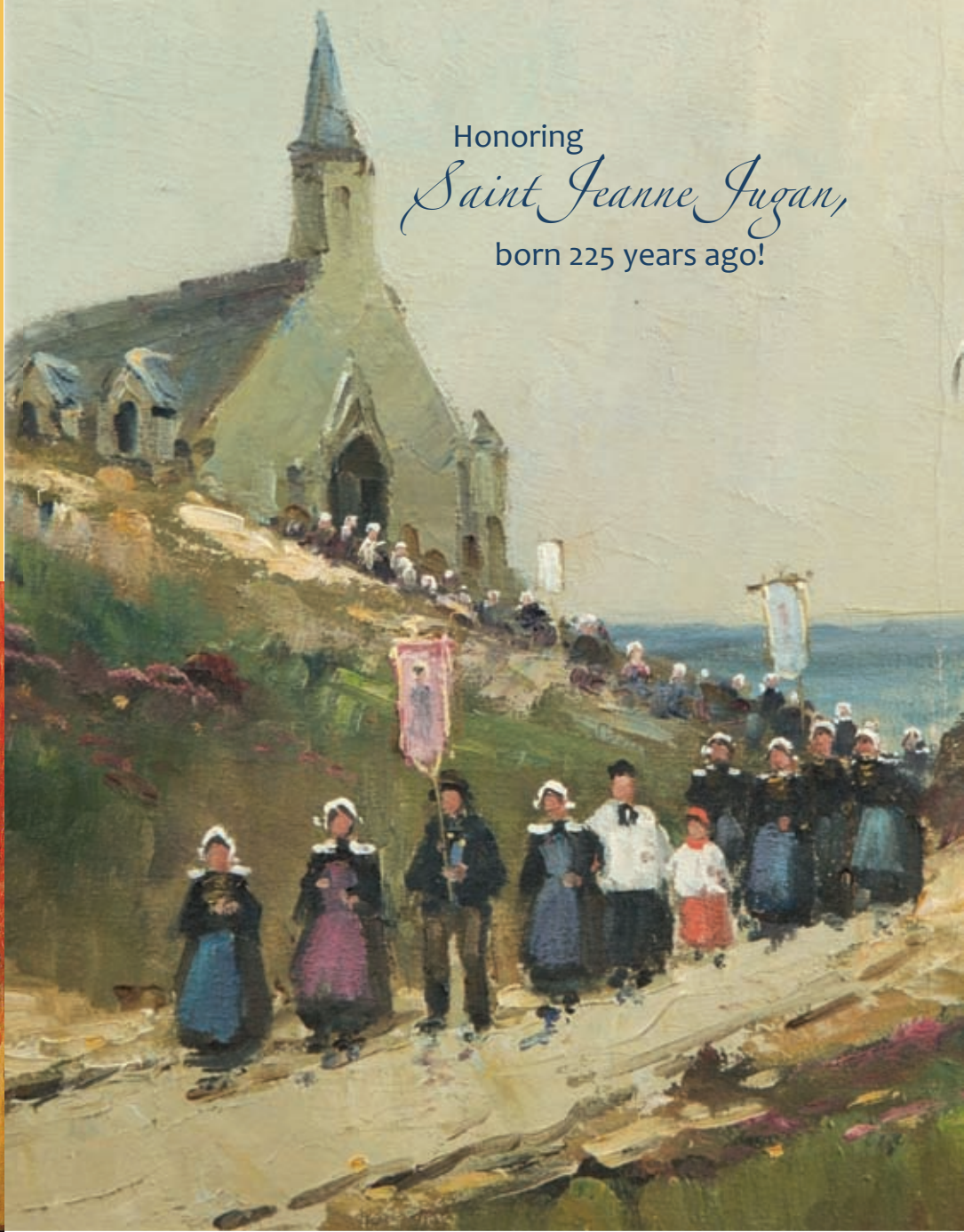
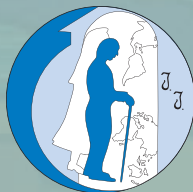


Serenity

no. 176 • Little Sisters of the Poor • October 2017

Honoring
Saint Jeanne Jugan,
born 225 years ago!





Our Mission

Continuing the work of Saint Jeanne Jugan, our MISSION is to offer the neediest elderly of every race and religion a home where they will be welcomed as Christ, cared for as family and accompanied with dignity until God calls them to himself.

Cover Photos

Front cover: Procession in Brittany, by Albert Hirtz (public domain).

Inside front cover: Banner of Saint Jeanne Jugan, by Slabbinck.

Outside back cover: Breton girls with Chinese lanterns, by Ferdinand du Puigaudeau (public domain, Alamy stock photo).



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** Plus a special rosary pullout section!*

Child of God, Daughter of Mary

On October 25th we celebrate the 225th anniversary of the birth and baptism of our foundress Saint Jeanne Jugan. Although she was born during the French Revolution, Providence allowed that as a child she be clandestinely imbued with the basics of the Catholic faith. By the time Jeanne was ten years old peace had been restored and the Church in France saw a renaissance of devotion and new religious communities.

It was during this period that our foundress matured and began to participate fully in the life of the Church, attending parish missions and Marian processions like the one shown on our cover. As soon as she was old enough, she joined the Third Order of the Heart of the Admirable Mother, a lay movement for women founded by St. John Eudes. Jeanne's spiritual life then grew by leaps and bounds, becoming centered more and more on Jesus Christ, for "to come to the Heart of Mary is to come to Jesus" (*Constitutions of the Little Sisters of the Poor*, n. 91).

This Christocentric Marian spirituality was echoed by Pope Saint John Paul II when he visited Fatima the year after the attempt on his life. In a homily on May 13, 1982, he said that the Immaculate Heart of Mary is spiritually united with the heart of her Son opened by the soldier's spear. "Consecrating the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary means drawing near, through the Mother's intercession, to the very Fountain of life that sprang from Golgotha. This Fountain pours forth unceasingly redemption and grace.... It is a ceaseless source of new life and holiness."

Recently Mother General Maria proposed that our Congregation mark the birthday of our foundress by consecrating ourselves and the entire family of Jeanne Jugan to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. "It seems to me that, this year, Sister Mary of the Cross is encouraging us to know, love and imitate the Blessed Virgin Mary in an ever deeper way," she wrote. We invite you to join us on this path of new life and renewed holiness! [!\[\]\(cbe80b694ebd74fcfe136a095b608235_img.jpg\)](#)

Jeanne de Cancale

Among the many songs we have honoring our foundress, Saint Jeanne Jugan, is one that evokes her birthplace. It is entitled “Jeanne de Cancale.” A rough translation goes like this: “Jeanne from Cancale, may our songs ring true — for you, a flower of grace sprung from this noble land, in the sunlight of faith, in the wind of the Spirit.” The lyrics conjure images of Jeanne Jugan’s native Brittany, a beautiful region where land and sea meet in rugged cliffs. The landscape is an apt image of the Breton people. On the following pages we reflect on the various influences in the early life of “Jeanne de Cancale.”

Each of us has a story.

Each one is a unique work of art, “created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance.” These words, based on St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, wonderfully describe our foundress, Saint Jeanne Jugan. She began life at a difficult moment in history, with very few gifts, resources or possibilities according to the standards of the world. But with what she was given, she allowed God to work miracles — little by little, day by day over the course of many years, Jeanne allowed him to prepare her to create a work of charity which responded to the needs of her time, and which has continued to bear fruit 225 years after the first chapters of her life story were written in a tiny fishing village in a remote region of France.

As we celebrate the 225th anniversary of the birth of Saint Jeanne Jugan, we pause to consider the context into which she was born, and the various factors that helped to mold her into the person God intended her to be. In any life it is never just the circumstances of one’s birth or one’s natural gifts that matter. The beauty the clay takes in the hands of the Divine Potter is what really counts for eternity. Such is the story of our humble foundress ... highlighted — but not constrained by — the following six themes.





A daughter of Brittany. Born in the village of Cancale, Saint Jeanne Jugan was a proud daughter of Brittany. The region was settled by Celtic migrants in the fifth and sixth centuries AD, and came under French rule in the 16th century. But it was only after the Revolution that Brittany officially became part of France. The Bretons have always been proud of their history and unique culture, which has more in common with the Welsh and Scots than the Franks who came to dominate the rest of France; many identify as Bretons before calling themselves French. In Jeanne Jugan's time they were a rugged, independent and deeply religious people.

French Revolution. Jeanne was born on October 25, 1792, at the height of the French Revolution. She was baptized the day of her birth by a priest who had sworn allegiance to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Priests who refused to sign the oath of loyalty were forced into hiding or killed. The parish

church of Cancale had been transformed into a hospital, and then a fodder-store for troops. Several months after Jeanne's birth a royalist and peasant counter-revolution broke out in Brittany. Thousands were massacred. For the next eight years an atmosphere of violence and fear prevailed in the region. This was the terrifying context into which our foundress was born.

Rugged land, awesome sea. The landscape of Brittany was a patchwork of green and gold green fields, thatched roofs, dirt roads and jagged seaside cliffs; the climate was generally damp and misty. Cancale was famous for its oysters; thanks to their hearty diet the local people were exceptionally robust. Three quarters of the population made a living from the sea, including Jeanne's father. He was on a fishing expedition in Newfoundland when she was born, and then four years later he was definitively lost at sea. A fisherman had to be missing for seven years before he could be declared dead, so Jeanne, her mother and siblings went on hoping for his return for many years.

Family life. Life in Cancale was austere and mothers prepared their daughters for the day when they would have to manage in the absence or loss of their husbands. Following her father's disappearance Jeanne grew up as one of five children in a single-parent household; three older siblings had died in infancy. With Jeanne's mother at the helm, the family toiled together to make ends meet.





As a youngster Jeanne pitched in by pasturing the family's small flock on the bluffs overlooking the Bay of Mont Saint-Michel. At the age of fifteen or sixteen she went to work as a kitchen-maid for a wealthy family, where in addition to cooking, she was involved in helping the poor and visiting lonely old folk.

Solidarity. Growing up, Jeanne witnessed the courage and ingenuity of the women of Cancale. They knew how to help one another, taking up a collection from house to house when a family came upon hard times. Whoever accepted the charity of others knew that one day she herself would be out collecting for someone else. Jeanne witnessed the faith of these proud, somewhat rough women who often gathered in a small chapel by the sea to pray for their absent husbands and sons.

Faith. The cornerstone of Jeanne Jugan's life was her profound faith. Although public worship was prohibited during her early childhood years, she learned her prayers and the basics of

her Catholic faith from her mother and a band of devout women who traveled from home to home secretly imparting the faith. As a teen Jeanne attended a parish mission preached by a band of Jesuit missionaries. She participated fervently and joined the sodality for girls established by the missionaries.

In 1817 Jeanne's two sisters were married and she decided to leave home in order to start a new life in a neighboring town.



She felt called to follow a different path from that of her sisters, refusing a marriage proposal and telling her mother, "God wants me for himself; he is keeping me for a work which is not yet founded." Before leaving home she divided her clothing into two portions, giving her sisters the prettiest items and keeping the simplest things for herself. She settled in Saint-Servan, about fifteen kilometers from her hometown, where she discovered a world of poor and suffering people ... and, eventually, the work for which God had destined her.

Jeanne deepened her prayer life and spent herself in the service of the poor. Like the wise virgins who kept their lamps lit as they waited for the Master's arrival, she remained vigilant and prepared herself for the Lord's visitation ...

Finally one day in 1839 he came in the person of a poor, blind elderly woman in need ... and the world would never be the same. Although she came from an obscure village, in spirit Jeanne traveled as far as her compatriot Jacques Cartier and the other Cancalais who let the sea carry them to new adventures and new worlds.

Today the Little Sisters of the Poor can be found in thirty-one countries around the world, striving to serve the elderly poor with the same spirit and the same heart as Saint Jeanne Jugan. [↴](#)



A word about the artwork on these pages: Brittany, and especially the Breton women who managed to provide for their families in the long absences of their husbands, were a popular subject of many late 19th and early 20th century painters, from the American John Singer Sargent to French post-impressionist Paul Gauguin. The images on these pages, which portray the everyday life of Breton women in Jeanne Jugan's lifetime, are all in the public domain and were obtained through Wikiart.org.

They include: A study for the Oyster Gatherers of Cancale, by John Singer Sargent (p. 2); Young Brittany Girl, by Jules Breton (p. 3); Fisherwives Waiting for the Boats to Return, by Eugene Boudin (p. 4); Oyster Pickers, the Coast of Brittany, by Aukusti Uotila (p. 5); Setting out for the Fields, by Jules Breton (p. 6); Procession, by Charles Cottet (p. 7); Celtic Woman, by Jules Breton (p. 8).



Three great mysteries of consecrated life

Two novices made their first profession as Little Sisters of the Poor on Saturday, July 22, 2017. Sr. Mary Gerard, pictured above at left, is originally from upstate New York. Sr. Faustina Clare is from southern Maryland. Their first assignments as Little Sisters are to Palatine, IL and Philadelphia, PA. Our two new Sisters are pictured here with Bishop James Massa, auxiliary bishop of the diocese of Brooklyn, the principal celebrant for the profession Mass. His homily follows.

To you both, Sister Faustina Clare and Sister Mary Gerard, I offer the congratulations of the Church here in Brooklyn and Queens, and beyond, for having arrived at this moment of your discernment. To your parents and to all the members of your families, I

also give thanks for the gift of the two of you to this humble and powerful vocation as a Little Sister of the Poor. Truly, may the Lord who has begun this good work in you at first vows bring it to completion.

What gathers us here today are three great mysteries of consecrated life, which I believe can be found in your respective journeys: the call, the community and the Cross. Each of these mysteries may be said to define the vows professed by every Little Sister of the Poor. Each of these mysteries also belongs to the life and witness of your remarkable foundress, Saint Jeanne Jugan.

Since her canonization in 2009, the life of Jeanne Jugan has become more widely disseminated throughout the Church. Not long ago, I found myself taken up with her story, which Pope Benedict XVI described at her canonization as a balm for the wounds of our age. The call to found a new community dedicated to the elderly poor unfolded gradually in Jeanne's life. During her teenage years when she was a kitchen maid, a young man pursued her hand in marriage. She said no at age eighteen, and then again at age twenty-four.

It was not because he was not a good man, an attractive man, or a man of means who could reverse the ill fortune that had fallen on her family since the death of her father at sea. It was not because Jeanne disdained marriage, but because she heard a different call — a summons to be a different kind of bride, adorned not with the fine jewelry that Isaiah describes in our first reading, but with the virtues of a disciple who follows the bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Jeanne said to her mother, who must have been mystified by her persistence in refusing to marry: "God wants me for himself. He is keeping me for a work not yet founded."

Those last words — not yet founded — suggest that the call that Jeanne received would indeed unfold slowly over the course of many years, after much patient listening and discerning of the circumstances of her life. The call of God is mysterious, as Sisters



Top: The two Sisters hold candles evoking their baptismal consecration as they pronounce their vows. Below: Sr. Mary Gerard pronounces her vows; they are received by Mother Provincial Alice Marie Monica.

Faustina Clare and Mary Gerard understand only too well. It must be tested by getting one's hands dirty, something that happens a lot in the novitiate! It must be discerned through dialogue with the spiritual directors the community provides in the period of formation. It must be brought before the Lord: Can I love as you have loved me, as you say in the Gospel, dear Lord? Can I be a chaste virgin for the Kingdom, just as you are, my beloved Jesus?



Top: Our two new Little Sisters are backed by our three U.S. provincial superiors, their families and the novices. Below: Sr. Faustina Clare receives the Constitutions from Bishop Massa.

The second mystery is that of community. The vocation of a Little Sister of the Poor cannot be lived alone. For sure, there were solitary moments in Jeanne's long journey of service to the sick and the indigent. In her late twenties, she lived alone while working as a nurse in the town hospital of Saint-Servan. But this led to her becoming ill, and so she knew that a solitary life would not be hers to embrace.

By 1837 Jeanne found herself living in a small community made up of herself, the seventy-two year-old Françoise Aubert and the seventeen year-old orphan Virginie Tredaniel. Centered on prayer, these three women devoted themselves to catechizing the young and tending to the sick poor. Then in the winter of 1839, Jeanne carried home in her arms an elderly blind and lame woman named Anne Chauvin. It wasn't enough to go out and care for the sick poor. God was asking something else of these women: to create a home for the elderly poor, live with them, help them die. Jeanne gave up her bed for Anne and slept in the attic.


The founding of the Little Sisters dates back to the day in 1839 when a single act of mercy was made on behalf of an old blind woman. The world changed that day. A community was formed out of this one small sacrifice. One great act of love, shared within a community attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, then began to attract other young women who sought to care for the elderly poor and the sick, to make of themselves what Saint Paul calls in our second reading "living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God."

How is this possible? Out of the giving of one's self in love comes an immense joy that no one can steal. Little Sisters of the Poor are happy women precisely because they live from the living sacrifice of the Eucharist, which puts every believer in touch with the founding event of faith itself: the Cross of Jesus Christ. From this encounter with Christ's self-offering at Mass, the Sisters are formed in a wisdom that Saint Paul describes as "not of this age." Their minds and hearts are constantly being transformed by the love the Bridegroom has for them and for all of us, the love that is channeled from the saving event of the Cross to each one of us as we partake of the Eucharist. The Sisters live what Pope Francis calls the joy of the Gospel in the way they honor one another's distinct gifts and help build up every convent and nursing home they run. The elderly on whom they pour out God's mercy, in countless ways, find in them a cheerfulness that heals.

The third mystery is the Cross. No one who reads a biography of Saint Jeanne Jugan can escape entering into the anguish of the cross she carried in the final decades of her life. In 1843 the community that Mother Jeanne had founded was stolen from her by ... a power-hungry priest, whom Church authorities would not catch up to until eleven years after Jeanne's death, and who fixed the election of a superior whom he could manipulate, assigning Jeanne to go out begging for the poor. Within a short time, he forced Jeanne into retirement and a life of obscurity that would last twenty-three years until her death.

Yet amid this quiet struggle Jeanne retained her peace and joy. That lovely anecdote about her in the final years, nearly blind, but smiling out her window at the young Sisters going off to work, strikes me as a sign that she lived the whole paschal mystery - not just Good Friday, but Easter too!

Her suffering also attests to the lesson that so many of us learn as we age, namely, that our own individual cross may be heaviest not when we are exhausted from the burdens of daily work, but when we lose our ability to work. The Residents of your homes know this. The elderly Sisters know this. Still, as we are "grafted onto the cross," Jeanne would tell us that we must "carry it joyfully unto death."

Joy is perhaps the ultimate mystery. So much of the world finds its joy in acquiring and dominating, whereas the Little Sisters of the Poor find it in giving and serving. Herein lies the wisdom that remains hidden to the wise and learned, but is revealed to the friends of Jesus. It's the wisdom that you possess, Sr. Mary Gerard and Sr. Faustina Clare. We are so grateful you have received the grace to make your profession. Now live the joy of the Gospel within your new community, for the salvation of your souls, for the growth of Mother Church and this Congregation of Sisters, and for the glory of God — who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen. 



Mary & Memory: the rosary weaves together our stories and Mary's

An anyone who spends time with the elderly cannot help but notice the prominent role that memory plays in their lives. While some older people show signs of significant memory loss, others laugh off those minor lapses we've all come to refer to as "senior moments." Elders spend hours evoking memories from the past and mulling over their life experiences. While the young often do not appreciate the tendency of their elders to return to the past, such reminiscing is a significant part of aging.

Memory is a constant thread running through the lives of the elderly. For those who practice their Catholic faith, the rosary is also an ever-present element of their lives. During this year dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima a group of Residents sat down to talk about what the rosary means to them. They agreed that as they pray the rosary they feel closer to Jesus and his Mother, and this brings them peace. They also said that meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary helps them to keep the life of Jesus, and his love for them, in mind throughout the day.

Pope Saint John Paul II linked the rosary with the concept of memory. "Mary lived with her eyes fixed on Christ, treasuring his every word: 'She kept all these things, pondering them in her heart' (Lk 2:19; cf. 2:51)," he wrote. "The memories of Jesus, impressed upon her heart, were always with her, leading her to reflect on the various moments of her life at her Son's side. In a way those memories were to be the 'rosary' which she recited uninterruptedly throughout her earthly life.... In the recitation of



The memories of Jesus, impressed upon her heart, were always with her.

the rosary, the Christian community enters into contact with the memories and the contemplative gaze of Mary.”

Pope Francis has also linked our Blessed Mother with memory, calling her “our Lady of Memory” because she continually meditated on “interior inspirations and life events,” pondering them in her heart. It is interesting to consider how the writings of these two Popes weave together the themes of rosary and memory,

which are so important to the elderly.

Offer your memories to the Lord

Speaking to older persons at our home in Perth, Australia in 1986, Pope John Paul II encouraged them to offer their memories to the Lord. “Thinking about the past will not alter the reality of your sufferings or disappointments,” he said, “but it can change the way you look at them. Younger people cannot fully understand the way in which the elderly sometimes return to the distant past, but such reflection has its place. And when it is done in prayer it can be a source of healing.”


“This kind of healing is gained through an awareness and appreciation of the ways in which God works through human weakness as well as through human virtue,” John Paul II explained. Even the memory of our sins does not discourage us any longer,

because we realize that God's mercy is greater than our sins and that God's pardon is a proof of his faithful love for us."

"You can look back on lives rich in memories," John Paul II continued. "Perhaps some of you remember times of pain and the hopes that never quite materialized. But all of us — to use the words of the First Letter of Saint John — 'know and believe the love God has for us.' Yes, God has loved and continues to love each one of you in a deep and personal way. If you think back, you will see that your whole life is a story of God's love coming upon you in successive stages." To see our lives as the unfolding story of God's personal love — these words of John Paul II resonate deeply with our Residents.

Read the present situation in the light of God's saving power

Pope Francis also emphasizes the importance of memory, especially in relation to the irreplaceable role of the elderly in the family. "Memory has the power to unite and integrate.... Memory becomes the vital unifying force of a family or a people," he wrote in *Open Mind, Faithful Heart*. "A family without memory hardly deserves to be called such. A family that doesn't



Memory reads the present situation
in the light of God's saving power.



The voice of God resounds in the Church and in each person's life.

respect and care for its grandparents, who are its living memory, is a family in disintegration, but the families and the peoples that remember their past are families and peoples with a future.”

In *Open Mind, Faithful Heart* Pope Francis suggests that in God's historical deeds we see an “ongoing theme that offers a key for reading the present and a promise that opens toward the future.” Memory, he said, learns to read the present situation in the light

of God's saving power, and when read this way, “the present is transformed into promise for the future.”

Referring to Jesuit founder Saint Ignatius, who encouraged believers to remember all that God had done for them by remembering the gifts he bestows — “creation, redemption, and other particular gifts,” Pope Francis wrote, “Let us ask for the grace to recover memory — memory of our own personal journeys, memory of how the Lord sought us out, memory of our families, memories of our people.”

Through Scripture the voice of God resounds in the Church and in each person's life, helping us to trust in his Providential love. Just as God's chosen people were tested as they traveled through the desert, each of us passes through trials during our earthly pilgrimage, but God is always with us. “*Fear not, for I have redeemed you, ... and I will redeem you again,*” says the prophet Isaiah (43:1-21). “*Be strong and of good courage, do not fear or be in*

(continued on page 19)



Generations of Love

ROSARY MEDITATIONS
FOR GRANDPARENTS

from the Catholic Grandparents Association

**SPECIAL
PULL-OUT
SECTION!**

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

THE ANNUNCIATION

"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" (Lk 1:28).

I imagine that when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, she was praying to God the Father. Hearing the greeting "full of grace" really would have perplexed her. "Full of grace" means completely containing the life of God. That means she had been given all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Knowing that she was very little, Mary would put all her trust in God to be what he wanted her to be. Her humility would tell her that, on her own, she could not do such a great task. But being "full of grace" meant that she had the fullness of God's life within her, so he would be her help in every need.

Thank you, Jesus, for the gift of grandchildren. Through this cherished gift, you bring me to a closer understanding of how you love us. Help me, Jesus, to teach my grandchildren that you are with us with infinite love. With little eyes watching me I want to strive all the more to reflect your perfect love and do as Mary did, proclaiming, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord."

THE VISITATION

"In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah ... and greeted Elizabeth" (Lk 1:39).

I can imagine the joy Elizabeth felt when she saw the familiar, friendly face of her cousin willing to lend a hand. How soothing Mary's sweet, gentle kindness and her holy presence must have been at that wonderful time in Elizabeth's life, when she was preparing for the birth of her son.

Jesus, I feel your love flowing through me. May I always feel this close to you and all those you put in my life, so that I may share your love with everyone. Help us remember what a great gift it is to our

grandchildren that we love each other — both immediate and extended family. May love and service be our mission, just as it was Mary's on her visit to her cousin Elizabeth.

THE NATIVITY

*“You will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes
and lying in a manger” (Lk 2:12).*

Jesus, we kneel before you, our awesome God lying in the manger as a newborn baby, born into the world to live among us. Show us the way and teach us how to lay down our lives for you and those we love. Born into poverty, you remind us not to spoil our family with material things. You show us your love for the poor by choosing to be poor. Jesus, help me to live simply as my grandparents did. They taught me that to love, you do not need to have many possessions. They gave their time, showing me what is really important in life.

May we all have that kind of awe, Jesus, when we contemplate the nativity and meditate on your humility and the greatness of your love. May we remember that adoring you in the manger is much like adoring you in the Eucharist. May we always treasure the time we have with Our Lord in the most Blessed Sacrament and the time we have together loving each other and leading each other closer to God.

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE

*“And when the time came for their purification
according to the Law of Moses, they brought him
up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord” (Lk 2:22).*

Mary and Joseph knew who Jesus was — the Son of God, the Messiah. Mary could have said, “We don't need to go through this ritual of purification. This baby is the King of the Universe, and I am his mother!” But she did not do that. Following the laws God gave to Moses, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the Temple. They went out of love and faithful obedience to God.

We cannot love without faith and obedience. We come to know God when we obey his will and do what he wants us to do. If we believe and have faith in all that God has said, we will obey. In obeying we choose to live good lives.

God the Father, give me perfect obedience so that I can love you more. I want to be close to you in all things. I want to be face to face with you for eternity. Purify my heart. Help me model to my family great obedience to your will so that they will want to love and follow you too.

THE FINDING OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

“And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers” (Lk 2:47).

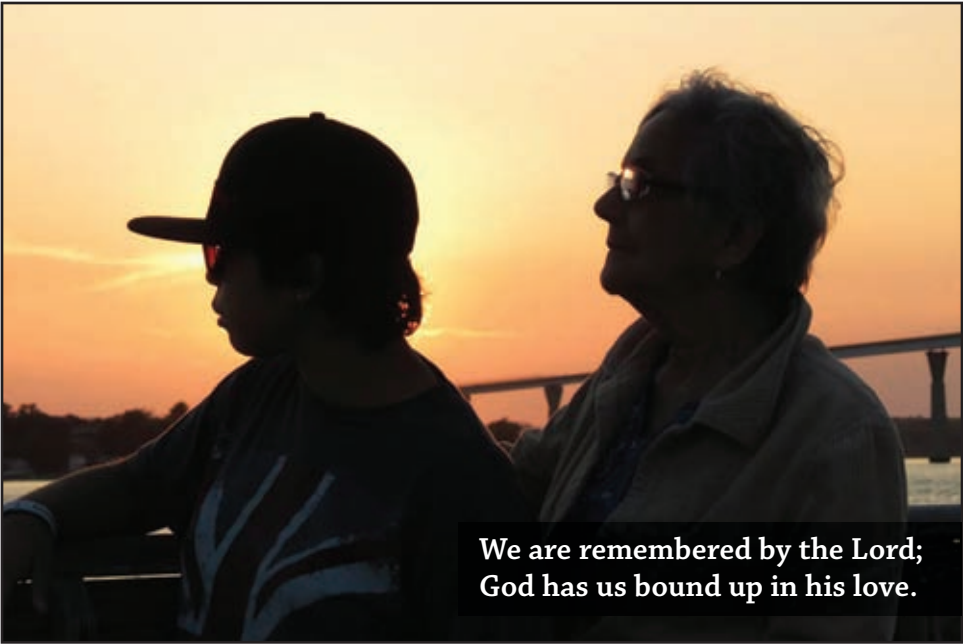
Oh Jesus, what a beautiful sight! A perfect boy of twelve, sitting among the elders and the teachers, talking about Scripture. If I place myself there, I want to ask you so many questions. I yearn to hear your responses. I want to see the love you have for the Father written on your adorable face. I want to spend time with you, Jesus, talking and listening to you.

We find you, Jesus, in the love and charity we share. Help us to be a holy family that loves unconditionally, overlooks each other's faults and finds you among us.



“Talk” with your grandfather and grandmother, namely, the “older” generation. Young people need to listen to the elderly, and the elderly need to listen to young people. Elderly people are not for you young people to put away in the closet! The elderly are not to be kept hidden; the elderly are waiting for a youth to go to make them talk, to make them dream and you, young people, need to receive from those men and women those dreams, those hopes that will make you live.

– Pope Francis, 9/4/2017



**We are remembered by the Lord;
God has us bound up in his love.**

dread of them: for it is the Lord your God who goes before you; he will not fail you or forsake you” (Deut 31:6-8). If we ground our lives in memory, then we can be certain that we are remembered by the Lord, that God has us bound up in his love, regardless of the trials we may endure.

“Remember how for these forty years the LORD, your God, has directed all your journeying in the wilderness, so as to test you by affliction, to know what was in your heart: to keep his commandments, or not. He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna, a food unknown to you and your ancestors, so you might know that it is not by bread alone that people live, but by all that comes forth from the mouth of the LORD. The clothing did not fall from you in tatters, nor did your feet swell these forty years. So you must know in your heart that, even as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD, your God, disciplines you. Therefore, keep the commandments of the LORD, your God, by walking in his ways and fearing him” (Deut 8:2-6).

Mary, the guardian of memory

For the woman who “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (Lk 2:19), memory enabled her to understand her own situation within the greater context of the history of the Chosen People. She demonstrates this awareness in her Magnificat: *“For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him.... He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever”* (Lk 1:48-50; 54-55).

As Saint John Paul II wrote, “Mary lived with her eyes fixed on Christ, treasuring his every word. The memories of Jesus, impressed upon her heart, were always with her, leading her to reflect on the various moments of her life at her Son’s side.” Through all of the challenges and difficulties she would face, Mary’s hope, nourished by her meditation on the Word of God and by the unique treasures stored in her heart, never wavered. At the foot of the Cross she was both sorrowful and filled with watchful expectation of a mystery far greater than the terrible grief of Good Friday.

At that critical moment Mary remembered the promises of the Annunciation, and was blessed in her believing, thus becoming the first witness of what Pope Francis calls “the tomorrow of God” (Address to Camaldolese Nuns, November 13, 2013). Mary pondered in



The memories of Jesus, impressed upon her heart, were always with her.

her heart the promises, the prophesies and the memory of her Son. From the “living water” of memory came welling up within her the strength to remain standing, courageous and hope-filled at the foot of the Cross. Through the darkness of Good Friday and the silence of Holy Saturday, Our Lady continued to remember God’s promises. Despite her mother’s anguish she trusted in God’s mercy and love. Her risen Son thus found her waiting, her lamp burning brightly, on the third day.

The guardian of memory, Mary teaches us that prayerfully pondering the graces of the past enables us to draw from them the spiritual resources needed to confront the hopes, the promises and the challenges of the future with vision and determination (cf. Pope Francis, address to Korean Episcopal Conference, August 14, 2014). Although there are many ways to draw close to Mary and her Son, there is no more fruitful way than the contemplative recitation of the rosary, through which we meditate on the mysteries of Christ’s life and death as seen through the eyes of his mother.

Mary sets before us the “mysteries” of her Son

To pray the rosary with Mary is to remember with a mother’s heart. As Saint John Paul II taught in *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, the biblical understanding of remembrance denotes “a making present of the works brought about by God in the history of salvation.” These events are made present above all in the Liturgy, but they are also brought into the “today” of salvation, “to some extent,” through other forms of devotion. In the rosary Mary sets before us the “mysteries” of her Son, that those mysteries may remind us of his redeeming love, and that they may release anew all their saving power ... in our lives and in our world! The daily remembering of the mysteries of Christ with Mary — from the Annunciation through his passion, death and resurrection — can thus empower the elderly with his grace and his Spirit as they face the challenges of the autumn of life.

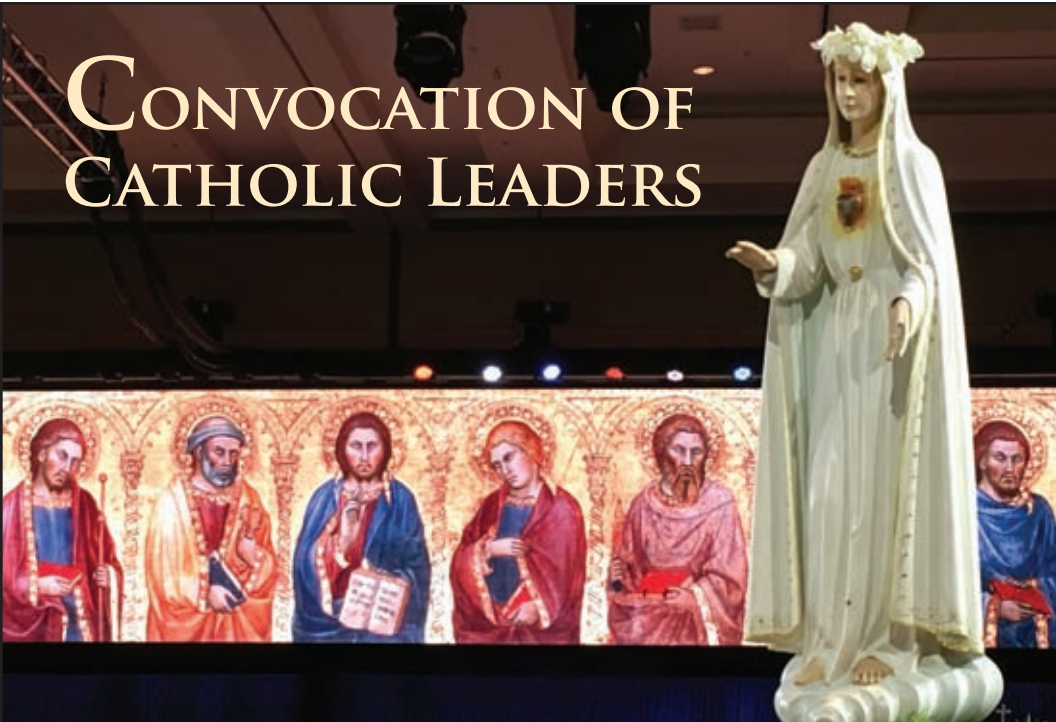
You will find joy and strength
when you ask Mary's help.



As I walk through our home I often see Residents sitting silently in the chapel or garden, rosary in hand. Watching them as they finger their beads, I imagine that with Mary's help, the threads of their life story — both joys and sorrows, high points and low — are being spun together with her memories of the saving events of Christ's life and death in a way that will bear fruit for eternity. It is this intertwining of memories — those from one's personal experiences with those from Mary's contemplative heart — that forms an unbreakable chain anchoring them in the hope that after all of the joys and sorrows of this life, they will see God face-to-face and be reunited with those who have gone before them.

"Jesus has given us his Mother Mary to be our Mother too," Pope Saint John Paul II confided to the elderly in Perth. "She is close to us every day of our pilgrimage to heaven. You will find joy and strength when you ask Mary's help, especially when you pray to her using that beautiful prayer which is the rosary. She is the Queen of heaven and she awaits us all with her Son. At the time determined by God she will welcome us to our eternal home, where together with the angels and saints we shall for ever praise the Most Holy Trinity: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." [⬇](#)

CONVOCATION OF CATHOLIC LEADERS



Over the July Fourth weekend several thousand Catholic lay men and women and hundreds of bishops and clergy gathered in Orlando, Florida for the first-ever Convocation of Catholic Leaders. The idea of an encounter between American bishops and lay leaders had been conceived eight years ago by the Bishops' Working Group on the Life and Dignity of the Human Person, but it was not until the publication of *Evangelii Gaudium* that the event took shape with a definite theme and direction. It is from this document, and Pope Francis' example, that the Convocation took on its sense of joyful urgency.

Two Little Sisters participated in this historic event. Sr. Robert Francis Marie, assistant provincial in our Baltimore province, attended as part of the delegation representing the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR). Sr. Constance Carolyn, communications director for our U.S. homes, was asked to lead a panel discussion on outreach to the elderly and to offer a brief personal testimony on radical missionary discipleship. The text of her reflection follows.

BEING CLOSE TO THE POOR IS ITS OWN REWARD

Sr. Constance Carolyn, l.s.p.

As I stand here to talk about radical missionary discipleship I'm a bit embarrassed. I'm a Little Sister of the Poor, but I'm not little! And although the charism of my community is humility and hidden service, we've been parked in the spotlight for four years now.

People have commended us for our courage in standing up for religious liberty, but when I think about the martyrs who laid down their lives for the sake of the Gospel, I am embarrassed by all of the attention we have received. The followers of Christ have been at odds with the dominant culture in every age and it will always be this way. Like the useless servants in the Gospel who merely did their duty, we are only the instruments God has chosen in this moment of history to confound the proud and the powerful.

Taking the long view has helped me to stay grounded. So has the advice of our foundress, Saint Jeanne Jugan: "We must efface ourselves in everything God asks of us, as only the instruments of his work." Although there have been a few perks associated with life in the spotlight, where I really want to be is at home with our elderly Residents. Being close to the poor is its own reward.

Being close to the poor and forgotten is, I believe, the heart of *Evangelii Gaudium*. I also believe it is what will give the Church credibility in a faithless world. As our Holy Father has often said, being a disciple today means getting involved in people's daily lives and touching their suffering flesh. It means abasing ourselves and taking on the smell of the sheep. In a hands-on ministry like ours, these words come to life in a very concrete, nitty-gritty kind of way.

(continued on page 26)



During the Convocation for Catholic Leaders Providence led us to encounter the dynamic leadership team of a new initiative, Catholics for Freedom of Religion. The organization was founded in 2012 by Barbara Samuells and a group of fellow retirees, and works closely with the diocese of Rockville Centre, which is comprised of Catholic communities on Long Island, New York.

Catholics for Freedom of Religion (CFFR) first contacted us to let us know about their existence and offer their prayerful support in the weeks leading up to our day at the U.S. Supreme Court in March 2016. The group was born in reaction to recent assaults on religious liberty in our country, including the HHS Contraceptive Mandate, which gave rise to our own legal battle. “Lay Catholics and Americans of other faiths don’t realize that they have a role they must play in religious freedom,” said CFFR cofounder Barbara Samuells. The group wants to change the conversation on religious liberty and is active educating citizens about our first freedom.

Samuells and her group help organize Rockville Centre’s annual Fortnight for Freedom Rally. They also use a variety of tools to raise awareness about religious liberty, including hosting speakers, creating videos, conducting prayer events, holding an art and essay contest and distributing flyers promoting religious liberty. From Long Island the group has already spread to several states, including South Carolina, Texas and Florida.

For more information visit <http://www.catholicsforfreedomofreligion.org> or <https://www.facebook.com/CatholicsforFreedomofReligion/>

Christian humility means taking on the attitude of a servant. It also means having a healthy realism about ourselves. This is what has struck me the most about Pope Francis. In his first interview as Pope he identified himself as “a sinner on whom the Lord has turned his gaze.” At a difficult moment in my life

these words set me free. If a Pope could admit that he is a sinner, then I could finally accept my weaknesses rather than trying to keep them buried in a vain attempt at perfection. This has enabled me to accept whatever place the Lord assigns me at the moment — in front of a TV camera or in the last place at home — so that he can use me as he wishes.

I’ve learned that admitting my own poverty and littleness is no obstacle to effective discipleship and leadership — it is the key. It is only when we are convinced of God’s personal love and constant presence in our lives — despite our own ugliness — that we can let go of pretensions and selfish ambitions and let God fill our emptiness. When we take the lowest place his grace will flow into our souls like a river and he will use us in unbelievable ways.

When the Pope visited our community in 2015 he made a big impression on me, but not in the way I expected. He was so unassuming that all I could think as he approached me was how easily he would blend in among our elderly priests. He came to strengthen our resolve in facing our legal battle, but the advice he gave us was to sing to the elderly, to caress them and treat them tenderly, and to remember that it is Jesus whom we care for in them. He thus showed us the heart of Christ and the heart of the Gospel. [↵](#)





Catholic Grandparents Association

supporting a vocation with no retirement

The Catholic Grandparents Association (CGA) is an international volunteer-based, non-profit organization whose mission is to help grandparents pass on the Catholic faith and keep prayer in the heart of the family. The group began with a grandparents' pilgrimage to the National Shrine of Our Lady in Walsingham, England on the feast of St. Joachim and St. Anne, July 26, 2003. The pilgrimage was the inspiration of Irish entrepreneur Catherine Wiley, who had recently become a grandmother. As the parents of Our Lady and the grandparents of Jesus, Joachim and Anne are the heavenly patrons of the Association.



At the request of Catherine Wiley and her supporters, in 2008 Pope Benedict XVI composed a special prayer for grandparents, which Catherine presented at the Sixth World Family Congress in Mexico the next year. In September 2009, the Catholic Grandparents Association was officially launched during the Third Grandparents' Pilgrimage to Knock. Catherine Wiley became founder of the Association with Archbishop Michael Neary of the archdiocese of Tuam, in the west of Ireland, as its patron.

On August 26, 2017 a group of Little Sisters and Residents from our homes in Newark, Delaware and Washington D.C.

traveled to Philadelphia for the Association's inaugural event in the United States. With local chapters already established in a number of U.S. dioceses and parishes, CGA is hoping to become fully implanted in North America. The all-day event was held at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Wynnewood, a suburb of Philadelphia.

The day included keynote talks by CGA founder Catherine Wiley and Jim and Joy Pinto, hosts of a regular program on EWTN. Breakout sessions on a variety of themes related to grandparenting were presented by CGA members from some of the new North American chapters. A wealth of practical advice was offered, including the following points, which we felt we could adapt in our homes:

As a grandparent you have a sphere of influence in your family; make it count. Think about the power of your words before speaking.

Don't trouble others' waters; rather, blow the wind into their sails so they can flourish and move forward.

Give others the gift of themselves by teaching grandchildren that they are made in the image and likeness of God; help them to discover their personal gifts.

Don't worry about when the seeds you have planted will bloom. It's your **intentions** — not your grandchildren's **attention** — that counts.

Carry a photo of each grandchild in your wallet and pray for each one everyday.

Pray for your family in your daily rosary: for healthy, faith-filled marriages; for grandchildren preparing for their sacraments or celebrating their birthday or name-day that day; for grandchildren on exam days, etc.

When visiting, join in the morning and/or nighttime prayer routines your children have established with their



Our little delegation with Rev. Edward Hamilton, a retired priest from the archdiocese of Philadelphia who attended the conference.

own children, especially when your grandchildren are young. When they are visiting you, invite them to join in your daily prayer routines, including grace before meals.

Involve your grandchildren in seasonal celebrations in your home or theirs: May crowning, Mardi Gras, a St. Nicholas or St. Lucia party, Bambellini Sunday, the feast day of Sts. Joachim and Anne, blessing of pets on the feast of St. Francis, an All Saints celebration, etc.

Create non-materialistic traditions with your grandchildren for various holidays such as Christmas and Easter. Celebrate Christmas as Jesus' birthday.

Plan your vacation around the dates of your grandchildren's reception of the sacraments, graduations or other milestones so that you support them at these events.

Work on a "Catholic genealogy" or "oral history" project with teen grandchildren.

When children or grandchildren ask what to get you for

Christmas or your birthday, ask them to go to Mass, pray or spend quality time with you.

In addition to birthday cards send cards to your grandchildren to remember their baptism, first communion, confirmation or wedding anniversaries.

Invite teen or young adult grandchildren to join you in some form of community service.

Send teen grandchildren text messages offering to pray for any special needs or intentions they may have. You may not appreciate this form of communication, but they do!

Standing before the crowd of about 200 people, CGA founder Catherine Wiley was like a general rallying her troops. “The Church has never needed grandparents as much as it does now!” she announced. She said that grandparents are the glue that holds families together. God didn’t let grandparents reach this stage of life without giving them all the tools they need to live their vocation, she said; a vocation rooted in love and passed on through the generations.

Throughout the day it was obvious that these faith-filled Catholic grandparents take their mission of passing on the faith very seriously, and that grandparenting is truly a vocation in the Church — a vocation from which one never retires!

To learn more about the Catholic Grandparents Association visit <http://www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.org> or <https://www.facebook.com/catholicgrandparentsassociation/> 📌



Growing in wisdom through friendship

An intergenerational initiative is born at our home in Chicago.

A few months ago, one of my little sisters received \$50 from an anonymous donor through the archdiocese of Chicago with the task to give back to the community. Josephine could have just donated the money, but instead decided to think of a project that would impact people throughout the year. (an ambitious hope for \$50!) With Mom's help she considered many options and bounced ideas off many people, but couldn't decide between the young and the older person.

Fortunately for us (all eight siblings) our mom is the real Wonder Woman! She patiently went the extra mile with my little sister to find what she would really want to do. Once my little sis-



ter made her decision, she gave it a name: *Growing in Wisdom through Friendship*. Although it is only a few months old, it seems to be making a lasting impression on the young and older persons who have signed up for the project.

Josephine set up five pairs of pen pals; each with a Resident of Jugan Terrace and a middle school student. She talked me into helping her design a logo suited to the name and decided on a drawing of a somewhat intricate tree with different colored leaves next to a plant that is just beginning to grow. The logo shows that through the program, the students will be able to learn about their elders' lives and gain wisdom through the elders' choices and their life experiences, passing it on to the children so that they may continue to grow into the best they can be.

So far, the program has gone exceptionally well since all the participants have learned more about each other and are always excited to find a letter from their pen pal waiting for them. The advice, by the way, is proving effective both ways; the kids have a lot of tech knowledge to offer their Jugan Terrace pen pals. Both sides of the pen pal teams grow in wisdom by corresponding with



each other and it helps the young women learn to maintain a friendship.

On Sunday, April 23, the young women (plus a couple of moms and I) sponsored an afternoon tea with the pen pals in the garden of Jugan Terrace. We served homemade finger sandwiches, cookies, and other sweets, along with assorted teas. It was a beautiful day. The project will likely exceed my little sister's expectation of lasting a year!

– Clare Favela, Chicago, IL (age 16)



Samoans play for a good cause

On August 3, 2017 our home in Apia, Western Samoa, received a visit from the Samoa Under-16 National Football (soccer) team. The young women came to deliver food and other needed items to our Residents as part of a program organized by the Samoa Just Play Social Responsibility initiative. According to Just Play project manager and Samoa team manager, Lynette Faaiuas, the intent of the visit was to demonstrate that sports can be used as a positive tool for development.

One of the Residents spoke on behalf of the home to acknowledge the donation and wish the team a blessed tournament. The girls spent several minutes after the presentation speaking and mingling with the Residents. It was a moving morning not only for the elders but for the players, who used the experience as a motivation and inspiration.

The Just Play program is supported through the kind assistance of the Australian Government, the New Zealand Government, Football Federation Australia, U.E.F.A Foundation for Children and U.N.I.C.E.F. [🔗](#)

The culmination of an extraordinary year

This has been an extraordinary year of grace as we've celebrated the centenary of the apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima. And now we are looking forward to the 225th anniversary of the birth and baptism of Saint Jeanne Jugan on October 25th! Rather than just ride out the year uneventfully, Mother General Maria has invited us to mark this double anniversary in a memorable way.

"The 225th anniversary of her birth and baptism should fill us with thanksgiving to God who, in giving both human and divine life to Jeanne Jugan, raised up in her and through her a path of holiness in the Church through the humble service of the elderly poor," Mother Maria wrote to us. This beautiful charism is "actively being passed on thanks to her fidelity to the action of the Holy Spirit, and thanks also to so many holy Little Sisters who have preceded us. Today this charism is still relevant and very much alive in the Congregation and more widely so in the great family of Jeanne Jugan."

As we celebrate the 225th birthday of our foundress, Mother General has proposed "that we consecrate ourselves, all our homes and the entire Congregation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. "In this centenary year of the Fatima apparitions," she wrote, "Sister Mary of the Cross will be pleased to see her large family making this act to the Immaculate Heart which she loved so much."

We invite you to share in this momentous occasion with us. The consecration prayer composed by Mother General Maria is printed on the next page and we invite you to contact the home nearest you to see how you can participate in the celebration that will take place in your area on October 25th. We also invite you to join us in praying for vocations by offering a Hail Mary each day for this urgent intention (see inside back cover for details). [↙](#)

CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

**on the occasion of the 225th anniversary
of the birth and baptism of Saint Jeanne Jugan
October 25, 2017**

Immaculate Heart of Mary,
We come to you with confidence and love.
Following the example of Jeanne Jugan, our Mother,
We desire to contemplate you, love you and imitate you.

We consecrate ourselves to you.
We consecrate to you all our homes, our families, all the elderly
who are entrusted to our care, as well as those throughout the
whole world; all those who collaborate in our hospitaller work,
the whole extended family of Jeanne Jugan.

Mary, our Mother,
Help us to live in prayer, sacrifice and reparation as you request-
ed in Fatima. Help us to live with joyful fidelity our vocation of
Little Sisters of the Poor.

Draw down God's blessing upon the Congregation and make
each one of us a docile instrument in your maternal hands in
order to announce to all the Love and Mercy of God the Father
who desires the salvation of all his sons and daughters.

Mary, we desire to love you as Jeanne Jugan loved you and we
desire to live by doing all that Jesus tells us.

Immaculate Heart of Mary,
Accept our humble offering, take care of the entire Congrega-
tion, of our whole extended family, and help us to work more
and more for the salvation of souls and for the eternal glory of
God.

Amen.

Let us say a **HAIL MARY** together!

– St. Jeanne Jugan

This was St. Jeanne Jugan’s usual way of thanking people or praying for their special intentions.

In honor of Jeanne’s 225th birthday on October 25, please offer a Hail Mary for vocations to our Congregation everyday between October 1 and Christmas, 2017, that we will be able to continue caring for the elderly for 225 more years!



If you like, send us your special need or intention
and we will pray a grateful Hail Mary for you each day!

NAME or INITIALS: _____

CITY/STATE: _____

INTENTION(S): _____

Send this stub to: St. Jeanne Jugan Communications,
4200 Harewood Rd NE, Washington, DC 20017
or email your intentions through our website,
www.littlesistersofthepoor.org

Serenity

OCT 2017, No. 176

ST. JEANNE JUGAN
COMMUNICATIONS
4200 HAREWOOD RD, NE
WASHINGTON, DC 20017
www.littlesistersofthepoor.org

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