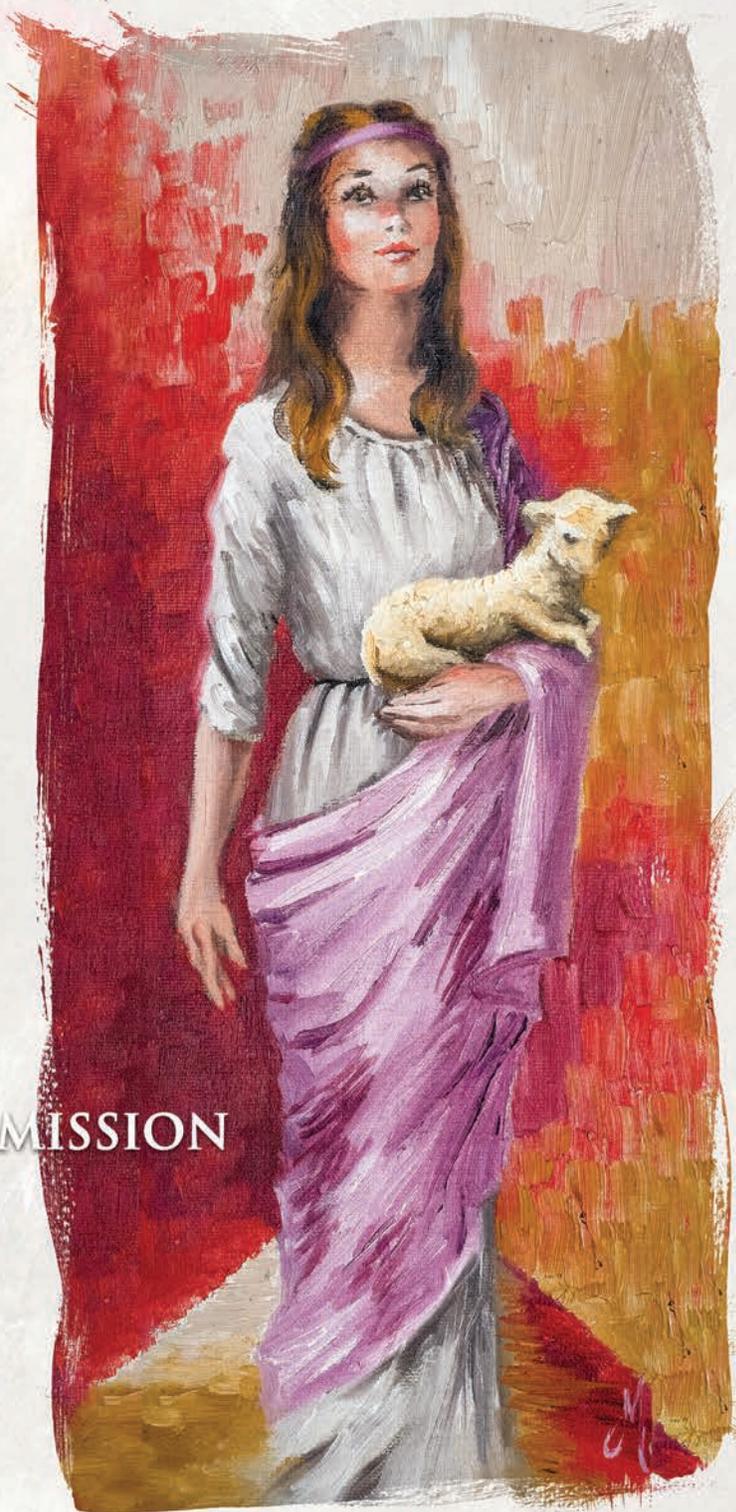


REFLECTIONS
&
Connections

FEBRUARY 2026



STORIES OF MISSION
& MINISTRY



CSA

Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
Promoting Justice, Building Community

Dear Friends,

As you will read in the pages that follow, a large focus for CSA in 2026 is unity and mercy. Within the first 30 days of the year, we have already seen these themes exemplified many times.

Women religious from across the United States have unified their voice at a critical moment in our country and across our world make visible the Gospel through advocacy for nonviolent paths that uphold human rights, protect democratic processes, and honor the dignity of life at every stage. Within our own community, we embody this message by standing with those who are vulnerable.

The power and beauty of a community coming together to meet the needs of the most vulnerable were evident in early January when temperatures in the city of Fond du Lac plunged as low as -45 degrees Fahrenheit. The St. Katharine Drexel Shelter knowing that those currently living out on the streets would be needing shelter put out a call for supplies that would be needed to serve the influx of clients.

The Fond du lac community responded quickly and generously. The Congregation of St. Agnes, SSM Health, many businesses, organizations, churches, agencies and individuals volunteered—donating meals, blankets, bedding, time and talent to honor and serve their brothers and sisters.



Pictured L to R: Sisters Sharon Pollnow, General Superior; Lael Niblick, General Councilor; Madeline Gianforte, General Councilor; and Peg Spindler, General Vicar

This truly was an act of mercy in a spontaneous moment where there was great need.

As each of us engages in acts of mercy, let us unite with one another and be a transformative presence rooted in prayer and concrete actions of love and mercy.

With grateful hearts,

Sisters Sharon Pollnow, Peg Spindler, Madeline Gianforte, and Lael Niblick

CSA General Council

ON THE COVER: The congregation celebrated the Feast of St. Agnes on January 21.

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Editorial Board Members:

Sister Jeremy Quinn, Sister Jean Perry, Dusty Krikau, and Mary Christopherson

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US at 250

TO FORM A MORE PERFECT UNION

The Congregation of Sisters of Saint Agnes is pleased to present a series on the theme “To Form a More Perfect Union: Division and Unity in the US at 250”. This three-part series will take place at the Prairie Theater and Event Center, in Fond du Lac, WI.

Speakers will explore the enduring principles of the U.S. Constitution and their relevance to today’s challenges. From the roots of representative democracy to the evolving meaning of liberty and justice, each of the three lectures will aim to deepen public understanding and inspire constructive engagement.

The first session will take place on Thursday, April 23. Janine Geske, former justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, will speak about the constitutional history of unity in this country. Then, on September 17, Constitution Day, Sister Dianne Bergant, CSA, will talk about unity and diversity from a theological perspective. A third speaker will be announced for October pending confirmation.



Janine Geske



Dianne Bergant

Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. for all speakers. Formal remarks will begin at 6:00 p.m. with opportunities for questions from the audience. Afterward, attendees are invited to join a heavy hors d'oeuvres reception with the speaker in The Winnebago Room.

A livestream will also be available on the CSA YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/@csasisters

There is no cost to attend any of the events, but your advance registration is appreciated to help us plan. Tickets are available at csasisters.org.



USat250



250 Acts of Mercy

Our Commitment

14 congregations of women religious throughout the state of Wisconsin have committed to spreading hope throughout the country. Each congregation has pledged to do 250 Acts of Mercy throughout 2026. This commitment is in honor of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and is aimed at manifesting God's mercy and forming a "more perfect union" through corporal and spiritual acts of mercy.

What Is Mercy?

Pope Francis reminded us in the 2016 Jubilee of Mercy, "Mercy is not an abstraction but a lifestyle consisting in concrete gestures rather than mere words: reaching out and touching others and institutionalizing the works of mercy."

In Matthew 25, Jesus provides us with a model of some of those "concrete gestures:"

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."
– Matthew 25:35-36

This list of actions is a keen reminder that mercy impacts physical and emotional well-being and offers the gift of hope and renewed dignity to the recipient. Indeed, the Catechism of the Catholic Church #2447 defines the Works of Mercy as charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his or her spiritual and bodily necessities.

Through their very nature, these acts create relationships across boundaries. Mercy brings unity and togetherness to otherwise divisive environments, helping the giver and the receiver understand one another's points of view in a new way.



Join the
Challenge

How Will CSA Manifest Mercy?

St. Teresa of Avila challenges us to remember that “Christ has no body on Earth but ours, no hands, but ours, no feet, but ours...” The Sisters of St. Agnes regularly participate in the mission of Christ through individual acts of mercy in many ways such as offering prayer intentions during Mass, leading initiatives to support the unhoused, participating in community “drives” for clothing and other necessities, providing spiritual direction, being present with the dying, caring for water resources, and preparing food for those in need. On a congregational level, CSA shares the blessings our partners in ministry have provided to us through donations to public services who are feeding the hungry and sheltering the homeless firsthand.

This new commitment offers an opportunity to renew the intention behind these acts that are often a natural part of daily life.

An Invitation

CSA warmly invites sisters, associates, and other partners in ministry to join us and the other 13 participating congregations in meeting our goal. We hope you will share your acts of mercy with us throughout the year, no matter how large or small.

Corporal Works of Mercy:

Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead.

Spiritual Works of Mercy:

Teach others about God and the Faith, counsel the doubtful, encourage reconciliation with God and others, bear wrongs patiently, forgive offenses willingly, comfort the afflicted, pray for the living and the dead.

Contemporary corporal and spiritual acts of mercy involve modernizing traditional charitable practices to meet current needs, such as donating to food banks (feeding the hungry) and mentoring – sharing our knowledge, skills, and perspectives with someone less experienced (instructing).

Which corporal works of mercy might you be called to practice? Which spiritual works of mercy?

We are women who believe the United States needs to...

Sisters Affirm Choosing *Nonviolence* as Gospel Witness

The Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes (CSA) are women religious who have lost three of our own to murderous violence. We have written our own statement on nonviolence signed by all our sisters and associates. We are absolutely appalled by the violence we have witnessed in Minnesota, wrought by agents of our own federal government. We cannot be silent in the face of such violent cruelty and lawlessness, both because it defies everything our Constitution stands for and because it denies the very humanity of certain targeted groups of people. As our Native American brothers and sisters remind us, “No one is illegal on stolen land.” So, we, the leadership of the Sisters of St. Agnes, embrace the Leadership Conference of Women Religious’ Statement Choosing Nonviolence as Gospel Witness wholeheartedly, standing with the people of Minnesota and across the country in Gospel love, hoping for more humane and comprehensive ways of solving our immigration issues.

That statement reads:

At this moment in history, when fear is normalized, violence is amplified, and democratic life is under strain in the United States and across the world, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) raises a clear and unwavering moral voice: violence is not the Gospel response.

The way of Jesus calls us to a love that refuses harm, rejects domination, and insists on the dignity of every person. Love demands more than silence or neutrality. It requires truth-telling, moral courage, and a willingness to stand publicly with those whose lives and rights are threatened. Nonviolence is not passivity; it is disciplined, courageous action rooted in justice and hope.

Across the globe and within our own communities — from Ukraine to Minneapolis — we see the tragic consequences of aggression. Violence does not resolve conflict or restore peace; it deepens wounds and multiplies suffering. Nonviolence, by contrast, requires profound interior strength and sustained commitment. It must be cultivated personally and communally, and practiced intentionally within social, political, and global systems.

Women religious have long understood this truth through lived experience. Since arriving in what would become the United States in 1727, congregations of women religious have participated in the shaping of this nation through education, healthcare, advocacy, and service to those most at risk. Throughout the evolving life of this democracy, women religious have sought to embody gospel values in public life, especially in times of moral crisis.

In continuity with this witness, we unequivocally denounce the use of violence in any form. We call upon individuals and communities — and especially those entrusted with leadership in local, state, and federal government — to choose paths that uphold human rights, protect democratic processes, and honor the dignity of life at every stage.

In these times, the members of LCWR commit to a public, prophetic presence rooted in prayer and expressed through concrete action. We pledge to make visible the Gospel through advocacy for nonviolence, racial justice, humane immigration policies, and care for our common home. Our hope does not rest in force or fear, but in the transformative power of love lived boldly and together.

In Memoriam...

Walking with God



Sister Marie Scott, CSA

Sister Marie Scott, CSA, daughter of Ruth Ann Scott, was born September 11, 1949, in Gary, Indiana. As an infant, Marie was adopted by her grandparents and attended St. Mary's School and the public high school in Crown Point, Indiana. After graduation, she worked for nine years as a lab technician at U.S. Steel in Gary, Indiana. Later, as a volunteer teacher of English as a second language to Vietnamese children at St. Mary's Parish in Crown Point, Marie reconnected with the Sisters of St. Agnes, her teachers in grade school. The sisters invited Marie to discern a vocation to religious life and to accompany them in summer ministry in New Mexico. She accepted both invitations and by July 1977 she had entered St. Agnes Convent in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. In July 1981, Sister Marie professed her vows as a Sister of St. Agnes.

Throughout her life, Marie prepared well for active ministry. To support both professional and congregational responsibilities, she acquired Bachelor and Master academic degrees. She served successfully as high school and college teacher, campus minister, pastoral or spiritual companion, and always a social justice activist. In addition, Sister Marie served in various community roles within the congregation as vocation director, novice director, and regional coordinator for sisters in the U.S. However, in 2020 health issues began to surface and Sister Marie was surrounded with the presence and support of many Sisters and friends. In March 2023, she was admitted to St. Francis Home in Fond du Lac and received loving care until her death on October 30, 2025.



Sister Jovita Winkel, CSA

Sister Jovita Winkel, CSA, formerly Sister Eugene, died December 29, 2025, at SSM Health St. Agnes Hospital, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. She was born March 4, 1934, in Marytown, Wisconsin, where she grew up on the family farm with her brother and two sisters. She attended St. Mary's Elementary School in Marytown and graduated from St. Mary Springs Academy in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. After high school, while she was employed by a local dentist, Jovita began to seriously consider a vocation to religious life. On January 20, 1956, she entered St. Agnes Convent in Fond du Lac, and on August 15, 1958, made her first profession of vows as Sister Eugene.

Sister Jovita earned a B.S. in Elementary Education from Marian College, Fond du Lac, and an M.S. in Elementary Education from the University of St. Francis, Ft. Wayne, Indiana. Throughout her years of ministry as teacher, principal, director of religious education, and pastoral minister, she enriched her skills by participating in numerous workshops, classes, and conferences. She served faithfully in parishes and schools in towns and rural areas in the dioceses of Milwaukee, Green Bay, Madison, and Superior in Wisconsin, and in the diocese of Gary in Indiana. Sister Jovita also served in CSA leadership positions, seven years as apostolic councilor and a four-year elected term as general councilor for the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes.

In 2021, Sister Jovita retired to Nazareth Court and Center in Fond du Lac where she shared life with the sisters in community, prayer, and her many stories until her death in 2025.



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Or call **920-907-2300**



Breakfast with Women: Energizing Spirits will be held on March 5, 2026, in Fond du Lac, WI, in downtown's historic Hotel Retlaw. Sister Anita Henning, CSA, will guide attendees to reflect on and record their spiritual legacies. This reflection has been shown to bolster meaning, dignity, hope, and agency.

Check-in and breakfast will be available at 7:30 a.m. The event will start promptly at 8:15 a.m., with presentation and discussion until 9:30. Attendees are welcome to stay for continued conversation with others until 10:00 a.m.

Purchase your ticket for \$15 before March 1.

Details and Tickets: **www.csasisters.org/breakfast**