

Staying Connected

Volume 21 - Issue 9

March 6, 2025

Sisters of St. Francis
of Mary Immaculate



My Visit to Washington, DC!

2/11 - 2/14, 2025

By Sr. Mary Frances Seeley

About three years ago, the Joliet Fire Department saw the need for a mental health program for people who called frequently for help. After taking them to the hospital, the persons were dismissed in a short time and sent home until perhaps a few hours or days later, they would call again, only to repeat the limited care in the hospital. The hospital does not provide continuing mental health care for non-emergency patients. The hospital would calm down the person, provide them with about three days of medications, and then send them home. It became a revolving door, especially for the homeless or those who could not afford a therapist. These repeated trips to the hospital became an expensive service for ambulances with limited resources. At the same time, the medics in the Fire Department were transporting a large number of people who attempted suicide. It was then that I was invited to join the committee studying the issue of both mental health and suicidal behavior. I rode the ambulance to get an idea of what

happens on a call, and the first call we got in the morning was a teenage suicide attempt.

Since then, I've been working with the Joliet Fire Department as a consultant and an



Continued on next page

important part of the C.A.R.E.S. committee. C.A.R.E.S. stands for Community, Assistance, Resilience, Education, and Support. Our first project was the Thriveworks mental health services, giving everyone, regardless of their ability to pay for private services, free mental health counseling, either in-person or tele-help. We offer mental health services to all ages, including children. In the first year, we counted 12 student suicides in the Joliet area, plus some adults. With the Thriveworks program, in 2024, there were no student suicides and a decreasing number of adults. Initially, there was a 50% drop, followed by another 50% drop the following year. The program is highly successful.

Thus, the invitation to Chief Jeff Carey to receive the Congressional Award for Excellence in Fire Service-Based EMS Award! Only four were invited from the Fire Department, and I



was honored to be one of them. The Mayor, Terry D'Arcy, and the City Manager, Beth Beatty, also attended, and we all traveled together. The experience was amazing!

Mayor D'Arcy graciously arranged transportation to Midway Airport in a large van that could accommodate six people's luggage. His police security person drove the van, making us feel pretty safe. We left Chicago on Tuesday, February 11th, aboard a Southwest plane. Meeting for dinner that evening, we were surprised to meet Dr. Clyne Namuo, President of Joliet Junior College, who was also attending a conference in Washington. Wednesday, the 12th, was a busy day. We had a 10:00 a.m. appointment with our State Representative, Lauren Underwood, in the Rayburn House Office Building. If you've been to Washington, you know that all the corridors in the official buildings are about a quarter mile long! We certainly got our walking mileage in that day.

We met with Senator Tammi Duckworth at noon in the Hart Senate Office Building. More walking, more searching for elevators! We missed the opportunity to take a group photo with all the firemen/women attending the conference because we couldn't find the right side of the Capital Building where it was taken. The building has four entrances, and we walked a long way around the building to find the right place. By the time we arrived, it was too late, but one of the departing firemen took our photo as a small group!

After a quick lunch, we met with Senator Dick Durbin in the Capital Building, where security was very tight.

For some reason, my last name was omitted from the list, and the guard took about 25 minutes to decide that Mary Francis and Mary

Frances Seeley were the same person! We still had to wait another forty-five minutes for security to let us pass and go to Durbin's office. The meetings went well. The two Senators were especially interested in our work in mental health and future projects, such as building tiny homes for the homeless in Joliet. They promised staff assistance with grants and other needs, for which we are very grateful.

Thursday was a special day of the banquet, and the honor was awarded to Chief Carey. During the day, there was a symposium for the firemen, but my day was spent packing and preparing to leave on Friday. At 4:30, there was



Chief Jeff Carey, Mayor Terry D'Arcy, and City Manager Beth Beatty

a rehearsal for the program, followed by a social hour and then dinner at 7:45, attended by 1,300 firemen/women. Chief Carey was awarded the Excellence in Fire Service-Based EMS Award after we sang Happy Birthday to him!

Since all the firemen/women of the Joliet Fire Department are also trained paramedics, I was well taken care of, but thankfully, I didn't need any help. I was a little slow in walking, but Deputy Chief Aaron Kozlowski and John Lukacic, a retired fireman, always walked each side of me to make sure I was safe. They also insisted on taking care of my luggage, getting coffee, and whatever help I needed. I tried to tell them I was not an invalid, but since they all (three of them) attended St. Paul Grade School, they knew many of our Sisters and related many stories about their experiences, and they felt they had to "be good to Sister." They really spoiled me. The firemen, Chief Carey, Chief

Kozlowski, and John, acted like a band of brothers, joking with each other and generally being fun. I once turned to the Mayor and assured him we couldn't pay for such great entertainment. Between that and the good meals, we all enjoyed the food and companionship. The Mayor and Beth were great additions to our group of four.

Friday, the departing day arrived and was, again, uneventful as far as travel was concerned. We arrived at Midway to find the Mayor's van and driver waiting for us, dropping us off at our home.

We were very grateful to the Mayor for his kindness and to Beth for her knowledge of Joliet and her ability to answer many of our questions about the city. It was a wonderful experience, and I still feel honored to be part of this great team. I look forward to our next venture — tiny homes.



Spring officially begins on March 20, and with buds on the trees and lighter evenings comes a new spirit of optimism. From Shakespeare to Wordsworth, poets have always been inspired by the season of new beginnings. Enjoy the poem below and Happy Spring!

Today

By Billy Collins

If ever there were a spring day so perfect,
so uplifted by a warm intermittent breeze

that it made you want to throw
open all the windows in the house

and unlatch the door to the canary's cage,
indeed, rip the little door from its jamb,

a day when the cool brick paths
and the garden bursting with peonies

seemed so etched in sunlight
that you felt like taking

a hammer to the glass paperweight
on the living room end table,

releasing the inhabitants
from their snow-covered cottage

so they could walk out,
holding hands and squinting

into this larger dome of blue and white,
well, today is just that kind of day.

Joint Franciscans Joliet/Frankfort

Submitted: Associate Therese Griffin

Franciscan Human
Trafficking
Joint Committee



**ALLIANCE TO END
HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Founded and Supported by U.S. Catholic Sisters

***TRAFFICKERS Can Be CLOSE BY
Human Trafficking Basics***

Risk Factors & Traffickers' Tactics

Watch on YouTube

<https://youtu.be/XhbfGo7voB8>

**Get familiar with the Basics by
Alliance to Stop Human Trafficking**

**As we begin Lent, Let Us Pray to End
Human Trafficking Worldwide**



As we begin a week of
Prayer to End Human
Trafficking, may we be
inspired to act in our
local communities to
support and protect
survivors of human
trafficking,
we pray to the Lord.

Week of Prayer to
End Human Trafficking
JANUARY 10-16 2022

Texas Catholic
Conference of Bishops

Valentine's Day at St. Patrick's Residence



A Valentine Surprise!

The Sisters of St. Francis (Joliet Franciscans) treated the Carmelite Sisters of St. Patrick's Residence, Naperville, to pizza and desserts on Valentine's Day. It was a fun celebration with good eats and good company!

Right: Sr. Anthony, Director of Mission Integration, at St. Patrick's, took the picture above. She was very happy and excited to be part of the merrymaking!

Our Sister residents at St. Patrick's are: Sr. Paula Bingert, Sr. MaryAnn Jerkofsky, Sr. Odelia Kloc, Sr. Margaret Krieger, Sr. Mary Jean Morris, Sr. Phyllis Pitz, Sr. Grace Ann Rabideau, Sr. Patricia Skowronski, Sr. Joan Clare Wisner.



A great time was had by all!

JEWISH NATIVE AMERICAN MUSLIM SUDANESE
 LATINX
 NIGERIAN GHANAIAN
 INDIAN SENIOR AFRICAN AMERICAN
 VIETNAMESE LGBTQ+
 UKRAINIAN FILIPINO
 HAITIAN YOUTH



SHARING CULTURES

A series of four monthly Zoom gatherings - 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm Central Time

With real people telling us what's special about their cultures!

Purpose: to better understand persons of cultures other than my own

Tuesday, March 25
Wednesday, April 30

Wednesday, May 28
Wednesday, June 25

TO REGISTER FOR ONE OR MORE, GET A ZOOM LINK

Email tpmarciani@gmail.com with

your name, email address and phone number.

*May we have a deeper appreciation of people of all cultures
 so we more fully grasp how each person can live to her/his full potential
 and all of us can live well together.*

Sponsored by Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission (JPIC)
 and Anti-Racism Committee (ARC)
 of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, Joliet Franciscans



Message from LSAP Goals 1, 4



Message from LSAP Goals 1,4
Subcommittee

If your organization or parish wishes to receive weekly bulletins, google Catholic Climate Covenant/Creation Care Corner Bulletin.

Message from JPIC



By Jane Nienaber, OSF

Creation Care Corner



*"...the environment
is God's gift to everyone."*

— Pope Benedict XVI

THIS WEEK'S STEWARDSHIP RECOMMENDATION:

Lent is coming. Consider a "fast" for Creation Care... sacrificing some comfort, giving up a wasteful practice, or modifying your actions to reduce harm to the environment. Some ideas include:

- **A Meat Fast:** How about adding a meatless Monday to meatless Fridays? What about eating only chicken when you do eat meat, or sustainably caught fish?
- **An Energy Fast:** How about turning the thermostat down 2-5°F lower than usual and putting that sweater on? And maybe turn the water heater down to 120°F and only take 3-minute showers?
- **A "Stuff" Fast:** Buying only the bare minimum of essentials you need and simplifying your life? And how about staying away from as much plastic as you can and minimizing your waste stream?



GRANT OPPORTUNITY

Sisters and Associates, you can financially help a social needs project that you're involved in or wish to start. Apply for a grant from the Joliet Franciscan Fund for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. Application form and letter are in the Joliet Franciscan February mailing and are due April 5th.

2025 Jubilee preparations are underway!

Look in next month's mailing for the Volunteer Form for Jubilee.

If you are willing and able, we will greeters, hostesses, ushers and drivers.

Thank you!

Review of book: *"The Slave Across the Street"* (by Theresa L. Flores)

By Marcia Van Natta, Associate

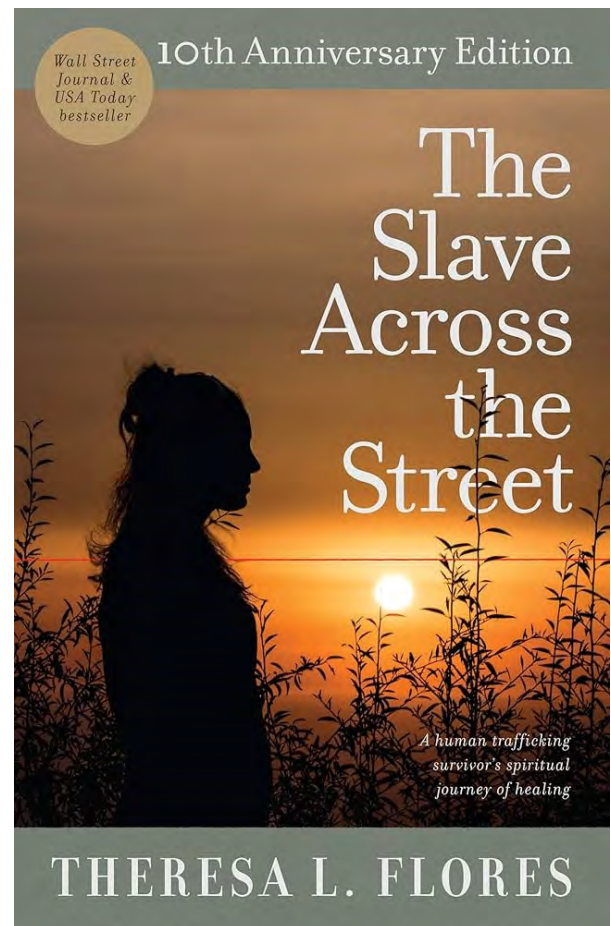
The Slave Across the Street was written by Theresa Flores. She describes her sex enslaved life at age 15. She comes from a family consisting of parents and two younger brothers. A strong Catholic faith was instilled in the family life.

Personal observations:

Working in the field of Human Services for the past 30 years, reading this book brought many thoughts to my mind. It was not reading the details of the abuse, rather the responses of those around Theresa. Yes, she kept the abuse a secret. She told no one. Very understandable with sexual abuse and the use of intimidation. What was difficult for me were those individuals in her life that ignored the signs. Starting with her parents, particularly her mother. Not being able to see how her daughter's emotional life and behaviors were changed. She questioned nothing. Basically, told her to do her chores, help with her brothers and go to school. Father was basically gone most of the time with his job.

The teachers at school did not take any initiative in challenging the problematic Chaldeans¹. They watched them bully the students, closed their eyes and let it happen. Theresa prayed that a teacher would stop what was happening. They did not!

The local police department was aware of the Chaldeans in the community and suspected them. At one point in the tragic events, Theresa was taken to a group of men, gang raped and left on the street in the middle of the night. A police officer picked her up, took her home to face an enraged mother and father because she was out in the middle of the night. The officer gave Theresa his card and told her he knew what was happening and when she was ready to contact him! Unreal to me that he did



nothing to protect her, rather left her with angry parents. So, the abuse went on.

More education on trafficking is necessary. Parents need to be aware of what goes on in their children's world. Teachers are front line with students. Kindergarten through high school, the majority of the day is spent in school. Teachers are mandated reporters. It is ethically and morally an obligation not to ignore abuse. Police are in a position to take action to protect those they serve. Not to ignore as they did Theresa.

Admittedly as I read there were parts of the story that were unbelievable, did she make this up? These thoughts facilitated introspection; being a counselor, a teacher, a woman and human being, have I ever ignored the red flags of human trafficking?

¹Chaldeans are an ethnic group who are primarily from Iraq. They are an indigenous people of Mesopotamia, which is now Iraq.



One Heart Project Results

A big thank you to all those who participated in the One Heart Project this past Valentine's Day giving a joint gift to three particular worthy services in our name.

Donations Collected:

Southwest Suburban Immigration Project	\$667.50
Casa Misericordia	\$650.00
Water By Women	\$1697.50
Total	\$3015

Lent 2025

Wednesday, March 5 - Thursday, April 17

**"God, may Your light guide my day,
and your spirit bring me peace."**



Save the Dates

2025
CONGREGATION
SUMMER
GATHERING AND
JUBILEE

Gathering:
Thursday, June 19 and
Friday, June 20

Jubilee
Saturday, June 21

CONGREGATION
SUMMER
GATHERING
AND
JUBILEE

MARK
YR
CALENDAR

Save the Date

160th Anniversary of the
Sisters of St. Francis
of Mary Immaculate

August 9, 2025
10:30 a.m. Mass and Brunch

Celebrant: Bishop Ronald Hicks

March 14 — National Learn about Butterflies Day

On March 14th, National Learn About Butterflies Day encourages us to look for a blur of color as butterflies begin migrating across the country. Each year the celebration brings with it an awareness of the varieties of butterflies and their importance to our survival. Spring and summer are just right around the corner, so it is an excellent time to take a few minutes and learn something new about butterflies and appreciate their beauty.

Like bees, bats and other pollinators, butterflies make the difference between valuable fruits and vegetables on our tables. While we're planting native flowers and trees, we're also providing for our future. Pollinators such as the monarch butterfly and the honey bee have been in decline. All the reasons have not been identified. However, increasing the available habitat does help! Butterflies need our help to survive as they rely on flowers and other natural sources for survival. We can help them by planting more flowers.

- There are more than 20,000 types of butterflies worldwide.
- Their wingspans can range from 1/2 inch to 11 inches.
- Butterflies in their adult stage can live from a week to nearly a year, depending on the species.
- Many butterflies migrate over long distances. Particularly famous migrations are those of the Monarch butterfly from Mexico to the northern USA and southern Canada, a distance of about 2500 to 3000 miles.



How to Observe Learn about Butterflies Day

- Read up on butterflies or find a good sunny spot to watch some.
- Plant a wildflower garden to provide a habitat for them. You won't regret it. You'll have butterflies to enjoy all summer long! To learn more about pollinator gardens visit *Million Garden Challenge*.
- Spend the day learning more about butterflies and creating an environment that is friendly to them.
- Watch a documentary about butterflies like *Wings of Life* directed by Louis Schwartzberg and narrated by Meryl Streep.
- Plant a variety of native flowers and plants.
- Provide a water source. The butterflies will drink from the damp soil and leaves when you water your plants, too.
- In the spring, don't clean up dead leaves and brush too early. Wait until the temperature is consistently above 50°F. This will allow time for the species that overwinter in a chrysalis to emerge safely and without the threat of frost.

Butterflies FAQ

Q. What do butterflies eat?

A. They drink the sugary sweet nectar from flowering plants. However, their larva (aka caterpillars) eat the leaves of plants. The monarch butterfly larva, for example, eats milkweed exclusively.

Q. How long do butterflies live?

A. The lifespan of a butterfly varies by species. Some butterflies live only a day while others may live several months.

Q. Are butterflies and moths related?

A. Yes. Butterflies and moths are a part of the Lepidoptera order.

Recipe Corner: Banana Walnut Bread

Ingredients:

1 1/4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon fine salt
2 large eggs, at room temperature
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup unsalted butter, at room temperature,
plus more for preparing the pan
1 cup sugar
3 very ripe bananas, peeled, and mashed with a
fork (about 1 cup)
1/2 cup toasted walnut pieces

Instructions:

1. Sift the flour, baking soda, and salt into a medium bowl, set aside. Whisk the eggs and vanilla together in a liquid measuring cup with a spout, set aside. Lightly brush a 9 by 5 by 3-inch loaf pan with butter. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. In a standing mixer fitted with the paddle attachment or with an electric hand-held mixer, cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Gradually pour the egg mixture into the butter while mixing until incorporated. Add the bananas (the mixture will appear to be curdled, so don't worry), and remove the bowl from the mixer.
3. With a rubber spatula, mix in the flour mixture until just incorporated. Fold in the nuts and transfer the batter to the prepared pan. Bake for 55 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the bread comes out clean. Cool the bread in the pan on a wire rack for 5 minutes. Turn the bread out of the pan and let cool completely on the rack. Wrap in plastic wrap. The banana bread is best if served the next day.



Facebook Prayer Authors

March	Sister Marianne Saieg
April	Sister Peggy Quinn
May	Sister Phyllis Wilhelm

Staying Connected

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Staying Connected is prepared by Renée Cipriani.

***Printing deadline for each issue is one week
before the issue date.***

Next issue of *Staying Connected*: April 3, 2025

If you would like to submit an item for *Staying Connected*, or if something you have requested to be published is inadvertently omitted, please e-mail Sister René Simonelic at rsimonelic@jolietfranciscans.org or Renée Cipriani at rcipriani@jolietfranciscans.org