

Staying Connected

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Sisters of St. Francis
of Mary Immaculate

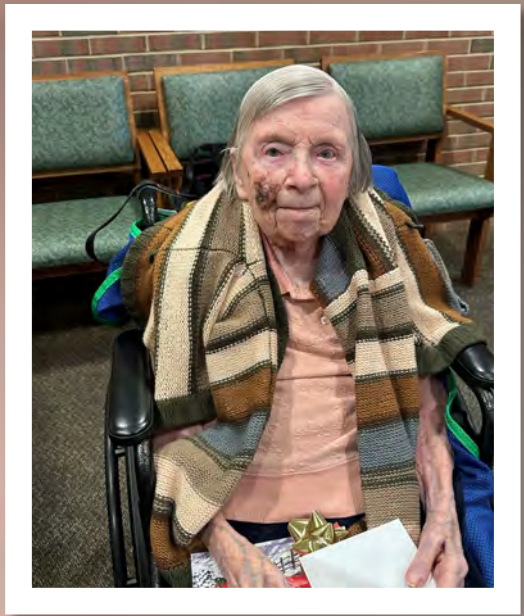
Surprise "Santas" Pay a Visit to the Sisters



Before
Christmas, visits
were made to the various
facilities where our sisters live.
Sister Jeanne, Sr. Peggy and Debbie
brought the sisters Christmas presents.
They were surprised and thrilled with the
visit and with their individualized Xmas gifts.

It was a
wonderful
day for all!







Franciscan Human Trafficking Joint Committee



Updated insights and photo:
by Associate Therese Griffin
UNCHAINED - At Last
<https://www.unchainedatlast.org>

Unchained started and now leads a growing national movement to end child marriage. Child marriage, or marriage before age 18, was legal in all 50 U.S. states as of 2017. Thanks to Unchained's relentless advocacy, that is changing. Delaware and New Jersey in 2018 became the first two states to ban this human rights abuse, followed by American Samoa in 2018, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Pennsylvania and Minnesota in 2020, Rhode Island and New York in 2021, Massachusetts in 2022, Vermont, Connecticut and Michigan in 2023, Washington, Virginia and New Hampshire in 2024, and Washington, D.C., Maine, Oregon and Missouri in 2025. However, child marriage remains legal in 34 states and is happening in the U.S. at an alarming rate: Unchained's research revealed that nearly 315,000 children as young as 10 were married in the U.S. between 2000 and 2021 – mostly girls wed to adult men.

Here are the four main reasons we must end child marriage in the U.S.:
Children can easily be forced into marriage. The "age of majority," (when children become legal adults and get the rights of adulthood), is 18 or higher in every U.S. state. Children who have not yet reached the age of majority have limited legal rights and therefore can easily be forced into marriage or forced to stay in a marriage.

They face overwhelming legal and practical barriers if they try to leave home to escape a forced marriage, get help from an advocate, enter a domestic violence shelter or retain an attorney. Perhaps most shockingly, children typically are not allowed to initiate a legal proceeding – such as seeking a protective order or even filing for divorce – unless they act through a guardian or other representative. This outrageous legal setup puts the "lock" in "wedlock." The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights categorizes all child marriage as forced marriage.

These statistics are still unreal in 2026. It's like reading history.

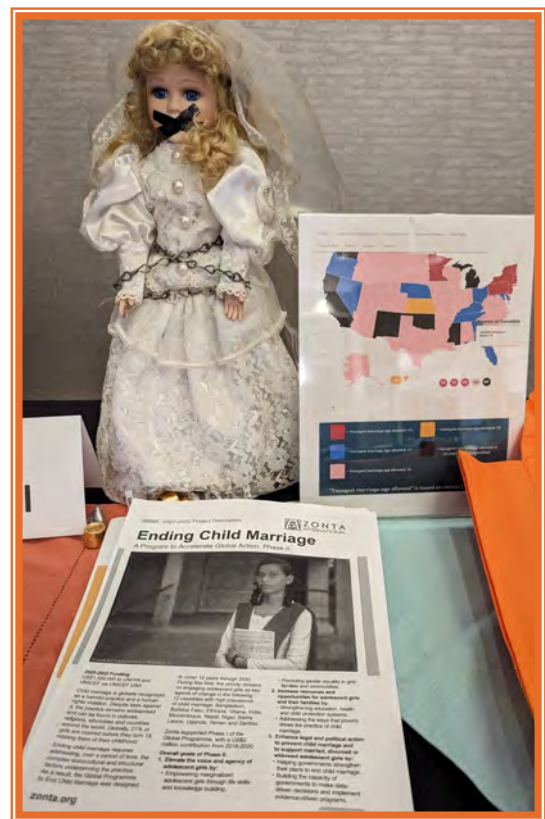


Photo by Associate Therese Griffin in Skokie

Take Action

Join the national movement to end child marriage in every U.S. state and at the federal level.

Historical Moment for JCA and DSF

By Sr. Jeanne Bessette



After a couple of years of planning, the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate completed the sale of Joliet Catholic Academy's property and buildings to JCA. All of the paperwork was signed on December 18, 2025, by Dr. Jeffrey Budz, president/principal of JCA, and S. Jeanne Bessette, congregation president.

You will recall that when Joliet Catholic High School and St. Francis Academy formed a merger in 1990, the new school that emerged — JCA — opened on our property at Larkin and Ingalls avenues in our newer and larger school building. Since that time, much has happened to enhance and modernize the school building as well as the athletic playing fields and a new gymnasium.

In addition to cash paid to the congregation for the property, JCA is establishing a \$1,000,000 fund in the name of the Joliet Franciscans to support faculty and staff salaries, benefits and ongoing education. This is a fund which can be replenished through donations over time. This sale did not include the OLA property.

Message from LSAP Goals 1, 4 Subcommittee



During this coming year, we continue to publish Creation Care Corner bulletins which are available through Catholic Climate Covenant. The bulletins emphasize the work of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* and Pope Leo XIV's actions in Care for Creation. Consider asking your parish to subscribe through Catholic Climate Covenant/Creation Care Bulletin.

Creation Care Corner

Protecting creation, *"is not only an ethical issue, but one that is eminently theological..."* —Pope Francis

Pope Francis' Creation Care Legacy - (Pt. 1)

Pope Francis will be remembered for making all things that live on the earth a pastoral priority. He helped the world to see caring for creation not as a political, social, scientific or ideological battle, but as a moral imperative. This is because the poor and future generations will suffer most from environmental degradation. He taught that abusing the "common home" of the earth, its ecosystems and all forms of life that depend on it "...is a grave sin."

Francis spoke of the growing environmental crises as signaling broader broken relationships between man and God, man and fellow man, and man and nature. Social, economic, political and environmental issues are not separate problems, but are dimensions of one overarching crisis, according to Francis. In his landmark encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home*, Francis spoke of an "integral ecology" and demonstrated that everything is interconnected. To address the environmental crisis, Francis taught that we need to fix our relationship with God, our fellow humans, and be open to an "ecological conversion." As part of his legacy, Pope Francis solidly established ecology and stewardship of creation as a pro-life, pro-marginalized, and pro-family issue.



Please look for One Heart letter and donation form in this month's mailing!

January Trivia

- 500 copies of the novel Frankenstein by Mary Shelley and The Modern Prometheus were published anonymously in London.
- Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863.
- The first New Year's ball drop in New York City started in 1908.
- In 1946, the first United States Computer was built in Pennsylvania at the Moore School of Engineering.
- The History Channel was launched in 1995.
- The plum blossom is the Chinese floral emblem of January
- The month of January is named after Janus, the Roman god that has two heads, one to look backward and one to look forward towards the New Year.
- In 1890, the Rose Parade started in Pasadena, California. Today the parade is broadcast in more than 100 countries.
- January was excluded from the Roman calendar which only had 10 months.
- The 31st day of January was added to the month by Julius Caesar.
- In 1959, Alaska became the 49th state of the United States
- Ellis Island opened on January 1st, 1892 allowing more than 20 million immigrants to enter the United States.



National Cheese Lovers Day ~ January 20

On National Cheese Lover's Day, don't feel bleu, throw a feta or act capriciously! January 20th is a gouda day to kummin over and have some cheddar or asiago or fontina!

There is no firm evidence of how humans discovered cheese making. But legend tells us it was likely that someone created the first cheese by chance. Thousands of years ago, people transported milk and stored it in sheep's stomachs. Left to sit a few days, the proteins would separate into curds and whey. From there, preserving the solids with salt may have seemed a logical next step. Salt was a highly valued preservative in ancient times.

The earliest record of cheese making dates back to 5,500 BCE in what is now Poland. Today there are over 1,400 varieties of cheese.

Basic Cheese Making

The basic principles behind making cheese are quite simple. Let the milk sour (or scientifically, coagulating the casein protein). Then separate the curds (solids) from the whey (liquid). The curds are then salted and left to age.

Bacteria, enzymes, or fungi may be added at various stages. These and the type of milk, temperature, time, and moisture are all controlled to produce the desired taste, color, and texture. Cheesemakers also add herbs and spices for additional variety and flavor. The nutritional value of cheese varies depending on the variety. Cottage and mozzarella cheese are at the lower end of fat and calories per serving, while mascarpone and cream cheese pack it on. Marscapone makes desserts like tiramisu rich and creamy.

For the Love of Cheese

For cheese lovers who think one day is just not enough to celebrate cheese, National Day Calendar presents a calendar full of cheesy celebrations. There are 18 other cheese-specific holidays on the calendar. Check out this shortlist of tasty cheese-based celebrations:

Cheese Lover's FAQ

Q. How much whey is produced when making cheese?

A. One pound of cheese can produce up to 96 fluid ounces of whey.

Q. Now, whey-t a minute. What happens to all that whey?

A. Whey is protein-rich. Many farms added whey to animal feed. However, whey is also used as a protein supplement in powders and nutrition bars.

Q. What is squeaky cheese?

A. Squeaky cheese is a young (it's not aged for very long) cheddar cheese that comes in these delicious nuggets called cheese curds. When the cheese curds are genuinely fresh, they squeak a little when you bite into them.



Recipe Corner: Cheese Dreams

INGREDIENTS

2 cups finely grated sharp Cheddar cheese
(freshly grated from a block)
1 cup unsalted butter, softened

2 Tbsp. heavy cream

1 large egg

1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce

1/2 tsp. table salt

1/2 tsp. dry mustard

Ground red pepper or hot sauce to taste

1 (16-oz.) pkg. firm white sandwich bread
slices (such as Pepperidge Farm White
Sandwich Bread)

DIRECTIONS

Prepare cheese mixture:

Preheat oven to 375°F. Beat cheese and butter at medium speed with an electric mixer until blended. Beat in heavy cream and next 5 ingredients.

Prepare bread squares:

Cut crusts from white bread slices; cut each bread slice into 4 squares. Spread cheese mixture on half of bread squares (about 1 tsp. per square); top each with 1 remaining square. Spread remaining cheese mixture over top and sides of sandwiches. Place sandwiches, 1 inch apart, on a lightly greased baking sheet.

1. Bake:

2. Bake at 375°F for 15 minutes or until golden brown. *ENJOY!!!!*



Facebook Prayer Authors

January	JPIC-Daily Intentions
February	Sr. Marianne Saieg
March	Sr. Karen Berry
April	LSAP Sub-committee Goals 1, 4

Volunteers needed for later in 2026 to be a Facebook Prayer Author!

Please contact Karen Garifo at
kgarifo@jolietfranciscans.org.

Thank You!

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1433 Essington Road
Joliet, IL 60435-2873
Phone: 815-725-8735
www.jolietfranciscans.org

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before the issue date.*

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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