



imagine
ONE

CONGREGATION OF THE
SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH

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CALLED TO
CONNECTION

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Who We Are

The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph is a religious community of vowed Catholic women and lay associates who live and minister in the U.S. and around the world. Through our Mission Network, we work with and support a diverse array of ministries including three Catholic high schools; tutoring and literacy programs; spirituality centers; social service programs; spiritual direction; and pastoral assistance. We are also involved in and support numerous justice and peace initiatives including anti-racism and inclusion efforts, the abolishment of the death penalty, fair and just immigration policies, non-violence advocacy, anti-human trafficking efforts, and care of Earth. Our mission is to bring all into unity with God, with one another, and with all creation. We do this through prayer, direct service and ministry, partnering with others to serve the *dear neighbor*, standing with and for the poor and vulnerable, and by advocating for systemic change.

WE CARE ABOUT ALL CREATION

In awareness of our mission, each issue of *imagineONE* is produced in an environmentally sustainable way through the use of recycled paper manufactured by windpower and printed using soy- and vegetable-based inks.

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All issues of *imagineONE* are available for download at CSJoseph.org/publications.



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ON THE COVER

Like the threads in lace, we are called to connection – with God, with others, and with all of creation. Lace is also an important part of our history as the original Sisters of St. Joseph in Lepuy, France supported themselves by making lace during the 17th century.



▲ Sister Sue Torgersen, CSJ

In this issue, we highlight some ideas of how we can pay better attention to environmental justice and to each other.

Dear Neighbors and Friends,

Remember when talking about the weather was a ‘safe’ topic for discussion? We do too. But in this highly reactive, polarized world, even the weather isn’t always a safe topic of conversation anymore. Because climate issues – storms, heat waves, fires, air quality issues, and related consequences – confront us on a regular basis, weather is controversial.

As a congregation, we try to hear and answer the cries of Earth and the cries of the poor, especially as called for by Pope Francis. We know our weather is affected by environmental factors as well as personal and corporate actions. Paying attention to the weather and its impact has become a matter of justice and one way we show solidarity with others. In this issue, we highlight some ideas of how we can pay better attention to environmental justice and to each other.

We also share stories about sisters, associates, employees, and ministry partners who recently made pilgrimages to Selma and Montgomery, Al. Visiting sites that made slavery, racism, lynching, and injustices come alive in the present day, these immersive experiences are impacting how we work to serve the *dear neighbor*.

Articles by Sisters Judith Minear and Erin McDonald offer reflections on ways to honor relationships and experiences. Poetry by sisters, associates, and friends is also woven throughout this issue as a way to reflect on and consider the topics covered.

And finally, Sister Pat Kozak asserts that we need to start talking to each other and really listening. In her reflection, she encourages us to start conversations and connect over simple things. We might advise not to start with the weather!

Offering you blessings of hope and connection,

Sr. Sue

Sister Sue Torgersen, CSJ
Congregational Leadership Team

Sister Helen Prejean at the premiere with actress and friend, Susan Sarandon, who portrayed her in the Academy Award winning film, *Dead Man Walking*.

TRIBECA
FESTIVAL



Sister Helen Prejean Documentary Premieres at Tribeca Film Festival

On June 5th, *Rebel Nun*, the new documentary about Sister Helen Prejean and her work to end the death penalty, premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City. Sister Helen, along with several of our sisters, attended the premiere. The film, by director Dominic Sivy, follows Sister Helen's journey to become one of the leading advocates of abolishing the death penalty in the United States. ■

To learn more about Sister Helen's work, visit SisterHelen.org



One Blessing at a Time

BY SISTER JUDITH MINEAR, CSJ

It's all about relationship.

This is a phrase you will frequently hear from any Sister of St. Joseph because ours is a spirituality of relationship. For us, relationship with God is lived through relationship with and care of others and all of creation. These relationships connect us to one another by offering a sense of closeness and belonging, leaving us feeling valued, seen, and heard. Healthy connections hold no judgment, and we feel stronger and nourished after engaging in them.

One of the quotes that guides my life is this one by Ram Dass: "We are all just walking each other home." For me, this concept delves into the deep aspect of human connection and the journey that we all embark on together.

When I was in 7th grade, I walked to school with a girl named Linda. Along the way, we connected with another girl from our school, Cheri. Our conversations deepened as our relationship grew, and we looked forward to laughing and exchanging stories each day as we walked to and from school together.

One afternoon, the three of us had just reached the corner of the street when Cheri collapsed. I remember that some teachers raced to be with Cheri, and Linda and I were encouraged to continue our walk home. The next day we learned that Cheri had been taken to the hospital and had died from complications of an epileptic seizure.

How could this happen? My friends and I could not imagine that a 12-year-old was dead. Someone *our* age, who had a book report due, whose brothers and sisters were still here, who was supposed to walk home with me that afternoon.

I do know that it was the blessing of relationship that helped me and my classmates to navigate this heartbreak. Miss Price, our math teacher, invited us to talk about our feelings during her entire class. She shared with us what she could of the story and facts about Cheri's death. She hugged us and normalized

our emotions, and took those of us who wanted to go to the funeral.

What a blessing she was to me and to my classmates. Her empathy and support positively impacted our resilience and healing from this traumatic loss. She modeled that we, too, could be a blessing for each other by being there for one another emotionally and physically through our listening, our understanding, our support, and our actions. Miss Price helped us walk Cheri home to God, and by doing that, she helped us walk more closely with one another.

Our lives hold daily opportunities to bless others and be blessed ourselves, and holding this awareness can cultivate a life of presence, intentionality, and gratitude.

Our lives hold daily opportunities to bless others and be blessed ourselves, and holding this awareness can cultivate a life of presence, intentionality, and gratitude. While Miss Price did not actually speak a blessing on each of us, her actions, her empathy, and her understanding were expressions of blessing that were pure gift. >

Our world, and each of us, are dynamic and ever-changing. The global pandemic isolated us and diminished the ways in which we lived, worked, ate, and worshipped as community. Years out, we continue to isolate and often move through our days more engaged with our tablets and phones than we are to one another. What might it be like for us to invoke blessings on the people or places around us?

Hear me out.

Think about the times in your life when you received a formal blessing. Perhaps you have a child for which you held a baptism or naming ceremony. Or you held a renewal of vows ceremony and you and your spouse were blessed by those celebrating with you. Or you were a speaker at a conference and the gathered assembly raised their hands to bless you. I get goosebumps just thinking of these examples.

We have the capacity and the authority to bless one another, to bless places and offer blessings for beloveds as we pray for people and situations. To bless a being or a place, or to receive a blessing, evokes a heart-opening feeling of caring and connection. Utilizing the practice of blessing, even if silently, affirms belonging and wholeness, renews and restores connection, and reminds us to keep God's love at the center of our lives.

Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen, a physician and author, has shared her experiences of blessings on several occasions. In her book, *My Grandfather's Blessings: Stories of Strength, Refuge, and Belonging*, she recounts the experience of being blessed by her grandfather, a rabbi and storyteller. In sharing the creation story with Rachel when she was 4 years old, he explained to her that it is our job to discover the hidden wholeness of the world and heal it back to unity. He told her that the way to do this was by becoming a blessing, and blessing life around you. On the Sabbath, he would put his hands on her head and tell God something

good about her. Rachel said this was the only time in her week that she felt safe and at rest. And isn't that a feeling we all need?

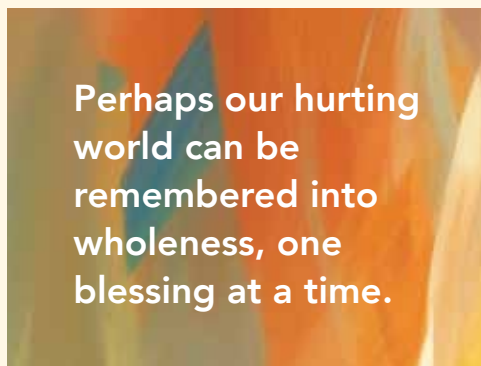
When I was a Chaplain resident at Rush Medical Center in Chicago, I was once called in the middle of the night to minister to the family of a woman who had cancer. The adult daughters, a young granddaughter, and I circled around the bed of the dying woman. The daughters had requested Last Rites, but a priest was not available at that hour. And while I could not offer the sacrament, I did have holy oils with me. I invited the women to tell stories about their mother, which they did through laughter and tears. When the stories were done, I invited them to each anoint the hands, lips,

forehead, and feet of their mother, remembering the ways she spoke to them, kissed them, held them, made them food, bandaged their wounds, and walked with them. It was a beautiful, spontaneous blessing offered in love, for love. It touched each of us as it filled the space around us and in our hearts.

In his book, *Blessing: The Art and the Practice*, David Spangler

explains that the language of blessing is an invocation, a calling forth, which is the reason for the use of the word *may*. 'May you be healed.' The word *may* carries a quality of beneficence, humility, and nonjudgment of outcome. The rest of the sentence declares intention, affirming a shared vision, and remembrance of wholeness.

For me, the concept of blessing provides a framework for remembering wholeness—in myself, my neighbors and family, and in our world. The practice cultivates a state of mindfulness and caring, with intentionality and gratitude. Especially in these times of deep political divide, climate emergency, and unraveling of social fabric, the practice of affirming wholeness and goodness through blessing helps me stay present in the face of despair and appreciate the moment. As Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker has written in her article of the same



name for the Unitarian Universalist Association, our critical work in these times is to “choose to bless the world.”

Simple practices of blessing in my life have been meaningful in creating moments of sacred space. Both silently and aloud, I find myself blessing my favorite prayer spots at Lake Erie, my best four-legged friend Ginger for her joyful love, my computer screen before I hit ‘send’ on a difficult email. These blessings call me to be present to what is right in front of me, and to be intentional about recognizing God in them, asking for God’s grace to be with them, and being grateful for the ways they touch my life and the world. I also stand in the silent blessings that return to me.

I invite each of you, too, to venture deeply into the world of blessings. Bless your children each night as you put them to bed. Say a quiet blessing for those outdoor workers who are exposed to extreme weather on our behalf. Find ways throughout your days to offer blessings to those around you.

Perhaps our hurting world can be remembered into wholeness, one blessing at a time.

May you be at peace. May you be healed. And may you be a source of healing for all beings and for Earth herself. ■



Sister Judith Minear, CSJ, is the Coordinator for Mission Integration for CSJ Ministries which provides support and oversight of the congregation’s sponsored ministries and Mission Network. Prior to this appointment, Sister Judith worked with the Mission Advancement Team in social media management and is a member of the Editorial Ideas Team which sets direction for this magazine. Her background includes 17 years as a Catholic school principal and Diocesan Superintendent, hospital chaplaincy, and ministry with the CSJ Vocations Team for nine years.

HEART OF A POET



The Five Senses of Christ

BY ANNIE TANORY, STUDENT,
ST. JOSEPH’S ACADEMY, BATON ROUGE

I hear the flutter of wings
a butterfly lands on my finger
single and free
so beautiful, so intricately crafted
could only be something of
God
i see your eyes,
how deep and open
colors mixing, where hope can be found
the cross aflame ringing
could only be something of
God
i touch the leaves
so soft and rough
so soothing and chaotic
contrasting heavy on our eyes
can you feel God too?

THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE



Sisters, associates, staff, and other partners in mission in front of The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Al.

CONVERSION BY IMMERSION

Many of us have either heard stories about or know young people who have gone on mission trips or summer immersion experiences to provide aid to struggling communities and become familiar with new cultures. We are also familiar with the idea of pilgrimages, which add a spiritual component to a journey or experience. But no matter how old or young we are, immersion experiences and pilgrimages can be transformative in many ways and often offer rich and challenging experiences.

Recently, through three of our mission partners – Catholic Mobilizing Network, FutureChurch, and Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities (FADICA) – many sisters, associates, and employees of the congregation became pilgrims by visiting Selma and Montgomery, Al.

While exploring the history of civil rights that began in Alabama and with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., participants were confronted with the challenges of honoring the racial dignity of all, and the realities of what life is still like in many parts of the South.

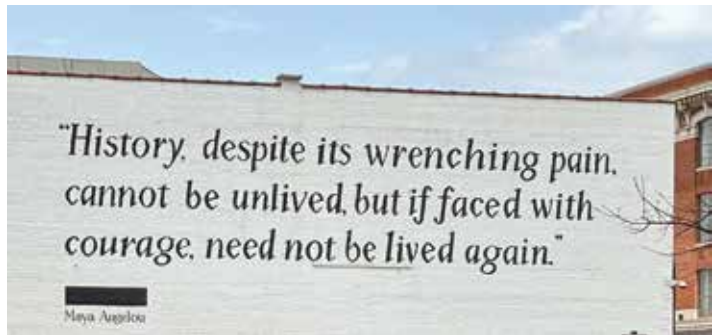
Starting in Montgomery, participants visited historic sites from the civil rights movement, beginning with the place where Rosa Parks boarded a segregated bus and claimed her seat. Visits were made to the Dexter Avenue Church, where Dr. King was pastor, and to the parsonage where he and his family lived. The time in Montgomery was highlighted by the three Legacy Sites: The Legacy Museum, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, and Freedom Monument Sculpture Park. The history of slavery in the United States, the reality of lynching, which continued until the 1950's, and depictions of the era offered through art and sculpture were shocking and emotional. These powerful, impressive, and upsetting spaces are spearheaded by the efforts of Bryan Stevenson, attorney, activist, and director of the Equal Justice Initiative, and author of the bestselling book *Just Mercy*.

Time in Selma was spent hearing stories from some who had marched over the Edmund Pettis Bridge in 1965, learning how poverty and gun violence plague the city in the present-day, and seeing how help is being offered to the most vulnerable in the community.

“We wanted to have as many of our ministry board members and Congregation of St. Joseph partners as possible come to Alabama and witness the history and the current state of racism and inequity,” said Theresa Denton, Executive Director of CSJ Ministries. >



Visitors to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice look up at the names of those who were lynched inscribed on each hanging column.



A quote by Maya Angelou on a building in downtown Montgomery.



Congregation of St. Joseph staff members Pat Milenius and Eileen Biehl, with Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, Executive Director of Catholic Mobilizing Network, at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Parsonage.



A sculpture depicting the final moments of the four young black girls killed in the Birmingham church bombing on September 15, 1963 at Kelly Ingram Park in Birmingham. The park and sculpture are across the street from the Baptist Church where the girls were killed.

“The experience was prayerful, intense, and extremely eye opening. Everyone on the trip was deeply affected. Our hope is that this experience will convert to actions that change our world,” Kascha Sanor, Director of Social and Environmental Justice for the congregation observed. “The experience of seeing the thousands of names of individuals who were lynched, despite constitutional amendments and laws, was devastating. It further underscores that uprooting racism requires both a conversion of heart and radical systemic and political change.”

Visiting these sacred sites and seeing what has – and has not – changed created an immersion experience that cracked open the realities of racism in the present day in ways that reading or watching something rarely do. The hope is that each participant was transformed by their pilgrimage and left Montgomery with fresh eyes and a willingness to open their heart to better ways of living in the complexities of our world. ■



Jade Spears, who is the Director of Mission Integration at St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge, La, points to her family names on a wall at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery.

HEART OF A POET



Montgomery Reflection

BY JADE SPEARS, CSJ ASSOCIATE

Montgomery made me see
clearly that
I am a descendant of St. Helena
parish’s red dirt,
the woods rife with lynching in
Wilkinson County,
and Pointe Coupee’s False River.

The plaque that bore the name
of my ancestor
forever etched
“Lewis Purnell 08-20-1896.”
Macy Gray’s strange fruit has
my blood.

I am all of my familial names.
Every one of them memorialized
in the National Monument to
Freedom.

Will and Susie’s great-great
granddaughter
a product of their 1895 wedding
and 15 children.

A long hard move to the “city”
that gave birth to the
paper bag test for admission
centuries of prayers on the
kneelers in the back of the
church,
and the Great Migration.

On paper, I seem generations
removed because people
only see
that “She comes from silver
spoon, golden rule, private
school
Never missed Sunday church.”

I am just
6 generations removed from
slavery,
3 generations removed from
overt threats of lynching,
2 generations removed from
unlawful segregation.

The Journey to Freedom is my
family’s struggle.

My roots are deep
in the Southern Louisiana marsh,
filled with centuries of
enslavement.

I am generations
of dreams come
to fruition through hard work
and prayers.

I am the everyday hope of my
ancestors.

Montgomery made me see that
while
Connor and Wallace may have
thought segregationists would
win,
we are all one.

Who is My NEIGHBOR?

BY SISTER ERIN MCDONALD, CSJ

When I was discerning my vocation to the Sisters of St. Joseph, it was common to see sisters serving as teachers, nurses, parish ministers, musicians, and social workers. Although it is true that many sisters live out our mission in these ways, there are also sisters working as lawyers, advocates, and representatives to the United Nations.

The Congregation of St. Joseph is a part of the Justice Coalition of Religious, a registered non-governmental organization (NGO) which provides sisters with a permanent presence at the United Nations (UN). This provides sisters with an opportunity to engage our mission in global spaces, foreign policy work, and in interactions with UN member states. It also provides a beautiful and humbling opportunity for our congregation to learn from global perspectives, diverse experiences, and international policy debates.

Each year, the congregation sends a small delegation of sisters and young adults to participate in one of two open sessions at the UN. This provides a great opportunity to expand the circle of people who can engage in and learn from the successes and challenges of our global family, and reflect on ways in which we are called to live out our mission in expansive spaces.

This year, two delegations attended separate open forums. The first included Sister Mary Jo Curtsinger along with young adults Jewel Yokie and Alix Basden, who participated in the Social and Economic Development Commission. The second delegation, which included



myself, along with young adults Esther Ngemba and Rosbel Brito, participated in the Commission on the Status of Women.

The inspiration to expand our UN delegation to include others who have some connection to the congregation emerged from both a commitment to engage with young adults and from the desire to invite a wider





Sister Mary Jo Curtsinger, Jewel Yokie, and Alix Basden outside the UN headquarters in New York.

circle of people to live into a faith that does justice. The young women who joined us this year are not members of our congregation, but individuals who are interested in learning more about our mission and how the Gospel call to love could be applied to global policy. These women are talented, energetic leaders who desire to grow in their faith and put their faith into action.

The two delegations spent many weeks preparing for this experience through formation in the mission of the congregation, learning the history of our presence at the United Nations, cultivating a greater understanding of current global contexts, and building community with one another. While at the UN, each group was immersed in the experiences of the global community through presentations, discussion groups, informal connections, and evening reflections. This is another example of sisters and young people accompanying each other in the hard and grace-filled work of being builders of unioning love in our local communities and in our wider world.

This is another example of sisters and young people accompanying each other in the hard and grace-filled work of being builders of unioning love in our local communities and in our wider world.

The delegation that participated in the Commission on the Status of Women heard representatives from Chad and Afghanistan talk about the impact of war on women, their maternal health, physical safety, and disruptions to their education and employment. Our delegation also participated in parallel events which happened outside the UN compound and were facilitated by global non-profit organizations, such as the Francesco Collaborative, which works to empower women economically through global partnerships, local leadership, and trainings. One speaker, Winnie Gor, said, “When women benefit, everyone



Sister Erin McDonald, Esther Ngemba, and Rosbel Brito.

benefits.” Winnie’s powerful words resonate across all communities, and her words echo the Gospel message from which the Sisters of St. Joseph mission flows, “that all may be one.” (John 17:21)

The United Nation’s Commission on the Status of Women was a powerful and complex week, enriched further by sharing it with our young companions. Their questions, reflections, and connections inspired some fantastic sharing. Each evening, as we shared a meal together, we reflected on the experiences of our day. Reflecting on the intersectionality of women, foreign policy, and our mission produced rich conversations on the need for policies both national and international that empower all people to advocate for social justice.

In God’s kingdom, none are excluded, and no one is without voice. Our time and presence at the UN among so many people from diverse cultures and countries broadened our global perspective and gave us hope. We left New York not only uplifted by hope, but with the challenge of consciously growing in our global understanding of, “who is my neighbor?” ■

Sister Erin McDonald, CSJ, currently serves as Digital Minister for the Congregation of St. Joseph. Prior to this, she served as University Minister for Service and Social Justice at the University of Detroit Mercy and as a case manager at Freedom House in Detroit where she worked with asylum seekers from all over the world. Sister Erin also spent two years ministering in Rwanda with Jesuit Refugee Services. She professed final vows with the congregation in 2019.

HEART OF A POET



Beholding with Respect

BY MARY JO HAZARD, CSJ ASSOCIATE

I am the tree outside our east window.

I am the leaves
glowing in the sunlight and dark in the shadows
blowing waving dancing like crazy
and also becoming still....present....
expectant....non-judgmental.

I am the branches
strong as sculptures
feeling heavy carrying so many deceptively
light leaves
yet solid....unshakeable....steady as Jesus’ Vine
and Branches.

I am all of this tree, this one right here outside our
east window.

I am the woods across the road
each oak and ash individually grounded
into Earth
and delighting in standing together as a
community of arbors.

I am the sky
the Chagall blue I see behind, anchoring the
leaves of green, red and brown
as well as the puffy white frolicking joyfully clouds.

I am the sunshine
giving and giving
asking for nothing in return
only delighting in the evolving life of all creation.

I and all of us are One in All, Christ as All.

Thanks be to God!



BEYOND THE HABIT

Podcast Continues to Inform, Include, and Inspire

During the most recent season of the Beyond the Habit Podcast, our cohosts, Sisters Erin McDonald, CSJ, and Colleen Gibson, SSJ, had more wonderful discussions with many interesting guests on a variety of timely and faith-filled topics. By committing to having honest conversations and being willing to share information about their own lives, the sisters continue to offer fresh perspectives that inform, challenge, and move beyond everyday assumptions of what it means to be Catholic. Check out some of the episodes here.



FINDING GOD IN ALL STORIES

Sisters Erin and Colleen interviewed Eric Clayton, author of the books *Cannonball Moments: Telling Your Story, Deepening Your Faith* and *My Life with the Jedi: The Spirituality of Star Wars*. They talked about what cannonball moments can look like, the importance of each of our own stories, and finding God in media, from *Star Wars* to *Ted Lasso*. “Why does Star Wars matter?” said Eric. “Well, it gives us this sense of mutual relationship and bringing up another generation and going on this journey deeper into ourselves...and that’s not just stuff that happens in a galaxy far, far away. That’s stuff that we do every day muddling through this invitation to find God in all things.”



OWNING IDENTITY

Sisters Erin and Colleen interviewed Dr. Tia Noelle Pratt, a sociologist of religion who is currently working on a book entitled *Faithful and Devoted: Racism and Identity in the African American Catholic Experience*. They talked about Tia's research on how systemic racism impacts African American Catholic identity, her work as the curator of the black Catholic syllabus, and about the importance of showing up to do the work. "I'm interviewing people for this book, and it's such a blessing to have people welcome me into their homes, into their lives, and oftentimes cook for me, treat me like family, tell me about their experiences, and be glad to do so, even these painful, difficult things," said Tia. "Often because nobody's ever asked them before. Nobody's ever asked them before what it's like to be black in this church, and they've been black and in this church their whole lives."

CALLED TO PREACH

Sisters Erin and Colleen interviewed Kayla August, a dynamic preacher and doctoral student of theology and education at Boston College. They talked about the importance of women preachers, how our stories can ignite something in others, and how making the world better starts with each of us. "Because we live in a Catholic Church where preaching is male dominated in many ways, we don't get to see women doing this thing that is innate in all of us," said Kayla. "I remember the first time I saw a woman preach and the way it felt in my body, and I remember being like, oh my God, that was the most beautiful thing I've ever heard."



BUILD BRIDGES NOT WALLS

Sisters Erin and Colleen interviewed Father David Neuhaus, a Jesuit priest who is a scholar and Professor of Theology in the Holy Land. Father David talked with the sisters about what life is like right now for him living in Jerusalem, the importance of building bridges instead of walls, and why we all must be connected to the suffering of the world. "I think that we make ourselves irrelevant if we are not on some very deep level, connected to the suffering in the world, witnessing to it, and purifying ourselves of how we contribute to that suffering," said Father David. "Only then can we start to become authentic people of Jesus's resurrection, proclaiming that the tomb is empty, that life is in abundance, because God has not allowed death to be the final moment."



Ready to start listening? Use this QR code or find us at BeyondTheHabitPod.com, or on Apple Podcast, Spotify, iHeart Radio, or anywhere you listen to podcasts!



Nine years ago, Pope Francis released *Laudato Si'*, an encyclical about how our consumeristic society is destroying Earth and eroding peace and stability. This important treatise on environmental justice, and injustice, seemed impossible to ignore.

AND YET...



Despite efforts supported by the Vatican, environmental groups, and initiatives around the world, *Laudato Si'* and Pope Francis's call for action remains almost completely ignored in Catholic parishes in the United States. Latest polling shows that more than 87% of U.S. Catholics have never heard about *Laudato Si'* in homilies preached in their parishes. This percentage represents approximately 45,000,000 people – and that is a lot of people who need to learn about, reflect on, and act on what *Laudato Si'*, and the recently released update to the encyclical, *Laudate Deum*, are demanding.

There are many critical issues facing the world and the United States right now. But, if attention is not paid to the environment and all that it is interconnected to, then some of these issues will only intensify. Weather events alone can have an effect on everything – from racism to immigration, fossil fuel reliance to corporate greed, and more. Every person's basic ability to earn a living is being affected by the catastrophic damage being done to Earth.

AND YET...

Where are our church leaders, our priests, and our bishops guiding us on this? As we celebrate the Season of Creation, which takes place each year from September 1 – October 4, we can remind each other of our ability to speak up and do something. The congregation has supported and continues to support groups and initiatives that work for



Solar arrays are present at and help power many of our centers, including the one above in Wichita.

Woman religious are often held up as some of the most involved advocates for climate crisis awareness and solutions. But we need everyone to join us. We need you.

environmental restoration and justice. Woman religious are often held up as some of the most involved advocates for climate crisis awareness and solutions. But we need everyone to join us. We need you.

As part of our congregation's commitment to *Laudato Si'* and the interconnectedness of all things, we have worked with many outstanding groups and projects. The congregation provides grants to many organizations, and there are also hundreds of sisters and associates involved within their communities in direct service and advocating for ecological justice. **AND YET...**

Climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe asserts in her book, *Saving Us*, that, "the most important thing that every single one of us can do about climate change is to talk about it – and use our voices to advocate for change within our spheres of influence. As a parent, child, family member or friend, student, employee, or boss, shareholder, stakeholder, member, or citizen: connecting with one another is how we change ourselves, how we change others, and ultimately, how we change the world. It's contagious."

So, the challenge ahead is clear. We need to talk about the environmental crisis in front of us. Maybe start with a friend. Maybe ask your parish priest what he thinks. Maybe pay attention to those around you who are willing to engage in this concern and support them and share their efforts with others.

There is hope that together we can raise our voices. And change is possible. But it is only possible if each of us accepts our responsibility – both our responsibility to each other and to Earth. Consider using the upcoming Season of Creation as a starting point for your personal reflection, and as an incentive to speak up and speak with others. Together, we can answer the cries of the poor and the cries of Earth. ■



Sisters Rose Roberts and Tami Schab with one of the congregation's many electric cars. Our centers are also equipped with re-charging stations and support many other environmentally responsible practices.

HEART OF A POET



The Walk

BY LINDA WARREN, CSJ ASSOCIATE

As I walk, I see
Trees so much older than me
The river older than the trees
The earth the oldest of all

As I began this walk, I wished
To be seen
To feel cherished
To be loved

I bow to the trees
So majestic
Never weeping for themselves
Offering shade for our eyes and a
home to birds, and squirrels

I bow to the river
Ever flowing
Never thinking of itself
Unrelenting in its journey to provide
water to the earth and her creatures

I bow to the earth
Regenerating
Adapting to survive
Supporting and nourishing all of us

I bow in shame at the
Neglect
Pollution
Abuse
Destruction
We Have caused

I pause
I smile
I say
To the trees, the river, the earth

I see you
I cherish you
I love you
We are one

Anniversary Celebration



This year, the Congregation of St. Joseph's founding community of La Grange Park is celebrating 125 years of service and presence in the greater Chicago area. On Sunday, June 9th, the congregation welcomed over 250 people to our center to enjoy an ice cream social in celebration of the landmark year. Visitors were able to learn more about the congregation, our history, and our ministries currently serving the Chicago area while visiting with our sisters, staff, and one another. Everyone also enjoyed an ice cream flavor made especially for the event, Jubilee Joy! We thank all who turned out to help us celebrate this milestone, and everyone who helped put this event together!





LEADERSHIP THROUGH MINISTRY

Summer Interns Learn While Making a Difference

This past summer, eight young adults from diverse walks of life joined the congregation's Leadership through Ministry Internship Program. Some hailing from big cities, others from the smallest of towns, the interns signed on as communication and marketing assistants, home visitors, summer camp directors, and advocates. Their hands-on experience at several organizations that are a part of our ministry network allowed them to see the impact of their contributions firsthand and deepened their appreciation for the significance of service and compassion.

In a world facing multiple challenges, the need for skilled community builders is more crucial than ever. The Leadership through Ministry Internship Program was designed to help young adults explore their interests, discover their passions, and make a positive impact in their communities.

Sister Pat Bergen, who coordinates the program and is pictured above with our 2024 interns, said, "We were thrilled to offer internships that allowed these young adults to learn, grow, and discover what truly matters to them. We are incredibly proud of the interns who shared their incredible gifts and spirits with us and our communities this summer."

Through programs like the Leadership through Ministry Internship Program, our congregation remains dedicated to building strong connections with various ministries and organizations and continues to nurture the next generation of compassionate and skilled leaders committed to making a difference in the world. ■

2024 CSJ Interns

Ben Tarnosky

Crofton, Md.
Catholic Mobilizing Network

Noelle Ward

Charles Town, Wv.
Catholic Mobilizing Network

Julia Dasaro

Bellmore State, Ny.
St. Joseph Retreat House/The Well

Anna White

Kermit, Wv.
ABLE Families

Katie Gozum

Aurora, Il.
The Well

Sophia Mikula

Elmhurst, Il.
Quinn Center

Karina Martinez

Valparaiso, In.
Quinn Center

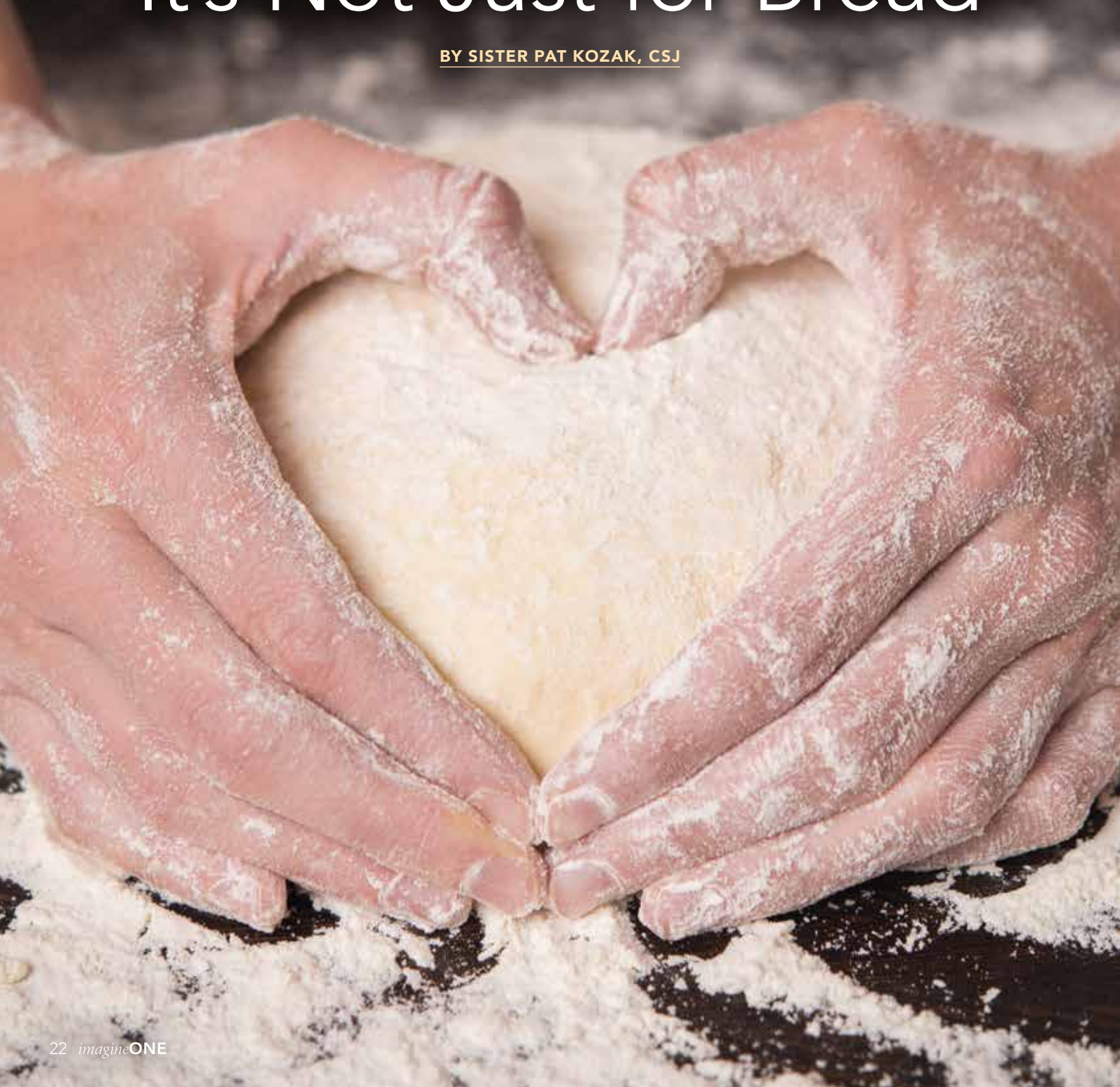
Itzel Martin

Chicago, Il.
Taller de Jose

Critical Yeast

It's Not Just for Bread

BY SISTER PAT KOZAK, CSJ



"Remember, no talking about religion or politics!"

How often have we heard that or said it, whether seriously or in jest? These days it's hard to go anywhere without some anxiety about the possibility of being drawn into a conversation that could veer into a topic that raises tension, anger, and regret.

It's a strange time we live in. Almost any topic can become political—from the air we breathe to the weather, from someone's health care to the cost of eggs. How do we navigate these times as people of faith who seek belonging and community? How do we live as people of faith who are called to form community with neighbors near and far, with people both similar and different from us? It's challenging because often even what we mean by "faith" and "faithfulness" can provoke an argument.

In an interview called, "The Fullness of Things," Krista Tippett interviewed the poet Jane Hirshfield for the podcast series *On Being*. Jane shared, "I have been given these years on this earth to accept what has come into my lifetime – wars, loves, trusts, betrayals, kindness. I must take them. I must find a way to live in this world. You can't refuse it. Along with the difficult is the radiant, the beautiful, the intimacy, with which each of us enters the life of all of us and figures out what is our conversation."

Perhaps it is the poetic language that touches me. Perhaps it is some small touch of wisdom, as I realize that much of our time

on Earth comes to us without any conscious choice. As the poet, we too must find a way to live in this world. And an essential part of life is figuring out the conversation that is needed at the moment. There is no doubt that adding to the hostile rhetoric, the energy of revenge and fear, will fail to move us toward the welcoming, forgiving community that the gospel proclaims. That first commitment is clear. Don't add to the meanness, the nastiness. That if it happened on a children's playground, we would have readily intervened and called a halt to it.

But this still leaves me uncertain about the "what" of the conversations we can have today, when so many topics are seemingly off-limits or too risky for a starting place. In the same interview with Krista, Jane Hirshfield continues, "What is our responsibility? What must be suffered? What can be changed? How can I live this in a way that lets me open my eyes the next day and also, perhaps, if I am lucky, can be of service." There is power in each of these questions. If we genuinely asked them of ourselves, we might find our way into conversations that are ironically both safe and brave. >



Where do we start when all around the atmosphere is charged with tension? There may be no better place to begin than where we are. Right here, with one person in your circle of connections. Put religion and politics aside. Ask about family and kids, about food and hobbies. There is a person underneath the political view and behind the religious dogma. Forget labels for the duration of your conversation – maybe longer if you can. This person deserves a name, not a label – and so do you. Listen to understand. Listen for common values, however minor at first. It takes time for trust to build. Slowly listen for ways you might be of help, or might receive it from them.

You won't do this perfectly. Don't expect to. Perfection is seriously overrated. Be grateful instead for "decent"; and celebrate the respect that you genuinely intend. And then try it again, a new person, a fresh commitment. Be vulnerable all over again. Be respectful, without exception.

Our rational selves may argue that these simple efforts cannot possibly make a difference. They will be a classic and naïve waste of time. We might argue that the country is too far into this divide for conversation

to change anything. And yet, history seems to suggest otherwise. So too does our belief in the virtue of hope. Every major transformation of thought, attitude, or culture has a beginning. It starts somewhere, however small. Perhaps always small.

Imagine the impact of yeast. In breadmaking, yeast is among the smallest, the least of the ingredients. And yet its size has nothing to do with its potential impact for change.

The author John Paul Lederach writes figuratively of the critical impact of yeast in a social movement in his book, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. "Critical yeast does not focus on producing large numbers of people," says Lederach. "Critical yeast asks the question . . .

who within a given setting, if brought together, would have the capacity to make things grow toward the desired end? The focus is not on the number, but on the quality



What is needed are people willing to be yeast, believing in yeast's capacity to expand exponentially from simple, respectful conversations to communities strong enough to host warmth and caring, laughter and love.

of people brought together, who represent unique linkages across a wide variety of sectors and locations.”

Who are these “yeast people”? Lederach goes on to say that individuals function as critical yeast because of who they are – people who care and are willing to risk, and because they have the capacity and willingness to connect with others. This capacity to network with others increases their impact exponentially.

Why can't you and I be critical yeast people? One person connecting to another. Starting small conversations, small units becoming exponentially larger, one conversation at a time. As we discover each other's humanity, we realize we share a common humanity. We find ourselves wanting to protect one another and, ultimately, wanting to protect and care for the well-being of all.

This may feel like such a small place to start and yet it is no small matter. It may also be our only real option. For certain, if we do not find a way

very soon to turn down the anger and mistrust, we may find the heat and anxiety will take the heart out of all of us, creating a society of suspicion and deepening isolation.

A different reality is possible. Hope insists on this, no matter the odds or the discouragement. What is needed are people willing to be yeast, believing in yeast's capacity to expand exponentially from simple, respectful conversations to communities strong enough to host warmth and caring, laughter and love. Imagine where this might lead. Small inroads at first. Small is still real. And in time, to a moment when the community is ready to gather for a feast, to gather for a bread breaking of biblical proportions. Hope says it is possible.

But regardless of that future day, it is today that matters. This choice before us to be yeast; this choice to begin a conversation; this choice to live in such a way that I might open my eyes tomorrow, and if I am lucky, might be of service. ■



Sister Pat Kozak, CSJ, is a facilitator and consultant to religious congregations, and a member of the board of Saint Joseph Academy in Cleveland. Previously, she served in congregational leadership, as a pastoral associate, in vocation and formation ministry, and in secondary and adult education.



BECOMING CRITICAL YEAST in a Divisive Time

What might it look like for each of us to become critical yeast? It might look and feel like a commitment to a profound spiritual practice, undertaken day after day, over and over again. A spiritual practice about meaningful human relationships. Below, we offer the five steps to starting this practice of becoming critical yeast.

- 1 Commit to creating warm and caring places** where respect for everyone is real, where people know they are welcome and safe. Don't let go of that steadfast respect, not even for an instant.
- 2 Start conversations** about simple things that open spaces. Conversations that are easy to enter, and comfortable to stay in.
- 3 Listen for common values** and shared interests. Be open to being surprised at what you share and where you are naturally different. Take your time. Find more examples of values you share; ask questions to understand the what and why of your differences.
- 4 Pay attention** to what's happening – really pay attention, and be grateful for it all.
- 5 Go one step further**—look for an opening to be of service—or receive service in turn. It could be offering a ride or trying a recipe; sharing a book or asking advice. Be indebted to one another for kindness, for care, for simple presence.

HEART OF A POET



Maranatha

BY SISTER CHRIS SCHENK, CSJ

You,
who make
wastelands bloom
and water flow
from stony parapets,
shower now,
this hard landscape
with freely given grace,
so poor
deserted
chosen ones,
can finally rest,
in amber waving fields
of tender justice.
You,
do now, something
new.

BOOKS ON HOPE AND HOPEFULNESS

"A single individual is enough for hope to exist. And that individual can be you."

Pope Francis

Here are some books suggested by sisters, staff and associates that might help you foster a spirit of hope and connection.

Just Mercy

by Bryan Stevenson

Call Us What We Carry

by Amanda Gorman

Braiding Sweetgrass

by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Man's Search for Meaning

by Viktor E. Frankl

Educated by Tara Westover

Possible: How We Survive (and Thrive) in an Age of Conflict by William Ury

His Truth is Marching On: John Lewis and the Power of Hope

by Jon Meacham

Hope in the Dark

by Rebecca Solnit

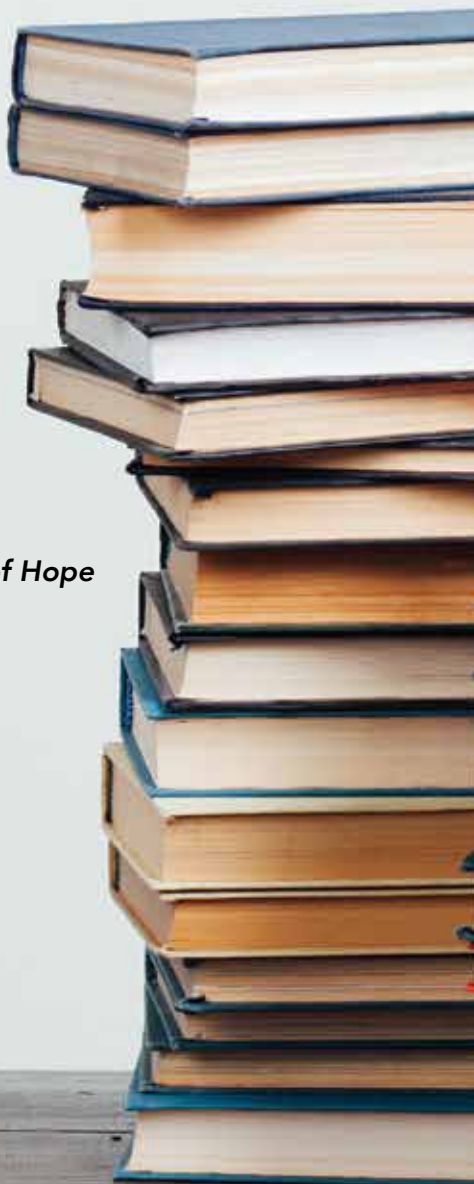
Do Walk by Libby DeLana

The Humans by Matt Haig

Wilding by Isabella Free

In the Sanctuary of Women

by Jan Richardson



Music to Pray With

How are we each called to connection, with each other, with creation, and with God? Below, we offer music to pray with that may help you reflect on God's love, stir you to honest conversation, consider your relationships, and find hope in our sometimes divisive world.

Don't Carry it All

The Decemberist

Nothing More (feat. Lily Costner)

The Alternate Routes

Glorious

Ella Henderson

Somewhere to Begin

Sara Thomsen

Mindful

Tow'rs

At the Same Time

Barbara Streisand

Benedictus

Simon & Garfunkel

Loved

Leslie Odom Jr.

Affair with the Moon

Lidia Solomon

Sing a Gentle Love Song

Kathy Sherman, CSJ

How Great (feat. Jay Electronica & My Cousin Nicole)

Chance the Rapper

Belovedness

Sarah Kroger

I'm A Star - From "Wish"

Wish Cast, Disney

I Am Willing

Holly Near

Bridge Over Troubled Water (feat. John Legend & Tori Kelly)

Jacob Collier

Sabbath

Krissy Nordhoff

Ubi Caritas

The Choir of the First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York

Banks

NEEDTOBREATHE

Look Up

Joy Olandokun



Scan the QR code to access this playlist on Spotify. You can also find it and all past playlists by visiting [Spotify.com](https://www.spotify.com) and searching "Congregation of St. Joseph."



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CELEBRATING the Season of Creation

Each year, from September 1st through October 4th, we celebrate the Season of Creation, a time for prayer and action to protect Earth, our common home. This year, the theme for the Season of Creation is, "To Hope and Act with Creation." As people of faith, we are called to raise up the hope inspired by our faith, the hope of the resurrection. This is not a hope without action but one embodied in concrete actions of prayer and preaching, service and solidarity.

This year, we invite you to join the Congregation of St. Joseph in celebrating the Season of Creation!

You can find daily posts on Facebook and Instagram which call us to pray, to contemplate our place in creation, and to consider ways we can take action for the good of one another and the planet.

To learn more, visit CSJoseph.org or visit SeasonOfCreation.org.



**TO HOPE AND ACT
WITH CREATION**
SEASON OF CREATION 2024