about."

The Franciscans have been celebrating the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi's poem "The Canticle of the Sun."

"Today, we've got this broken relationship between humanity and creation," Dunne said.

"St. Francis had an incredible kinship with all humanity, with all humans as brothers and sisters and with all creation. We all need to find that kinship today."

"A sense of purpose keeps me going," she said. "I can't take everything in all at once, so I stay focused on doing the next right thing, and ask, 'What is God's will for me? What is mine to do?' We all need to show up and find what's ours to do and do it."

Listen to the full episode here.

This story appears in the **The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast** feature series. View the full series.