

Serenity

January 2012 Little Sisters of the Poor no. 154



Firm in the faith
Madrid: WYD 2011



Our Mission

As Little Sisters of the Poor, we care for the elderly poor in the spirit of humble service we have received from St. Jeanne Jugan. We welcome the elderly as we would Jesus Christ himself and serve them with love and respect until God calls them to himself.

Cover photos
Front cover: Little Sisters and young people exude the joy of World Youth Day in Madrid.

Back inside cover: Jeanne Jugan and Elders, icon by George and Sergio Pinecross; photo by Ed Pedi.

Back cover: Residents in San Isidro, Argentina, celebrate their new quicho; Jessica Herrera, A.J.J., a Little Sister and novices participate in WYD in Madrid.

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LSP 2011 World Tour

OUR 2011 ISSUES OF *SERENITY* focused on several themes relevant to our apostolate, including the creative pursuits of the elderly and our ministry with the dying. With this issue we fasten our seat belts and take off on a spirited world tour. We'll travel from Madrid, Spain to New York, and from South America to Australia, as we look back on some of the big events of 2011.

For much of the year our homes around the world turned their attention to Spain, as Little Sisters and elderly alike lent the support of their prayers to the world's youth. The first-ever WYD Grandparents Club drew our Residents into the natural—and supernatural—enthusiasm of this event and made them more aware of the power of their prayers and the value of their wisdom and example.

At the same time, our Little Sisters in South America have been observing a jubilee year as they celebrated the 125th anniversary of the Congregation's arrival in Latin America. Even as they celebrated a rich history, they looked toward the future. Undeterred by the challenges associated with the rebuilding of two homes destroyed by the 2010 earthquake, they have also been busy with the construction of our first home in Peru.

During World Youth Day Pope Benedict XVI encouraged young people to strive for the virtues they will need to live their faith in today's world. These are the same virtues that enable our Little Sisters around the globe to continue the mission and spirit of Saint Jeanne Jugan in the midst of many challenges—faith and trust in Providence, patience, meekness, joy in self-giving and eagerness to do God's will. "To love means to serve," the Pope said, "and service increases love." This is what we experience each day! 



Traveling on this journey together: Elders participate in WYD 2011

WHEN WORLD YOUTH CAME TO AMERICA IN 1993, our U.S. communities participated by supporting pilgrims from their dioceses and sending a group of young Little Sisters to Denver to witness among the young. Since then World Youth Day has evolved, and so has the participation of the Congregation in this life-changing event. This summer's celebration in Madrid saw an unprecedented level of involvement on the part of our homes in Spain and Portugal. The Little Sisters, Residents and our many collaborators began by praying for the young pilgrims who would trek across their country. With unbounded enthusiasm, ingenuity and material support from many sources, they offered hospitality to hundreds of youth from dozens of countries during the days in the dioceses.

Sister Peter Marie, an American Little Sister living in Los Molinos, was involved in all the WYD activities and sent us an account of how the elderly of her home and throughout Spain participated in World Youth Day:

"In Sydney in 2008 Pope Benedict XVI announced that in 2011 World Youth Day would be held in Madrid. By 2009, groups had already started asking us for hospitality, and we began in earnest to organize our participation.

Especially during this last year of preparation, the Residents took to heart the petition to pray for the youth who would be coming to Madrid. In Los Molinos, where I live, the fifth decade of the daily rosary was always for WYD. Early on we all learned the official WYD hymn; we still sing it from time to time in the chapel!

Residents and Little Sisters also distributed leaflets permitting them to 'Adopt a Youth in Prayer.' The text of the leaflet read

"We have been making preparations for the past year to welcome young people. It's true that we are elderly, but we are doing this with great joy and hope. All of us, the Residents and the Little Sisters, members of the Association Jeanne Jugan and volunteers, have been working together for this. Our corridors are decorated with the WYD colors and we've done this all ourselves. During a prayer vigil, we distributed little papers with the name of a young person, and we have promised to offer our prayers and little sacrifices for him/her. You cannot imagine the responses that we have received! We are praying intensely so that all that the youth experience in Madrid will be rooted in their hearts."

*– letter from the Residents of Madrid to their archbishop,
Cardinal Antonio María Rouco Varela*

"I thank you sincerely for all the material and spiritual support that the Residents at the home of the Little Sisters of the Poor and the personnel are contributing to WYD, with so many sacrifices and so much enthusiasm. Please know that this is very valuable in God's eyes. I assure you of my affection and my blessing."

– the Cardinal's response

(photo: Residents ready to welcome pilgrims in Madrid)

as follows: 'We support you by our prayer. The elderly and the Little Sisters of the Poor hope all young people will encounter Christ and root their hearts in him. We want to pray for you, and help you in this way to live WYD in depth, in order to discern what the Lord wants of you. We ask for you the strength to give yourselves to him without reserve. A Resident or a Little Sister will be praying for you during this time of grace. From now on we will be traveling on this journey together!' In a few cases, the Residents actually got to meet the young person for whom they were praying during the days in the dioceses.

The Residents and Little Sisters also had sales in order to raise funds for the youth who could not afford to pay their way. Many people did not buy anything, but gave a donation for this cause.

All of the homes in Spain and Portugal were involved in the reception of youth from all over the world. Many homes offered hospitality to youth who came to Spain early to participate in the days in the dioceses, and four homes (Madrid Saint Joseph, Madrid San Louis, Los Molinos and Segovia) lodged youth during WYD.

Generally the Residents were involved in the reception of the youth when they arrived, and also were there when WYD ended and it was time to leave. Their participation was simple and heartfelt as they received the youth into their home. There were many opportunities to have Mass or prayer together, and some of the young people sang, performed cultural dances, or organized other animation for the Residents. Language was no barrier for the youth and the Residents to communicate, no matter what continent the young people came from!

One unique aspect of WYD in Madrid was the very large number of young volunteers. In one of our homes in Madrid they took care of a lot of the cleaning and organizing of the pilgrims, and hopefully will continue their contact with the home. In Los Molinos we welcomed a group of volunteers from Poland, Mexico and the Czech Republic who were having their training session nearby a week before WYD. It seemed as if these young people had been together all their lives, despite having come from countries in two different

(continued on page 8)



Language no barrier!

Top: Little Sisters from Plasencia with pilgrims from Honduras.

Middle: Residents from Madrid engage with young women from Kenya and South Korea.

Left: A Resident of Los Molinos converses with two members of the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal from the United States who were part of the CMSWR delegation.



Porto: 40 Taiwanese youth accompanied by a Spiritan missionary priest visited our home.

Salamanca: 10 Koreans stayed at the home; one day they were joined by 80 others for a giant paella!

Segovia: The Little Sisters welcomed two groups of youth from Madagascar for the day. 195 Austrians came for Eucharistic adoration on 2 different days.

Los Molinos: Our Little Sisters hosted 80 youth volunteers from Mexico and several European countries, along with 60 American women religious representing CMSWR.

Plasencia: A group of 19 pilgrims from Honduras lodged at the home, arriving at midnight after many delays. The Little Sisters, Residents and staff stayed up to greet them, exclaiming, "We welcome the Pope's youth to Spain!"

Caceres: 40 Filipinos stayed at the home, participating in a pilgrimage to Fatima. A group of youth from Malawi visited and greeted the Residents.

Seville: 18 young Koreans lodged at the home; 150 Brazilians celebrated the Eucharist in the home's chapel.

Puerto de Santa Maria: The home was a meeting point for 100 youth from Guatemala and El Salvador.

Malaga: A group from France stayed for a few days; 60 youth from Germany, Lithuania and Ecuador visited for the day.

Pamplona: a group of German and Latvian youth found lodging at the home.

Manresa: Dressed in a medieval costume, a Resident danced the Sardana to welcome a large group from Toulouse, France.

Lerida: 18 Austrians stayed for 4 days; 60 Polish and Lithuanian youth visited for several hours.

Madrid: Our 2 houses in this city welcomed 170 young people, priests and men and women religious from the Emmanuel Community, 80 French pilgrims, and several Little Sisters, novices and a postulant from our motherhouse. Many of the pilgrims slept in the garden!

Granada: The Little Sisters welcomed 27 youth, from different countries, from the Ignatian Youth Network. Each Resident was able to meet the young person for whom they had been praying.

Vic: 51 young people from Versailles, France, stayed at the home, leaving behind one of their T-shirts autographed by the group.

Gerona: 125 Italians stayed at the home and 250 more came for Mass, together with their bishops.

Barcelona: 22 Americans from the Militia of the Immaculata, 22 girls from Uruguay and 37 youth from Guatemala stayed at our home. 100 Parisians also dropped by for Mass.

Reus: A group of disabled young people from Eastern Europe lodged at the home, while a large group of Belgians spent a day with the Sisters.

Palma de Mallorca: A group of 50 Canadians stayed at the home, volunteering in various areas.

A great multitude, which no one could count!

The Little Sisters welcome youth too numerous to count, from all over the world.

parts of the world. The young Poles spoke multiple languages and so even though they could not all speak Spanish, we were able to communicate with them in French or English.

After the pilgrim backpacks had been distributed to all the youth passing through our home, we organized a mini-WYD for our Residents with the leftovers. To the strains of the WYD hymn, all of them received the backpack with the Australian hat, the Gospel of St. Matthew in six languages, the T-shirt and the cross. They are still wearing the cross, as are many people we encounter around town! The Residents followed everything that was on television, with small home-made Vatican flags in hand; the meal schedule was adapted to the programming.”

In addition to the initiatives described by Sister Peter Marie, we learned that a large team of Little Sisters, Residents, employees and Association members stitched together aprons bearing the WYD Madrid logo. These were worn by all the volunteers who served in our homes, including the Residents. Rosary bracelets with a small medal of St. Jeanne Jugan were assembled in many homes and distributed to all the pilgrims who passed through the homes or visited our vocation booth in Madrid.

In some cases groups larger than planned arrived; at times pilgrims showed up entirely unexpectedly—but in each case a bit more food or space for sleeping was found. In Plasencia the Residents and Little Sisters stayed up past midnight to welcome a group of Hondurans exhausted from their long journey and many layovers. This group left behind souvenirs from their country and touching thank-you notes. One young woman wrote, “When I arrived in Spain, I wondered which family would be welcoming me. Now I’m sure that I have met the best family. From the very first moment, you welcomed me with open arms, with a lovely smile and lots of love.”

Another added, “What a blessing to have been welcomed to this house so filled with the Lord’s love! I am very grateful to God for having offered me the opportunity to know you. Seeing the way you serve, I realize that it is Christ who is urging you on to serve the elderly with dignity. Thank you for having opened the doors for us,



Residents in Los Molinos model the official WYD gear supplied to pilgrims, and the WYD aprons worn by all those who volunteered in the home, including this enthusiastic Resident (left).

and especially your hearts. ... I am going back to Honduras with fond memories of you and I will keep you in my prayers.”

Realizing the potential impact of WYD on young lives, the Little Sisters spared no effort in opening their doors and their hearts to as many young people as possible this summer. “A great thrust of divine love motivated all the homes in Spain and many others throughout the world who joined forces to participate fully in this ecclesial event,” wrote one Little Sister. Even those who are less active contributed their prayers. “We all felt called to ask our Lord to bless this important event,” wrote another Little Sister, “since it could be a turning point in the life of a young believer.” ■

Ambassadors of the joy our world needs

A Little Sister from Lisbon and an Association Jeanne Jugan member from the United States speak about their World Youth Day experiences.



“FRIDAY, AUGUST 19TH: If I could, I would put this day in capital letters in my account of these days! It was a very, very special day! At 5:00 a.m. two buses drove out of our home in Los Molinos in the direction of the Monastery of El Escorial, where we were going to encounter the Holy Father a few hours later. A few Residents, volunteers and A.J.J. members joined us, as did some Little Sisters from the community of Los Molinos and other religious who were staying at the home.

After a long wait, punctuated by prayers, those who had the necessary passes entered into the Patio de los Reyes, where the encounter with the Holy Father was going to take place. What a surprise to find ourselves just behind the Carmelites of El Escorial! A few of them were quite young. We could sense that everyone was filled with the tremendous joy of being able to meet the successor of Peter. In all, we were 1,700 religious, without counting the hundreds who had to stay outside!

The great moment of the Pope’s arrival came at last! We were in the third row, about 23 feet from him. I felt like I was seeing a father encouraging us to live the gift of ourselves in a radical manner, saying, ‘It’s worth it. Never grow weary of being his spouse, because he loves you.’ He urged us to draw our strength from the Word of God and to live our charism as a living exegesis of this Word! May our total gift, radical and faithful, be a light for a society thirsting for God!” – *l.s.p.*

Dear Sisters

every charism is an evangelical word which the Holy Spirit recalls to the Church’s memory (cf. Jn 14:26). It is not by accident that consecrated life “is born from hearing the word of God and embracing the Gospel as its rule of life. A life devoted to following Christ in his chastity, poverty and obedience becomes a living ‘exegesis’ of God’s word... Every charism and every rule springs from it and seeks to be an expression of it, thus opening up new pathways of Christian living marked by the radicalism of the Gospel” (Verbum Domini, 83).

This Gospel radicalism means being “rooted and built up in Christ, and firm in the faith” (cf. Col 2:7). In the consecrated life, this means going to the very root of the love of Jesus Christ with an undivided heart, putting nothing ahead of this love (cf. Saint Benedict, Rule, IV, 21) and being completely devoted to him, the Bridegroom, as were the Saints, like Rose of Lima and Rafael Arnáiz, the young patrons of this World Youth Day. Your lives must testify to the personal encounter with Christ which has nourished your consecration, and to all the transforming power of that encounter. This is all the more important today when “we see a certain ‘eclipse of God’ taking place, a kind of amnesia which, albeit not an outright rejection of Christianity, is nonetheless a denial of the treasure of our faith, a denial that could lead to the loss of our deepest identity” (Message for the 2011 World Youth Day, 1). In a world of relativism and mediocrity, we need that radicalism to which your consecration, as a way of belonging to the God who is loved above all things, bears witness.

– Pope Benedict XVI





Jessica Herrera is a member of the Association Jeanne Jugan at St. Martin's Home in Baltimore, Maryland. A native of Puerto Rico, and therefore fluent in Spanish, Jessica spent her summer vacation helping our Sisters in Los Molinos with WYD preparations.

"TODAY, I HAD MY FIRST UP CLOSE and PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE POPE! I was on national television with a few of the Sisters from this home. We went to the Pope's meeting with the religious at El Escorial. We were the first to arrive and we had to split in three groups. A group of Spanish and Hispanic novices came from France for WYD and they had passes to go to the meeting; a group of A.J.J. and Residents went to another area, and the Sisters from the home went to the area for religious.

I was with the A.J.J. members in the front row. The Pope Mobile parked right in front of us. I was so nervous that the only thing that I remember was that I was screaming and in shock, and I have to admit, crying too. We could not believe he was right in front of us. This is the best thing that could happen to me in these days. I cannot ask for anything else! ...

The best way to describe Cuatro Vientos is that it was like a refugee camp—but not like the refugee camps we usually see on T.V. when natural disasters, wars or other adverse events happen. This was a voluntary refugee camp; we all registered to go as pilgrims and were prepared for long walks, a long day and night and life as a community. ...

The atmosphere was unbelievable! Everybody was so kind and calm and I was surprised about the behavior at the lines (water pipe, bathrooms and shops) and designated areas. The 'first come first served' rule applied—but I have to say in order and with courtesy.

The most-wanted item during the event was the 'precious water.' It didn't matter if it came from the pipe, the firefighters, rain showers or heaven! We asked for water during the hot day and God gave

it to us during the prayer vigil. They had predicted a 40% chance of rain, but it all started a few minutes after the Pope arrived.

The rain and the winds were so powerful that they damaged the tent for Eucharistic adoration, the background behind the altar and interrupted the prayer vigil. Everybody remained in their places; nobody moved, not even the Pope, who stayed in his chair, covered by umbrellas and few priests, until the rain stopped. I could see when he made the gesture that he was not going to leave. He was like the Good Shepherd who did not abandon his 'flock,' not even under the storm. While it was raining people were clapping, calling him 'Benedetto' and saying to him 'Esta es la juventud del Papa.'

We were all worried about his health, but I guess he was worried about us. His message was so generous and spontaneous: 'You asked for water and God has blessed you with this water!' Then the storm stopped and all became calm with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The mud and wet road or arena were not an impediment for all of us to kneel and give thanks and worship. It was very quiet and peaceful (consider the number of people!). God was with each one of us as a group and individually." ■



Our delegation of Little Sisters and young women prepare for their trek to Cuatro Vientos for the final prayer vigil and closing Mass of WYD. Jessica is in the front row, far left.

World Youth Day, New York style

FOR THOSE WHO COULDN'T MAKE IT TO MADRID, there was "WYD in NYC" at our novitiate in Queens! Over forty girls and young women from all over the United States joined our novices to follow the festivities in Madrid and create a bit of excitement of their own. Not to be outdone by their Spanish counterparts, Residents from our homes around the country showed their support for these young pilgrims in over 400 notes sent to Queens and posted for all to read. Because a bit of advice from our elders is good at any age, we print a few excerpts from their notes here.



Dear Young Friends,

Every Resident cared for by the Little Sisters is more or less at the end of the game of life, however you are still at the beginning, so please allow some heartfelt advice:

- Know thyself; you can't be a useful tool to God if you do not know your limits.
- Discover the value of silence—not just material silence but inner silence.
- Divine indwelling—no other world religion can lay claim to this fact and you already have it through Baptism.
- Learn the Jesus Prayer—read *The Way of the Pilgrim*.
- Your faith is your single most important possession. Always be grateful for it!

– Jim, Louisville, KY



Left: Checking out Resident notes sent to WYD pilgrims.

Below, left: A moment of prayer before New York's own WYD cross and icon.

Below: Pilgrims enjoy a fiesta!



"You are the saviors of our world. We—the elders—leave so much responsibility in your hands as we warmly take you into our hearts."

– Mickey Maginnis, Louisville, KY

"Whether you remain single, marry or become a religious, remember to make Jesus the center of your life. If Jesus is the center of your life everything will fall into place."

– Rev. John Carl Lombard, MSF, St. Louis, MO

"Take time out and ask yourself, Where are we going? What is our purpose? Speak to God—this is prayer. Speak to others about God—this is love. Visit and spend time with God—this is service and adoration."

– Deacon Aston Bailey, Gallup, NM

A daughter's vocation

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO OUR DAUGHTER, Christy, walked around the grounds of St. Joseph's Home with Sr. Mary Timothy praying the rosary for vocations. On August 28, 2011 in La Tour, France, those prayers were answered as Sr. Mary Christine of the Cross professed perpetual vows as a Little Sister of the Poor.

Christy was thirteen when she reluctantly joined a friend to volunteer at St. Joseph's Home. This was part of the fulfillment of required service hours for school. She instantly fell in love with the Little Sisters and their mission to serve the elderly poor.

Even before she began high school, Christy knew that the Lord was calling her to a vocation with the Little Sisters. She chose to study French, because she knew the Little Sisters studied in France during their formation. She longed to enter the Little Sisters immediately after high school, but we thought it would be better for her to continue her education so that she could be more useful to the Little Sisters. Christy obtained her RN in two years, even though many college advisors recommended an easier schedule. She was determined to join the Little Sisters as soon as possible.

Filled with joy, we, along with her grandparents and brother Patrick, traveled to the Little Sister's motherhouse in France for Sr. Mary Christine's final vows. It was a beautiful Mass with angelic singing. Most Rev. Jean-Paul Battu, auxiliary bishop of Lyons, France presided over the ceremony which was, of course, in French. To our amazement, the first reading was done by our daughter in English. She looked nervous but read flawlessly about God calling Samuel. Kneeling in front of Mother General Celine, the Sisters pronounced their perpetual vows, which were written on parchment paper and then placed on the altar.

At the end of the vows, Bishop Battu gave the sign of peace to Mother General. Two newly professed Sisters received the sign of peace from her and passed it to their Sisters, as a sign of the



fraternal communion uniting them henceforth in the life of the Congregation. After communion, the newly professed Little Sisters embraced Mother General, her Council, and the Sisters responsible for formation, while a hymn of thanksgiving was sung.

After Mass we entered a large hall where Mother General announced the assignments of the newly professed Sisters. We were happy to learn that our daughter was returning to the United States and going to Latham, New York. After multiple pictures and socializing we enjoyed a private dinner with Sr. Mary Christine.

We spent three wonderful days with our daughter. As Association Jeanne Jugan members, we especially enjoyed following in the footsteps of Saint Jeanne Jugan by visiting her birthplace and the first homes of the Little Sisters of the Poor. What made this time especially meaningful was to be at La Tour on the feast day of Saint Jeanne Jugan and participate in a special celebratory Mass.

As parents we all worry about the well-being of our children. The most important thing is for them to live happy, meaningful lives that will lead them to God. Can you imagine a better life for your child than to know the fulfilling, dedicated and joyful life of the Little Sisters of the Poor? We couldn't be happier for our daughter. 🌸



With Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., after the July 16 profession ceremony are (l to r) Sr. Mary Alexandra, Sr. Gemma, Sr. Marie Agnes and Sr. Ana Malia Benedict.

THE ARCHBISHOP STARTED IT... the applause after the first novice pronounced her vows. The congregation filling the chapel of St. Ann's Novitiate on July 16, 2011 kept it up after each of the four young women pronounced temporary vows of chastity, poverty, obedience and hospitality as Little Sisters of the Poor. Sr. Gemma, the first novice, reflected later: "Right after I made my vows and the archbishop led the congregation in applause, I felt a deep sense of joy and happiness that I am the spouse of Christ and I have been called to serve the Catholic Church in a profound and intimate way."

One of the novices professed, Sr. Mary Alexandra, had been a member of Archbishop Chaput's flock back in Denver. The others had left their homes in Indiana—and much further away—South Korea and the Pacific kingdom of Tonga, to devote their lives to the service of the elderly in need.

Newly-professed Sister Mary Alexandra commented, "Archbishop Chaput taught us that in 'being sent' we are with Jesus, liv-



ing Jesus' relationship with his Father... and that the youngest members of a religious community have the responsibility of being its servants, but also living examples of its charism, in youthful enthusiasm and dynamic fidelity."

The Sisters are now out on mission discovering the joy of serving Christ in the poor! 🙏

“WHAT HAPPINESS FOR US to be a Little Sister of the Poor” (St. Jeanne Jugan). This is what could be seen on the faces of fourteen Little Sisters who made their perpetual profession on Sunday, August 28, 2011. For me it was an occasion to renew my own commitment and to rejoice with my family in the great gift of a religious vocation, since my own sister, Sr. Birgitta, was one of the newly professed. May many other young women discover the great joy of belonging entirely to Christ and serving his people in the footsteps of Saint Jeanne Jugan! 🙏

Sr. Cornelia Maria (above left) is a native of Germany and entered our Congregation in 1997 after getting to know the Little Sisters in Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Her sister felt drawn to our community after witnessing Sr. Cornelia's first profession. Sr. Birgitta has been assigned to Brussels, Belgium. Sr. Cornelia currently resides in Philadelphia.

Celebrating past and future in South America



The next 125 years...

To inaugurate the next 125 years of Saint Jeanne Jugan's charism in South America, Sabrina Maino de Karagozian, an Argentinian artist, sculptured a new statue of our Mother. Although she had passed by our home in San Isidro on many occasions, she had never met us. Soon after the beginning of our anniversary year she happened to come into our chapel. A Little Sister gave her a copy of the biography of Saint Jeanne Jugan. Sabrina returned with the enthusiastic hope of "doing something." She later explained that "after becoming acquainted with Saint Jeanne Jugan, I had a great desire to make known the marvelous holiness of this simple woman to whom I quickly became indebted." Her daughter had been diagnosed with cancer, but Sabrina confided that she "felt only trust that Saint Jeanne Jugan would take care of her." "It's not that I believed she would intercede if I prayed, but that God already knew I had faith in Jeanne's intercession and trusted she would relieve my daughter, and our family, of this suffering." Above, the statue is blessed by Most Rev. Oscar Ojea, coadjutor bishop of San Isidro.



SOUTH AMERICA'S PACIFIC COAST must have seemed a world away from our motherhouse in Brittany back in the late nineteenth century, but that is precisely where Providence led the Congregation in 1885, when the first home in Latin America was founded in Valparaíso, Chile. Eventually homes for the elderly were founded in several Chilean cities, as well as Colombia, Argentina, and most recently, Peru. On October 24, 2010, our communities throughout South America inaugurated a year of thanksgiving for 125 years of presence on this continent. As this year of gratitude concludes, we take a look back at a bit of the history of our Little Sisters in Latin America, as well as their celebrations this year.

The Congregation owes its implantation in South America to two influential lay persons of the time. Mr. José Concha, a representative in Rome of the bishop of Talca, Chile, was aware of the plight of many elderly poor in his native land. Touched by his encounters with the Little Sisters in Europe, he requested that the Congregation come to Chile. He found an ally in the person of Juana Ross de Edwards, a well-known Chilean philanthropist. Ms. Ross de Edwards traveled to Europe in 1884 and visited one of the Little Sisters' homes in Paris, where she witnessed firsthand our mission of hospitality to the needy aged. In response to the petitions of these two, the Congregation accepted to send Sisters for an initial foundation in Valparaíso, Chile's main port city.

Eight Little Sisters set out by boat from France in the summer of 1885. Without the benefit of air travel, the trip took forty-five days. The foundresses were led by Mother Marie de St. Pierre, who wrote

back to the motherhouse, “We were favored by good weather during the trip, but especially by the invaluable consolation of being able to participate at the celebration of Mass aboard our ship. On Sundays, depending on the weather, Mass was celebrated on deck and all the sailors participated. Even those who did not share our beliefs were attentive and respectful.” On September 6, 1885 they were welcomed in Valparaíso by the superior of the Daughters of Charity.

The Little Sisters were led to a house owned by “Ms. Juana,” as they called their great benefactor. They wrote to Mother General, “It was she who had personally prepared the house with everything necessary. We recognize in these generous gifts the spiritual love of a benefactor and the visible instrument of Providence. The leading ladies of the city had gathered to welcome us, manifesting in many ways their joy at seeing our arrival to care for the poor. The Office of Apostolic Administration had announced our arrival in the newspaper, giving some details about our work. It did much good and opened many doors in our first steps in the collection at the markets. The Chileans seemed to already know us and all wanted to help.”

On September 14, 1885 the little community welcomed their first Resident, Andrea Laison. The Little Sisters’ Chilean family steadily grew until 1889, when “Ms. Juana” provided them with a new, larger home. “Nothing has been spared,” they wrote, “neither the dormitories, nor the beautiful chapel designed to be of service to them... Cleanliness, elegance and good taste are evident in everything.” Twenty-three Little Sisters served in the new home.

By 1906 another move was necessary. One hundred elderly women and fifty men moved into a new building, but their happiness was short-lived. That same year, a terrible earthquake shook Valparaíso. The new house was completely destroyed and nine Little Sisters died in the rubble. With great courage the remaining Little Sisters decided to leave Valparaíso, transferring the 150 elderly survivors to homes that had recently been founded in Santiago. Eventually the original home in Valparaíso was replaced by one in Viña del Mar.



Top: Painting of the arrival of the Little Sisters in Chile on September 6, 1885, done by a Resident of Viña del Mar.

Above, left: A young friend admires the statue of Juana Ross de Edwards, the Little Sisters’ greatest benefactor in Chile.

Above, right: A statue of the Virgin Mary brought to Chile in 1885 by the founding Little Sisters.



October 22, 2011: Anniversary Mass in the Cathedral of Valparaíso.

Through the years poverty, numerous earthquakes and political instability have posed challenges for our Little Sisters in South America—but nothing has deterred their zeal in bringing God’s love and mercy to the needy elderly of this beautiful and vast continent. Today our homes in South America comprise two provinces, with five homes in Chile, two in Argentina, one in Peru and ten in Colombia. Several young Chileans are in various stages of formation at our motherhouse in France and there is a flourishing novitiate in Colombia—all promising signs that the spirit of Saint Jeanne Jugan will continue to thrive in South America for many years to come.

Our most recent foundation in Tacna, Peru—the first for the Congregation in this country—is proof for us of God’s Providence and the universal relevance of our work. Sister María de la Luz, a native Chicagoan living in South America, writes from Tacna:

“The construction of our home in Tacna began almost one year ago. The bishop opened the former minor seminary for us as a temporary home. Since then we have welcomed nineteen elderly Aymara natives. The Aymara usually live in The Andes, where temperatures vary drastically and, as they age, eventually seek shelter away from

their communities. This frequently means relocating to the border town of Tacna. The people in Tacna do not complain of the influx of Aymara elderly, even though they cannot communicate well since they generally do not speak Spanish. The locals are usually poor themselves. To help us care for them, the people in Tacna bring us donations of rice, chickens, pasta, bread, and chocolate.”

Sister María continues, “Our mission in Tacna goes beyond caring for the physical needs of the elderly poor. The Lord uses our simple presence and daily service to reach those around us. Young people, and others not so young, begin to volunteer at our home and are eventually drawn to deepen their faith. Most locals have been baptized, but their living conditions and lack of education prevent them from going beyond a superficial and sometimes superstitious understanding of their faith. In the few years we have been in Tacna, many volunteers have received the sacraments of Confirmation and Marriage in our chapel. Young men and women are intrigued and inquire about consecrated life; some have entered the seminary and three young women have begun formation in religious life. This aspect of our new foundation has been a profoundly enriching experience for all of us. In fact, our bishop looks forward to reopening the minor seminary where we temporarily reside as soon as he inaugurates our new home.”



Mother Provincial Ana María Montserrat welcomes the first group of Association Jeanne Jugan members at our home in Santiago. The group began formation soon after the 2010 earthquake and made their promise for the first time in this anniversary year.



Above, left: Celebration following the blessing of a new quincho in San Isidro. A quincho is a pavilion for barbecues and outdoor parties.

Above, right: Craft projects made by Residents in Tacna, Peru.

Right: A play in Neuquen, Argentina, representing the life of Saint Jeanne Jugan.

The year in thanksgiving to Providence—which has sustained the Little Sisters in South America since 1885—culminated with Mass at the cathedral of Valparaíso on October 22, 2011. Bishop Gonzalo Duarte presided, with other bishops and priests concelebrating, among them Archbishop Bernardino Piñera and Archbishop Francisco Javier Prado. In his homily he pondered the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians assuring them that the love of God would “stand firm until the end.” “This great force of love that pervades the whole world, one day, 126 years ago, propelled the charism of Saint Jeanne Jugan to Chile to give solace to the elderly poor, making their sufferings bearable in the knowledge that God had not forgotten them,” he said. “Many Little Sisters and many friends have made Saint Jeanne Jugan present in this land as witnesses of God’s Provident love. How meaningful that we celebrate here, in the cathedral, whose crypt contains the tomb of that illustrious, and holy, woman, Juana Ross de Edwards. God can do great things through all of us —if we allow it!” 🌸

A house built on sacrifice and faith: 125 years in Sydney

NOVEMBER 1, 2011 MARKED THE 125TH ANNIVERSARY of the arrival of the Little Sisters in Sydney, Australia. To mark the occasion it was decided that the main event would be the Eucharistic celebration in our parish on Sunday, October 16, 2011. This date coincided with the end of our parish’s year-long centenary celebration of the arrival of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Sydney. They had also come from France and like us, find their roots in the “French school of spirituality.”

Staff and volunteers helped as the Residents were driven the few minutes to the parish church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Places had been put aside for them and it was touching to see the Resident-priests in front of the pews ready to concelebrate Mass. Some of the Sisters joined the parish choir for the singing, with one of our good friends, Carlie, at the organ and piano.

At the end of Mass, Mother Provincial Ann Marie James read a letter from Mother General, which was greeted with great applause. One Sister commented that it was as if Mother Celine was really in Sydney for the celebrations. During the time for refreshments, which were served in the home’s auditorium, the Residents joyfully mingled with their families, staff and friends.

Our thanksgiving continued with a family day for the Residents on Saturday, October 22nd. Even the most infirm Residents came down to the hall with their families. Some singers came to entertain, and then a lovely surprise visit by the relatives of one of the Samoan Sisters resulted in a stunning performance of Samoan dancing. This gave immense pleasure to everyone. Our Mother Saint Jeanne Jugan would have been happy to see the Residents and their families so

much at home as they enjoyed spending time together in the garden.

Sunday, October 30th was marked by a more intimate celebration at home, with some of the families of the Residents, friends and volunteers coming for Mass and lunch. It was touching to see all our Resident priests concelebrating.

Our celebration concluded with a special meal for the staff on November 2nd. One of the Residents provided a beautiful cake and some of the volunteers helped prepare the meal. Everyone appreciated the gift of the book by Eloi Leclerc, *Jeanne Jugan: God's Tenderness for the World*, together with a bookmark commemorating the event.

The display of pictures and stories from our arrival in Sydney will remain in the reception area until the end of the year, as so many visitors love to browse through them. The heritage left to us by our first Little Sisters here in Sydney is something for which we will always thank the Lord. Their sacrifices and faith in the presence of many difficulties are the foundation upon which our beautiful home is built. They inspire us to want to always be grateful daughters of Saint Jeanne Jugan and to build upon the legacy left us by those who have been instruments of Providence for us. May the Lord bless our wonderful friends and benefactors, especially our friends in the market who, twice a week for the past 125 years, have provided so generously for us. We can only say, with Jeanne Jugan, "Where would we be without our benefactors?" 🌸



– from our Little Sisters in Sydney



I didn't know there were people like you...

excerpts from the homily of Rev. Peter Hearne, msc

Saint Jeanne Jugan's founding story repeated itself across the world, so far from France, in Leichardt. Within weeks an elderly man

came on his crutches from Woollahara, having walked many miles to Leichardt, and was admitted by the Sisters. They did not have much to give him at the time, but they recorded in their foundation book that he allowed them to cut his hair, clean him up and get him some new clothes. He said to them "I didn't know that there were people like you in the world who would take care of the likes of me, but I had heard." He took out of his pocket a handkerchief with some coins in it and gave it to them. He lived until he was 97 years old. As he regained his strength, he helped the Sisters around the house.

That is a beautiful thing with the Sisters. I don't know how Occupational Health & Safety goes these days, but to be able to take their part in the working of the home, to have a sense of belonging, means that the Residents are not merely recipients of care. They are enabled to make their contribution. It is their home and they help to make it function as a home.

Restoring, honoring, elevating, making whole, showing great respect for the image of God in these elderly people—that is what I see is at the very heart of the Little Sisters of the Poor, their vocation. And what a beautiful vocation, what a beautiful thing to be able to do for people who, for whatever reason, are not able to do it for themselves.

There were no pensions, no government assistance and no social welfare when the Sisters began and for many years afterwards. They lived on the good will and esteem of people—so readily given—and especially, the results of their "begging" trips to the markets.

We can have Government pensions, have money in our pockets and be well-housed; but for all that we can still be desperately lonely. We can be confused and lose our way. Age and infirmity, sickness, can all diminish us in some way. When I go to the Little Sisters of the Poor, I notice that the Sisters and the staff always walk at the same speed as the person they are with, never hurrying, never pushing—and how beautiful that is—walking at the speed of the other, giving them a welcoming place that is beautiful, a place of dignity, a place where one senses the Presence of God, because right there in the heart of the home is the Eucharist, forming a Eucharistic community.

And there is the prayer of the Sisters. They are a semi-contemplative order in that sense. Prayer is foundational for them, and out of this prayer comes the ministry of gentleness, compassion and of love. And I know that in many countries it is the Little Sisters of the Poor and other religious communities who alone serve the aged. The image of God we heard about in today's Gospel, grows brighter because of the care of the Little Sisters. ■

The mission remains as we bid farewell to Canada

DEPARTURES OFTEN ENGENDER A SENSE of sadness and nostalgia, but these sentiments heal with time. Our departure from Montreal was a mixture of these two emotions, together with a deep sense of gratitude for our many years of service to the elderly of this wonderful country. Many friendships were forged over the past 124 years of our mission in Canada, including those with our Residents, employees, volunteers, benefactors and Association members. Without them how could we have managed?

Saint Jeanne Jugan often told her daughters that without the help of our friends and benefactors, we would not be able to offer the elderly all the care and comfort they deserve. Perhaps more than ever as the time of our departure drew near, we were conscious of this truth. Employees planned a wonderful farewell celebration for about 150 persons under tents erected in the garden. The Residents and their loved ones were all invited so that the entire family of Ma Maison St. Joseph would be represented. What a magnificent display of the gratitude and family spirit so desired by our holy Mother Foundress!

It was impossible not to celebrate all the wonderful things that have been accomplished by the Congregation in Montreal, while at the same time celebrating the fact that our mission will continue through the Sisters of Providence who are assuming the administration of the home. We thanked God that they accepted to keep alive the mission of the Little Sisters of the Poor to serve the elderly with respect and affection. It was very important to us that our Residents, employees and friends—who had made our home



One of the last Little Sisters to leave Montreal was the very eldest in the community. Sr. St. Emmanuel, a native of Canada, had been looking forward to celebrating her hundredth birthday on October 29, 2011—but never did she dream that she would begin her second century of life in a new country! That is exactly what she did, however, as she moved south of the border to Latham, New York, just a few weeks before her birthday. Her new community welcomed her with open arms and helped her celebrate the big day in style. Sister's secret to a long life? "See there, hard work never killed anyone!" Her reaction to her new surroundings? "C'est si beau! ... It's so beautiful," she often repeats.

the center of their lives and activities—knew that our mission was not ending, but passing into the hands of another community of religious who share our values.

This was certainly emphasized at the Mass of Farewell and Thanksgiving offered on August 24, 2011 at the Sanctuary Marie Reine des Coeurs. The theme of the Eucharistic Celebration was "The Mission Remains." Cardinal Jean Claude Turcotte, archbishop of Montreal, was the principal celebrant, with the assistance of numerous priests. An assembly of about 650 Residents, friends and benefactors joined us for this final celebration. Members of the Sisters of Providence were also present.

This passing on of our mission was marked by the carrying of the relics of St. Jeanne Jugan and Blessed Emilie Gamelin, Foundress of the Sisters of Providence, in the entrance procession. The Sisters' presence at this celebration assured us that they would help us all meet the challenges of the coming weeks with a spirit of openness and trust. A reception after Mass gave us the opportunity to personally thank all the attendees, while at the same time introducing the Sisters of Providence to all.

We remain united by prayer to all our Residents, employees and friends in Montreal, sure that they will continue the mission of St. Jeanne Jugan and give their help to the Sisters of Providence in this new endeavor. Words can never express the gratitude due to all who have given us, by their support, the joy of having served the elderly of Canada for so many years. Blessed be God! 🙏

– Sister Bernice Marie, superior

A new presence of *Saint Jeanne Jugan*

IN THE WINTER OF 1839, Jeanne Jugan carried an elderly, blind woman from the cold streets of Brittany to the warmth of her own home, where she gave the woman her own bed and promised to care for her. With that singular gesture of love, Jeanne began an apostolate of welcoming and caring for the elderly poor. That profound act of love gave birth to the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor. In 1868, the “work” which began in France spread across the Atlantic Ocean with the establishment of the first home of the Little Sisters of the Poor in Brooklyn, New York.

The Icon, *Saint Jeanne Jugan and Elders*, places the Saint with her arms extended, welcoming two older persons—a woman of Brittany, France and a man of Brooklyn, New York. While the Saint opens her arms to receive two elders, such a horizontal extension reminds the viewer of the Crucified Christ. Her mission to the elderly is an expression of total self-giving, sacrifice in union with the Cross of her Savior. There is also a repetition of triangular movement in the icon, suggesting the power of Trinitarian Love, seen in the mantle worn by the Saint and in the position of the heads of each of the subjects.

The elders, at one time poor, now find in Saint Jeanne Jugan an expression of that Love which enriches them in every way. While holding the quote of Hebrews 12:2, both elderly persons fix their gaze on the Saint and it is Jesus himself whom they see. By virtue of her baptism and her religious consecration, the Saint stands in the place of Christ who came not to be served but to serve (Mt. 20:28). Together they form a new Community of Love, attending one to the other.

“*Saint Jeanne Jugan and Elders*” is the work of iconographers George and Sergio Pinecross. The icon was commissioned by Msgr. Thomas Petrillo for his parish, Saints John and Paul, in Larchmont, New York. It was recently dedicated to inaugurate a new parish program, “*Family Jeanne Jugan*,” which will enlist families to assist elderly members of the parish.



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