



JUST Love

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF PEACE, JUSTICE AND
ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT ELIZABETH

Brigid of Kildare, Model of Pleasure Activism

February 1 is the feast of St. Brigid of Kildare, patron, along with Saints Patrick and Colmcille, of Ireland. Brigid is also an inspiring patron for activists for justice, peace, and a flourishing Earth. She lived from around 451 – 525 and is associated with the monastic center she founded in Kildare. Much of her story is intermingled with mythic elements from the Celtic goddess of the same name, patron of poetry, smith work, and healing. As a girl Brigid engaged in a significant act of disarmament, selling her chieftain father's sword and giving the money to the poor. She was renowned as a peacemaker and was called, "the nun who turns back the tides of war." It was said that no fire she kindled could be used to forge a weapon but only instruments of farming or healing.

Brigid once asked a warlord for land for a convent and he cynically told her that she could have all the land



her cloak would cover. She threw down her cloak and it spread until it covered 5000 acres. Scoff if you will, but that land, known at the Curragh, is still the largest common green space in Europe where anyone is free to graze their cattle. We unwittingly honor Brigid in our celebration of Groundhog Day since her feast is the traditional first day of spring when animals begin to leave their burrows. Faithful to her roots in Celtic spirituality, Brigid's spirituality is very earthy. She would brew beer every Easter and give it to the poor. In a famous poem attributed to her, Brigid envisions heaven as a lake of beer where she will drink with the King of Heaven and his court for all eternity. Activist adrienne maree

brown writes about "pleasure activism." "Ultimately, pleasure activism is us learning to make justice and liberation the most pleasurable experiences we can have on this planet." May the example of Brigid inspire us to creative acts of disarmament; to fight against income inequality and in favor of the common good; to enjoy the pleasures of life and make them available to all.



We often think of chattel slavery as an atrocity confined to the American South. A new study by the Equal Justice

Institute headed by Bryan Stevenson, profiled in the 2019 film *Just Mercy*, reveals how much the Northern states were implicated in the Atlantic Slave Trade. Since many Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth and Seton Associates live and minister in New Jersey, let's take a look at our state's involvement in slavery. **Did you know that...**

- Jersey City was the site of a plantation? In 1630 the Dutch West India Company kidnapped and trafficked 50 African Americans and confined them there.
- From this beginning New Jersey began to codify slavery into law, e.g. in 1664 a law was passed that gave

land grants to white settlers for each enslaved person they trafficked into New Jersey. A 1713 law prohibited former slaves and Native Americans from owning land in New Jersey.

- Morris County, where the Sisters of Charity motherhouse is located, is named after a slave trafficker? The Tinton Manor Ironworks was a Monmouth County iron mine in which enslaved people worked. It was owned by Lewis Morris who trafficked slaves from his sugar plantation in Barbados and after whom Morris County is named.
- While NJ is one of the most racially diverse states it is also one of the most segregated. Our state's public school system remains the sixth most segregated in the nation.

The entire report can be read at this link <https://eji.org/reports/transatlantic-slave-trade-overview/>



Many religious Congregations had a custom in the past of choosing by lot a patron saint for the year whose life we would study and try to emulate. Here's an idea for 2023.

Choose an animal from the endangered species list https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/directory?direction=desc&sort=extinction_status

Try to learn as much as you can about that animal this year. Pray for it. Advocate for its well-being. Mourn what will be lost if this species goes extinct.

Happy 10th Birthday to JustLove!

Here's a photo of the very first issue of *JustLove*, February 2013. And here's what readers of *JustLove* have shared about our publication:

"The content and name of *JustLove* are so informative and attractive. I continue to send it to newer employees of St. Joseph's Health to help them 'catch our spirit.' Ten years of what and how to entice and inform readers in quite an accomplishment." ~Sr. Mary Pauline Hogan, SC

"*JustLove* is like a spa day for the soul. It beckons contemplative space where the soul and being have breath and space to allow love, peace, grace, serenity, and action to take root." ~Donna Fico

"I appreciate the concise content of *JustLove* and its attractive layout. Receiving it at the end of one calendar month is helpful, especially with the dates to remember and upon which to reflect for the upcoming month. It's nice that the image of the

pelican at the top of the first page changes from month to month."

~Sr. Noreen Neary, SC

"Congratulations!

As someone who has received all 120 issues, I can honestly say that there are few publications which are as consistently timely as they are beautifully designed

and masterfully written. To have a resource that highlights important peace and justice matters while also providing new, unknown information is invaluable to my personal spiritual and practical application." ~Daniel Francis



"You keep us current whether we want to be or not! Thanks so much, and congrats for all the work represented in 10 years of uninterrupted programming and service! Arriba!" ~Dorothy Calvani

JPIC Dates to Commemorate in February

February is Black History Month <https://centerracialjustice.org/resources/black-history-month-resource-guide-for-educators-and-families/>

1 Feast of St. Brigid of Kildare. The "nun who turned back the tides of war." <https://solasbhride.ie/>

2 Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life – Make a litany of religious who were activists for peace, justice, Earth and pray it.

8 Feast of St. Josephine Bakhita. Educate about human trafficking by referring people to the resources on the SC website <https://www.scnj.org/peace-justice-ecological-integrity>

14 St. Valentine's Day. Make sure you give chocolates that are Fair Trade <https://shop.equalexchange.coop/collections/chocolate>

22 Anniversary of the execution of Sophie and Hans Scholl (1943), leaders of the White Rose movement of resistance to Hitler. "I will cling to the rope God has thrown me in Jesus Christ, even when my numb hands can no longer feel it." ~Sophie Scholl