



# 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

## Sisters' History is Women's History

The sadly defunct Catholic magazine, *The Critic*, was renowned for its cartoons. One showed two nuns fallen out of a row boat and flailing for their lives. Their Mother Superior on the beach points to one of them and says to the lifeguard, "Save her. She just got her Ph.D.!" Pre-Vatican II religious life for women has the reputation, somewhat deserved, for rigor and repression. But equally true is that religious life offered women a context in which to develop their talents and flourish as did very few other institutions of American society of the period. Even though nuns were the first women college presidents, hospital CEO's, pioneers in education and social service, they receive little mention in standard histories of women's accomplishments. March is Women's History Month and we recall that Sisters' History is Women's History. March *JustLove* celebrates three history-making Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth.

### Mother Mary Xavier

**Mehegan** (1825-1915) Though she had little formal education herself, Mother Xavier placed a high priority on the education of women. In 1899, he established, the College of St. Elizabeth, the first New Jersey degree granting college for women and one of the first Catholic women's colleges. At a time when women's colleges were little more than finishing schools, the College of Saint Elizabeth had a rigorous academic curriculum that included Latin and another foreign language, the sciences, economics, and philosophy. Numerous studies have shown that the most effective way to improve social and economic conditions in an underdeveloped country is to promote the education of women. The Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth continue to promote the education of women in their third century.



**Sister Helen Angela Dorety** (+1951) was the first sister in the United States to receive a doctoral degree; in botany, summa cum laude, from the prestigious University of

Chicago. Since Catholic colleges with doctoral programs refused to admit women, sisters were often "forced" to pursue higher studies at far superior secular institutions. An alumna of the Class of 1912 of the College of St. Elizabeth described one of Sr. Helen Angela's botany trips, "She was always the lead, her veil catching on the underbrush, her habit covered with burrs, but darting here and there to show us some formation with its attendant vegetation and growth. No hill was too steep for her, no ravine too deep – we must see it all." Sister Helen Angela was a practitioner of what we now call "bioregionalism." We can't love Earth in the abstract. We must know and love the place we live and be in communion with its land, water, and creatures. May the example of Sr. Helen Angela inspire us "to see it all."



### Sister Louis Marie Bryan

(+2012), a native of St. Thomas, the Virgin Islands, was one of the founding members of the Black Sisters Conference and the 1990 recipient of their Harriet Tubman Award given to a woman religious who was, like Tubman, "a Moses to her people." If the contribution of women religious to history is understudied, all the more so the contributions of African American women religious. Sr. Louis Marie appears in the forthcoming volume *Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle* by Shannon Dee Williams. You can read the introduction to the book here [https://www.dukeupress.edu/Assets/PubMaterials/978-1-4780-1820-9\\_601.pdf](https://www.dukeupress.edu/Assets/PubMaterials/978-1-4780-1820-9_601.pdf) May the example of Sr. Louis Marie inspire us to be tireless in opposing America's original sin of racism.





This month concludes the seven month ZOOM series *A Journey to Integral Ecology: The Seven Goals of the Laudato Si' Action Platform*. Sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of New York, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, and ROAR (Religious Organizations Along the River), the series was a great success drawing 70-100 participants to each session from across the USA and a few from other countries as well and hundreds of other viewers on YouTube. If you missed a session or would like to see one again, the entire series can be viewed here [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCImrLRD1M\\_xE-oebX3bfD5g](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCImrLRD1M_xE-oebX3bfD5g)



At this link you can sign up for the Ignatian Solidarity Network's *Laudato Si' Lent: Living the Laudato Si' Action Platform During Lent*. Each week, you will receive an email with a brief explanation of one LSAP goal along with easy, medium, and hard practical suggestions for ways you can implement the goal personally or collectively! Sign up here: [https://ignatiansolidarity.net/ignatian-carbon-challenge/laudato-si-lent/?utm\\_source=igsol.net&utm\\_medium=urlshortener#toggle-id-1](https://ignatiansolidarity.net/ignatian-carbon-challenge/laudato-si-lent/?utm_source=igsol.net&utm_medium=urlshortener#toggle-id-1)



## Dates to Remember in March

**2 Ash Wednesday** – How will the observance of Lent deepen your commitment to the gospel of justice, peace, and the flourishing of Earth?

**10 The death of Harriet Tubman (+1913)** “If you hear the dogs, keep going. If you see the torches in the woods, keep going. If there’s shouting after you, keep going. Don’t ever stop. Keep going. If you want a taste of freedom, keep going.”

**12 Feast of Blessed Rutilio Grande, SJ. Martyr of El Salvador**, “The Gospel has to grow little feet.”

**15 International Day Against Police Brutality** Sign up for an ACLU course on race and policing [www.aclu.org/policing-course](http://www.aclu.org/policing-course)

**17** As you enjoy your soda bread on the feast of St. Patrick, recall that Patrick was a victim of human trafficking and pray for the victims of modern-day slavery.

**19 Feast of St. Joseph** “Joseph reminds each of us to consider important what others discard. In this sense he is truly a master of the essential: he reminds us that what truly matters does not attract our attention, but requires patient discernment to be discovered and appreciated.” Pope Francis

**22 World Water Day** – Drink a glass of water slowly and reverently with gratitude for the gift of potable water. Pray and act for those who do not have access.

**24 Feast of St. Oscar Romero** “Whoever tortures a human being, whoever abuses a human being, whoever outrages a human being, abuses God’s image.”

**25 Feast of the Annunciation** – on this day the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul all over the world renew their annual vows. Write a vow today that expresses your commitment to peace, justice, Earth.