

Serenity

January 2013 Little Sisters of the Poor no. 158



*Those who make room for the elderly
make room for life!*

– Pope Benedict XVI



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: Eleanor Ciukowski and her great-granddaughter Katelynn, St. Mary's Home, Chicago, Illinois.

Inside cover: *Light to the Gentiles*, by Greg Olsen.

Inside back cover: Flight into Egypt, photo by I.s.p.

Back cover: Our mother-house, La Tour Saint Joseph, in winter.

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Acknowledgments

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Open wide the doors!

THE COMMON THEME of the articles in this issue of *Serenity* seems to be opening doors. First, the majority of these pages are dedicated to the Year of Faith, which Pope Benedict launched with the words, “The door of faith is always open for us...” (*Porta Fidei*, n. 1).

Second, the issue actually begins with the text of a talk our Holy Father gave to residents of a home for the elderly in Rome in November 2012. “The quality of a society, I mean of a civilization, is also judged by how it treats elderly people and by the place it gives them in community life,” the Pope said. “Those who make room for the elderly make room for life! Those who welcome the elderly welcome life!” The significance of these words cannot be underestimated: Benedict XVI said that our society can be judged by the welcome we give to the elderly! To make room for them is to welcome life!

This issue of *Serenity* also contains a reflection by a Little Sister on the faith of Mary and Joseph, figures beloved by Saint Jeanne Jugan. Written in the glow of Christmastide, this piece evokes the couple’s obedience of faith in submitting themselves to God’s mysterious plan for the Incarnation. Their story, too, involved a door and a welcome — or rather the failure of a certain inn keeper to open the door and make room for the young couple about to bring the holy Child into this world. Together, the Pope’s words and the story of Mary and Joseph call to mind the words of a hymn we Little Sisters are fond of singing. Entitled *With All the Saints*, it invites us to gather with “holy Mary and Joseph, ... with all in need, the poor and forsaken to whom the inn keeper shuts the door.” As we put away our Christmas decorations for another year, may we continue to welcome Christ by opening the door of our hearts to faith, and the door of our homes to those in need! 



I come to you

as Bishop of Rome,
but also as an old man visiting his peers....

Addressing all the elderly in spirit,
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I would like to tell you with deep conviction:

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It is beautiful to be old!

On November 12, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI paid a visit to a home for the elderly in Rome operated by the Sant'Egidio community, a lay movement founded in Rome in 1968 by Prof. Andrea Riccardi. The movement is dedicated to prayer, evangelization and solidarity with the poor. The text of the Holy Father's talk to the elderly that day follows.

I COME TO YOU AS BISHOP OF ROME, but also as an old man visiting his peers. It would be superfluous to say that I am well acquainted with the difficulties, problems and limitations of this age and I know that for many these difficulties are more acute due to the economic crisis. At times, at a certain age, one may look back nostalgically at the time of our youth when we were fresh and planning for the future. Thus, at times our gaze is veiled by sadness, seeing this phase of life as the time of sunset. This morning, addressing all the elderly in spirit, although I am aware of the difficulties that our age entails I would like to tell you with deep conviction: it is beautiful to be old! At every phase of life it is necessary to be able to discover the presence and blessing of the Lord and the riches they bring. We must never let ourselves be imprisoned by sorrow! We have received the gift of longevity. Living is beautiful even at our age, despite some "aches and pains" and a few limitations. In our faces may there always be the joy of feeling loved by God and not sadness.

In the Bible longevity is considered a blessing of God; today this blessing is widespread and must be seen as a gift to appreciate and to make the most of. And yet frequently society, dominated by the logic of efficiency and gain, does not accept it as such: on the contrary it frequently rejects it, viewing the elderly as non-produc-

tive or useless. All too often we hear about the suffering of those who are marginalized, who live far from home or in loneliness. I think there should be greater commitment, starting with families and public institutions, to ensure that the elderly be able to stay in their own homes. The wisdom of life, of which we are bearers, is a great wealth. The quality of a society, I mean of a civilization, is also judged by how it treats elderly people and by the place it gives them in community life. Those who make room for the elderly make room for life! Those who welcome the elderly welcome life!

From the outset the Community of Sant'Egidio has supported so many elderly people on their way, helping them to stay in their own living milieus and opening various "casa-famiglia" in Rome and throughout the world. Through solidarity between the young and the old it has helped people to understand that the Church is effectively a family made up of all the generations, where each person must feel "at home" and where it is not the logic of profit and of possession that prevails, but that of giving freely and of love. When life becomes frail, in the years of old age, it never loses its value and its dignity: each one of us, at any stage of life, is wanted and loved by God, each one is important and necessary (cf. Homily for the beginning of the Petrine Ministry, 24 April 2005).

Today's visit fits into the European Year of Active Aging and of Solidarity between the Generations. And in this very context I would like to reaffirm that the elderly are a value for society, especially for the young. There can be no true human growth and education without fruitful contact with the elderly, because their life itself is like an open book in which the young generations may find precious indications for their journey through life.

Dear friends, at our age we often experience the need of the help of others; and this also happens to the Pope. In the Gospel we read that Jesus told the Apostle Peter: "when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go" (Jn 21:18). The Lord was referring



to the way in which the Apostle was to witness to his faith to the point of martyrdom, but this sentence makes us think about that fact that the need for help is a condition of the elderly. I would like to ask you to seek in this too a gift of the Lord, because being sustained and accompanied, feeling the affection of others is a grace! This is important in every stage of life: no one can live alone and without help; the human being is relational. And in this case I see, with pleasure, that all those who help and all those who are helped form one family, whose lifeblood is love.

Dear elderly brothers and sisters, the days sometimes seem long and empty, with difficulties, few engagements and few meetings. Never feel down at heart: you are a wealth for society, even in suffering and sickness. And this phase of life is also a gift for deepening the relationship with God. The example of Blessed Pope John Paul II was and still is illuminating for everyone. Do not forget that one of the valuable resources you possess is the essential one of prayer: become interceders with God, praying with faith and with constancy. Pray for the Church, and pray for me, for the needs of



*May you feel
beloved by God* and know how to bring
a ray of God's love to this society of ours!

the world, for the poor, so that there may be no more violence in the world. The prayers of the elderly can protect the world, helping it, perhaps more effectively than collective anxiety. Today I would like to entrust to your prayers the good of the Church and peace in the world. The Pope loves you and relies on all of you! May you feel beloved by God and know how to bring a ray of God's love to this society of ours, often so individualistic and so efficiency-oriented. And God will always be with you and with all those who support you with their affection and their help.

I entrust you all to the motherly intercession of the Virgin Mary, who always accompanies us on our journey with her motherly love and I willingly impart my blessing to each one of you. I thank you all! ❀

Mary, Joseph and the door of faith

Saint Jeanne Jugan had great devotion to the Mother of God and her husband, Saint Joseph. No doubt she modeled her life on the courageous and faith-filled lives of these two great figures.

IN OUR FAITH CONVERSATIONS WE OFTEN REFER TO DOORS — church doors, holy doors, the door to our hearts and even the gates of heaven. From the very first day of his pontificate, Blessed John Paul II invited the faithful to “open wide the door to Christ!” Pope Benedict XVI also uses the image, introducing the Year of Faith with a similar phrase, “The ‘door of faith’ is always open for us...” Even Christ himself spoke of doors: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me” (Rev 3:20).

As Christmas rolls around each year, we decorate our doors with wreaths and remember the innkeeper who closed his door to the young couple seeking shelter in Bethlehem, proclaiming that there was no room in the inn. Surely he did not realize that it was the long-awaited Messiah knocking! In Mexico and some other Spanish-speaking countries, the faithful re-enact this scene each year through the tradition of Las Posadas. Every night from December 16–24, processions wind their way through local villages, with actors dressed as Mary and Joseph knocking on their neighbors’ doors looking for shelter. Unlike the Gospel account, however, during Las Posadas the doors are always opened and the travelers are offered cordial hospitality.

Holiday traditions aside, do we ever stop to think about what it must have been like for the young couple who found themselves



"Light to the Gentiles," painting depicting the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, by Greg Olsen.

*Like Mary,
Saint Joseph's greatness
is rooted in his faith.*

– Rev. Frederick L. Miller

so far from home in such unusual circumstances? After all, Mary could have been stoned for her unplanned pregnancy; Joseph's honor was on the line; and a cold, abandoned stable was nowhere for a royal birth. For Mary and Joseph, the trip to Bethlehem was an important stage in the journey of faith that had begun with a mysterious angelic visitor knocking on the door of their hearts. It was a pilgrimage that required courageous faith, if not total abandonment into God's hands.

A passage from *Porta Fidei* could well be applied to Mary and Joseph as they entered into God's mysterious plans. "Only through believing," the Pope wrote, "does faith grow and become stronger; there is no other possibility for possessing certitude with regard to one's life apart from self-abandonment, in a continuous crescendo, into the hands of a love that seems to grow constantly because it has its origin in God."

Much has been written about Mary's faith, and yet the faith of Joseph, her spouse, was just as heroic. Beginning with Mary, let us briefly examine what may be called the obedience of faith of Jesus' earthly parents.

In his latest book, *Jesus of Nazareth, the Infancy Narratives*, Benedict XVI writes that Mary's response to the angel unfolds in three steps. First, she is "troubled and pensive." Mary ponders; she "dialogues within herself;" she "seeks to understand," the Pope writes. Mary "stands before us as a woman of great interiority, who holds heart and mind in harmony and seeks to understand the context, the overall significance of God's message."

Mary then asks a question, "How can this be, since I have no husband?" She does not doubt that the promise can be fulfilled, as Zechariah had done when he learned that his elderly wife would bear a child. Instead, she asks how. After the angel assures her that she will conceive by the power of the most High, Mary offers "a straightforward yes:" "Let it be to me according to your word." Benedict writes that Mary becomes a mother through her "yes." "Through her obedience, the Word entered into her and became fruitful in her."

Pope Benedict then emphasizes the angel's departure. "The great hour of Mary's encounter with God's messenger — in which her whole life is changed — comes to an end, and she remains there alone, with the task that truly surpasses all human capacity." She then had to continue along "the path that leads through many dark moments ... right up to the night of the Cross." How often, the Pope suggests, she must have returned inwardly to those consoling words, "Do not be afraid!"

But Mary was not alone in her mysterious journey. She was accompanied by Joseph, a man of great faith and integrity. While Mary's annunciation is found in Saint Luke's Gospel, Joseph's encounter with the angel through a dream is recounted in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. The evangelist refers to Joseph as a "just man," which the Pope explains indicates one who "maintains living contact with the word of God," into which he "sinks the roots of his being" as a tree planted beside flowing waters constantly brings forth fruit. God's will is not for him a law imposed from without, but rather a joy — Gospel, or good news, which he reads with a loving openness to God. As such, Joseph is "inwardly prepared for the new, unexpected and humanly-speaking incredible news that comes to him from God."

Saint Joseph, writes Benedict, is inwardly watchful for the divine; he has a sensitivity for God and his ways which enables him to discern. "The message conveyed to Joseph is overwhelming, and it demands extraordinarily courageous faith." After the birth of Jesus, Joseph again receives instructions from God in a dream. And again he is presented "as the listening and discerning one, the obedient one who is also decisive and acts wisely." In both instances, Joseph says nothing, but he does as the angel of the Lord commands him, taking Mary as his wife, and then taking her and the baby into Egypt. "In this way," wrote Blessed John Paul II in his encyclical, *Guardian of the Redeemer*, "he showed a readiness of will like Mary's."

In faith, Joseph surrendered his entire life to the mystery of the Incarnation, just as Mary had done. Mary and Joseph were asked to



make an identical act of faith — “through Mary’s faith, the Son of God became man. Through Joseph’s faith, Mary’s child became Son of David, the Messiah of Israel,” wrote Rev. Frederick L. Miller, in his work, *Saint Joseph, Our Father in Faith*. “Like Mary, Saint Joseph’s greatness is rooted in his faith, a faith that demanded incomprehensible confidence in God’s power and a heroic degree of charity.”

In the words of John Paul II, Joseph was “the first to share in the faith of the Mother of God.... He is also the first to be placed by God on the path of Mary’s ‘pilgrimage of faith.’ ... Joseph’s way of faith moved in the same direction [as Mary’s]: it was totally determined by the same mystery, of which he, together with Mary, had been the first guardian.”

Father Miller suggests that through his response to God’s word, his total trust in God’s power to save and his tender love for Mary and her son, Saint Joseph is the paradigm of the obedience of faith, hope and love for every member of the Church. Surely Joseph obtains for all who ask a share in his obedience of faith.

It is no wonder that Saint Jeanne Jugan, whose favorite Scripture passage was “The just man shall live by faith” (Hab 2:4; Heb 10:38), had such great devotion to Saint Joseph, along with

a profound love for the Mother of God. From this holy couple she learned the secret to union with God in faith. From them she learned to consecrate herself totally to the Person and the redemptive mission of Christ, according to her own unique vocation. In Saint Jeanne, heroic faith was manifested through complete confidence that God would provide for the needs of the poor, and through the acceptance of a period of obscurity and injustice that lasted twenty-seven years. Just as Mary and Joseph must have strengthened their faith in moments of darkness by recalling the angel's words, "Do not be afraid," so Jeanne Jugan must have confirmed her call by recalling the words that had echoed in her young heart so clearly, "God wants me for himself; he is calling me for a work that is not yet founded."

Jeanne's life could be summarized by the following passage from *Porta Fidei*: "The life of Christians knows the experience of joy as well as the experience of suffering. How many of the saints have lived in solitude! How many believers, even in our own day, are tested by God's silence when they would rather hear his consoling voice! The trials of life, while helping us to understand the mystery of the Cross and to participate in the sufferings of Christ (cf. Col 1:24), are a prelude to the joy and hope to which faith leads."

Because Mary, Joseph and Jeanne Jugan persevered through darkness, they are able to lead us to the Light of Christ. As you knock on the door of faith this Year, they are waiting there to help you cross the threshold into a life of deeper communion with God. May these models of heroic faith help you to entrust yourself to God with sure confidence, knowing that his love awaits us at the end of the journey. ❀



Recognizing the Lord Jesus present in our lives and in our history

In our last issue of *Serenity* we featured stories from our Residents about signs and symbols of faith. Beginning with a group of employees in Noumea, we now share the personal faith stories of a variety of persons associated with our homes. The first reflection was translated from French.

WE ARE CARE GIVERS AT THE HOME OF THE LITTLE SISTERS in Noumea, New Caledonia. You might think that our profession becomes routine. We hope that this testimonial on how we care for the elderly will help change your mind.

At 6:30 each morning the personnel and the Little Sisters responsible for the care of the Residents gather to foresee the needs of the day. In addition to the sharing of necessary information, the meeting is rarely complete without a bit of teasing, a friendly squabble, or the sharing of a personal reflection or two — all so that everyone may begin their day's work in good humor. Cheerfulness is contagious, after all.

We then go to awaken the Residents, approaching each in their own way. In fact, the first contact of the morning often determines how well each person's day will unfold. We know so well the little idiosyncrasies of our Residents, so after knocking on the door (to which they never seem to respond), we enter, adapting ourselves to each one. For some, we let them know we are there by gently calling "coucou" from the other side of the room (difficult to translate from the French, "coucou" is roughly equivalent to "peek-a-boo"!). For others it is best to approach them in silence and gently caress their cheek, quietly whispering "bonjour." For some there are kisses; others remain completely immobile, pretending to be asleep, all to draw from us a bit of extra attention. Nothing makes us happier

than when a Resident looks up with a child-like expression, saying “Oh, it’s you.”

Each elderly person is so different, with their whims and their need for love and recognition. Our daily gestures of care can never be “standardized” in a set of procedures. It is up to us to care for each Resident in such a way that their expectations are met, so that they feel, even from the first moments of each day, that all will be well.

Mealtime is one of the most important moments in the day here at “Ma Maison” (French for “My Home”). Meals foster socialization and serve as reference points in the day. Our dining rooms take on the appearance of a fine restaurant, with tablecloths, napkins, flowers, music and appropriate condiments on each table. The ambiance awakens the senses even before the meal is served. For those who need assistance, before going to the dining room there is careful attention to personal appearance, all in respecting their preferences. This may mean helping them don a scarf, or a blanket over their knees; for others it may mean fixing their hair, or checking to make sure their clothes are clean. As caregivers we do a bit of everything — our task is to make each person feel like an individual, even in the midst of a large group. This requires that we give personal attention to each one, while at the same time avoiding situations that could lead to little conflicts or jealousies among them....

The elderly sometimes surprise us, especially those who are confused or disoriented. As soon as they arrive, and the singing of the grace before meals begins, they open their eyes and move their lips, singing the old familiar tune. Moments like this challenge our assumptions about the frail elderly. We can learn all the appropriate care techniques, but if we do not have patience in our manner of touching, of speaking, of listening to, of placing ourselves at the side of the other to feed them, without rushing — if we do not know how to give a bit of ourselves — we will never see these little changes in the Residents that make our work so fulfilling.

When at last the day is over — not for us, but for the Residents — and the hour to go to bed has come, they are all relieved. In fact,



they generally want to get to bed as soon after the evening meal as possible — all at once — which sometimes causes a bit of a commotion! Each one has their little bedtime rituals. These may include a massage for their legs, a bathrobe carefully placed at the foot of the bed, a blanket laid over their feet, the shades closed just-so, a little wave and a smile from us, and finally, a bedtime prayer. When we have helped them to accomplish these details,

we caregivers are happy with our work. The serenity and relaxed atmosphere that reign throughout the home each evening help us to accomplish our work with a sense of calm, and to give each person the attention they need. We are so accustomed to each one's "little nothings" that we accomplish them without even thinking. At the same time, it is these "little nothings" that make each Resident an individual for us.

In our personnel guidelines there is a phrase, "Those who are old have the right to be themselves." We respect this little motto, never revealing to each Resident's roommate their little idiosyncrasies. These are the little secrets of caring, the secrets of the heart.

Our foundress, Saint Jeanne Jugan, said, "Never forget that the poor are Our Lord." Caring for the elderly each day, from the time they rise until the moment they retire, is a matter of respecting them, accompanying them, helping them, and making possible a manner of living in which they can still find happiness.

— written by a group of employees in Noumea, New Caledonia

IN MAY OF 1990 while attending the Policemans' Memorial Day weekend in Washington D.C., I stopped to visit the National Shrine. It was there that I had a special moment of faith at one of Our Lady's altars, where my desire to become a Catholic was confirmed. While a non-Catholic, I had always attended Mass and raised my sons in the Catholic religion, but always felt like an outsider just looking on.

On August 31st, 1991, I became a Catholic, which came as a surprise to my family, as I had been receiving my instruction from our pastor privately during my days off from work. I feel that the silent witness of my wife's strong faith for then 26 years of marriage, as well as the inspiration and example of the Little Sisters, was a strong influence in this step of faith.

My faith journey continued, as I later became a volunteer in the home, then a member of the Association Jeanne Jugan, where I served as coordinator for six years. I also served as chaplain to my Fraternal Order of Police, and as a member of the Knights of Columbus, where I was recently elected Deputy Grand Knight. I know that Our Lady has protected me in my law enforcement career, and has guided me along every step in my journey of faith.

– Tom Mefford, A.J.J., Pawtucket, Rhode Island



JEANNE JUGAN RESIDENCE IN PAWTUCKET, RHODE ISLAND, enjoys the dedication and talent of many staff members who contribute to the family spirit at the home. After almost two years, it seems like



Lori Linardo, a registered nurse, has been a part of the “little family” for ever.

Lori recounts a story of faith that indirectly — or from the perspective of faith we may say providentially — led her to become part of the Jeanne Jugan Family: “My brother was born 52 years ago with spina bifida. When he was a few days

old he developed meningitis, and the doctor said he would not make it. My family had great faith in God and their prayers were answered. He did not only live, but has been able to walk, graduate high school and to be an independent adult. Though he has gone through many surgeries and setbacks, he has never given up his faith in prayer. He continues to watch the Mass on television every day and goes with the family to church on Sundays.”

Since childhood Lori felt the desire to become a nurse in order to help her older brother and others who suffer from handicaps. Her grandmother lived with the family and instilled in them a deep faith in God and a wonderful devotion to Our Lady, praying the rosary with them every afternoon. “From our mother and grandmother, we learned to enjoy every blessing that God gives us,” Lori related. Lori started out working in pediatrics and then transferred her skills to serve those at the other end of life. Although she is an astute rehabilitation nurse at our home, occasionally she works as a staff nurse on a Resident unit. The Residents and nursing assistants acknowledge that “it is always a treat when we have her all to ourselves.”

– *Written by the Little Sisters, Pawtucket, Rhode Island*

HAVE WE EVER QUESTIONED THE FAITH OF OUR BAPTISM; the faith that permeated the very air of the homes we each grew up in, the faith of our parents? Have we ever doubted that God himself is at our side, invisible, untouchable, but nevertheless with us to hear and answer our prayers?

No! We have never in all our lives lost the belief that God is real — Jesus Christ is real — and he hears and answers our prayers ... eventually in his own time and place.

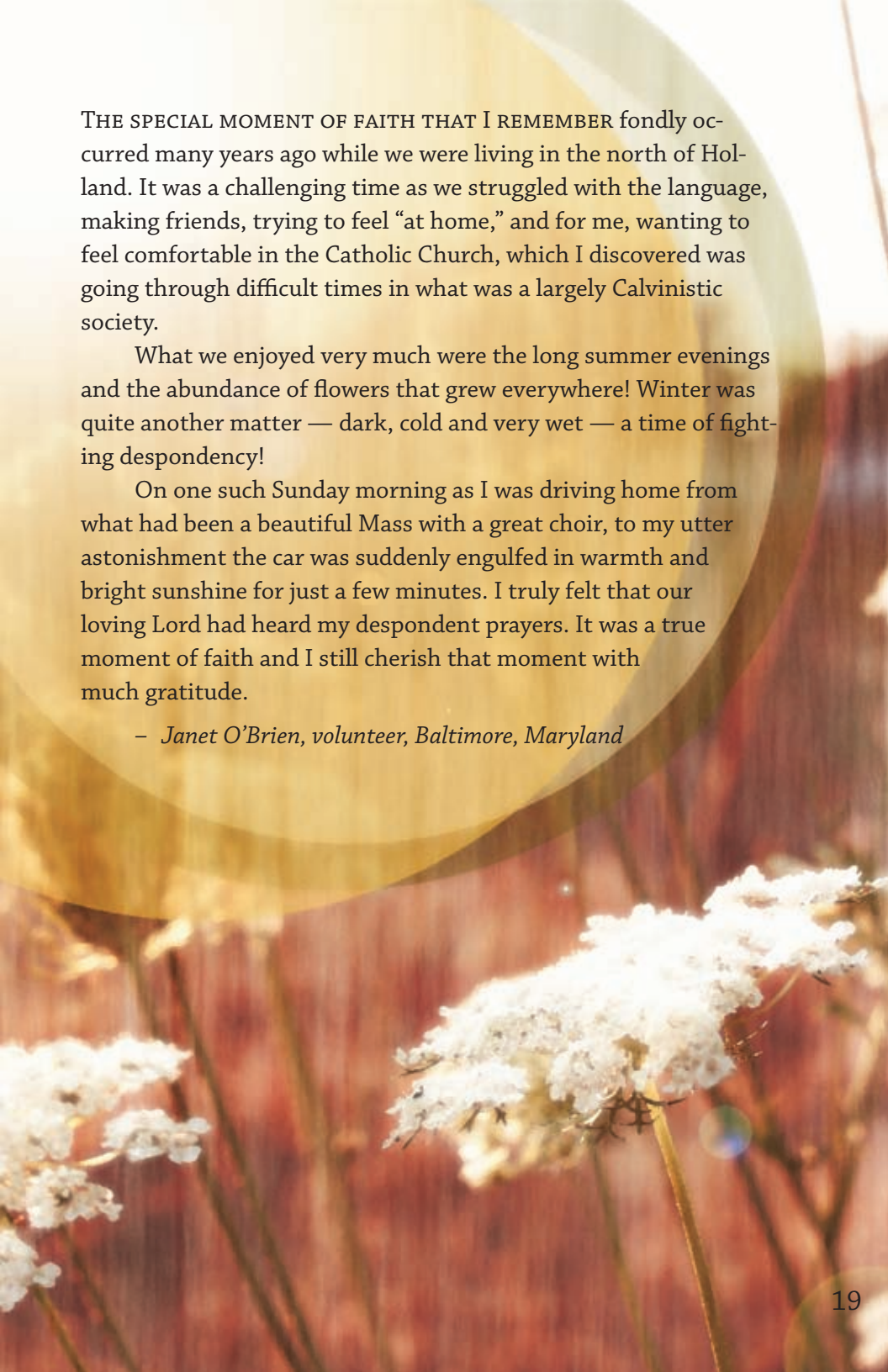
When as a young couple dating distance separated us — with Ellarita in our hometown of Chicago and Jack in college in Arizona — we wondered, “Will our love survive the test of time and distance and one day become a marriage?” So we made the Sorrowful Mother Novena together, with 2,000 miles between us, hoping for a miracle that our prayers, made in faith, would be answered and that someday we would be united in marriage.

The years of separation were tough. Our relationship was mostly by letter; but there were a few short times when we were together. But then, one day after Mass at a church in Tucson, Jack placed a ring on Ellarita’s finger and our future became a certainty.

Our 60 years together since the sunny blue sky day in Chicago when we were married have been, as in any lasting marriage, a trail of happiness and sorrows, achievements and losses, “in sickness and in health,” but always in FAITH that God would carry us; that we could hand to him the loads we couldn’t carry ourselves, that our prayers were heard, in some way. Our faith has been founded on trust.

Now, as the sunset of our lives here at the Little Sisters seems closer, our trail becomes more narrow and the “letting go” becomes more realistic, we pray that the faith by which we have lived will remain strong and carry us on the road ahead through that curtain that hides us from the next world promised to us, where we will live in the presence of an eternal Love beyond our poor mortal ability to imagine. Whatever pain lies before that, we believe that Jesus, who took on the pain of all humankind on his cross, will hold our hands tightly all the way. This is our Faith.

– Jack & Ellarita Wolfe, Cleveland, Ohio



THE SPECIAL MOMENT OF FAITH THAT I REMEMBER fondly occurred many years ago while we were living in the north of Holland. It was a challenging time as we struggled with the language, making friends, trying to feel “at home,” and for me, wanting to feel comfortable in the Catholic Church, which I discovered was going through difficult times in what was a largely Calvinistic society.

What we enjoyed very much were the long summer evenings and the abundance of flowers that grew everywhere! Winter was quite another matter — dark, cold and very wet — a time of fighting despondency!

On one such Sunday morning as I was driving home from what had been a beautiful Mass with a great choir, to my utter astonishment the car was suddenly engulfed in warmth and bright sunshine for just a few minutes. I truly felt that our loving Lord had heard my despondent prayers. It was a true moment of faith and I still cherish that moment with much gratitude.

– Janet O’Brien, volunteer, Baltimore, Maryland

IN MY EARLY DAYS AS A LITTLE SISTER I was given the opportunity to prepare one of the Residents to enter the Catholic Church. Conrad had been baptized as a Lutheran, but had fallen away from participation in church services. In his latter years he felt drawn to the Catholic Church. On entering the home as a Resident, he expressed his desire to become a Catholic. It became my privilege, with the aid of an adult catechism, to instruct Conrad in the Catholic faith.

Every afternoon we spent an hour in systematic study. On certain topics Conrad found similarities with what he had learned as a Lutheran. His eyes would light up with each successful new revelation of doctrine, practices, liturgy, hierarchy and sacraments. Finally after several months it was decided that Conrad was ready for his first Confession, then to receive conditional Baptism and the sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Confirmation. On that day in May, Joseph — the name he chose for Confirmation — was beaming with joy as he left chapel. He later related that at each thought of having truly received the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion, his deep joy was rekindled.

I cannot recall ever having met a happier man, day after day ... in whatever little job he undertook. Hence my stupefaction when some weeks later I came across Joseph almost in tears. When I inquired, he told me that he had witnessed an unpleasant altercation between two other Residents that day and couldn't believe what they were saying to one another. What lay behind his disappointment was that the Residents in question had also received Holy Communion that morning, which left Joseph searching his mind: How could they, with Jesus in their hearts, conduct themselves like that?

Joseph's point was well taken. We discussed human weakness, the possibilities of reconciliation and the inner guilt that could lead to repentance. Moreover, we agreed that we cannot judge our neighbor. Many times since then, I have stepped back and asked myself Joseph's question: are my words and behavior in keeping with the privilege of having received Christ in the Eucharist that day?

– Sister M. B., Latham, New York



CASSIE McMULLAN LIKES SURPRISES. It was a bit of a surprise to her she made it to her 100th birthday because she had never really wanted to live that long without her husband, Thomas.

“I was 34 years married, and 45 widowed. He was marvelous. He said to me, ‘Get married again,’ but I couldn’t. Nobody could take his place.”

To celebrate her 100th birthday earlier this year, Cassie, a resident in Dunedin, New Zealand, went for a short ride in a 1912 Model T Ford. The vintage car was manufactured the same year Cassie was born!

She learned to drive in a Model T but never gained enough confidence to get her licence and spent the rest of her life being driven around by her husband and then her children.

One of eight children, Kathleen Sullivan Brown, known as Cassie, spent most of her childhood “running around the hills” near Naseby with her brothers and had to walk two miles each day to and from school — a healthy, fit lifestyle she credited for her later longevity.

Another secret to Cassie’s longevity might be her faith. Cassie and her cousin Greta suffered from epilepsy since birth. Their mothers knew of a Redemptorist priest who was well known for his gifts of healing. He was asked to pray over Cassie and Greta (Cassie was

9 years old then). Father gave both girls a holy picture of the guardian angel with two children on it and prayed over and blessed them. Cassie was cured soon after and has not had a seizure since then. Her cousin Greta was not cured immediately. One day she had a seizure in the garden, fell onto a fence of barbed wire and cut her face. She was cured immediately after this incident.

Looking back, both Cassie and Greta knew that it was their mothers' faith and their own that healed them.

– *from our Little Sisters in Dunedin, New Zealand*

IN *PORTA FIDEI*, OUR HOLY FATHER WROTE that “By faith, men and women have consecrated their lives to Christ, leaving all things behind so as to live obedience, poverty and chastity with Gospel simplicity, concrete signs of waiting for the Lord who comes without delay.” For our Little Sisters in Hong Kong, a perfect story of faith was the silver jubilee celebration of three Little Sisters in September. All three are from Hong Kong, had made their novitiate and first profession there, and are now faithfully serving the needy elderly in the Congregation's two homes in their native city. Sisters Catherine Marie de la Presentation, Maria Magdalen and Cecilia Emmanuel are pictured at right at the moment of the renewal of their vows during their jubilee Mass on September 8th.

The other two photos were taken during the jubilee show performed by the Residents along with volunteers from several local youth groups. The Little Sisters were eager to involve the young people in the jubilee in order to give them an up-close look at consecrated life and the witness of our Little Sisters in following the charism of Saint Jeanne Jugan for twenty-five years. During this Year of Faith Pope Benedict has invited young people to overcome the tendency to remain enclosed in their own world. “Have the courage to ‘go out’ from yourselves in order to ‘go forth’ towards others,” he encouraged them. Through their interactions with the elderly, these young people in Hong Kong did just that!



INTERVIEW THE CHAPLAIN. It seems like a cop-out for a project centered on sharing faith. But really, how does a priest share his faith? There are obvious duties where priests act as the instruments of God and transcend the boundaries of the world. Yet priests are people too. Father Robert Dunn is just about as individual and unique as they come.



Father jokes in a heavily dramatized New York accent, “Faith is wha’ I do.” But then getting serious he says, “Faith is not what I do, it is who I am. Because Faith is not only a text; Faith is a test. Because, it is such a living dynamic it is hard to separate faith from life, and therefore the two are inseparable. Faith and life. It is not just ‘out there’ or ‘in here’, it is everything.”

According to Father, this Year of Faith is needed to counter the growing lack of faith present in our society. Hopefully this year will call people to see the content of faith in a dynamic way, rather than just seeing it as an academic subject. Rather than a phase, faith needs to be a force in one’s life.

He has grown by observing the attractive nature of exercising the living faith. Many of the Residents bear the pain of having a family member who has rejected the faith. Father encourages those who bear similar wounds to appreciate the faith they have and to pray for those relatives who have walked away.

Priesthood is more than a nine to five job. You do not just clock-in and clock-out each day. Father believes the most important witness for him is to do what the Church does, to live as an extension of what the Church asks. Father Dunn said he shares his faith by trying to deal with everything in life from a faith perspective. “That is where it becomes dynamic,” he stated as he leaned in to his words. “It’s not about what do we have to do, but how we should live.”

– *Father Robert Dunn was interviewed by Raven Dryden
at Jeanne Jugan Residence, Bronx, New York*

Saint Jeanne Jugan takes up residence on Long Island

SINCE ATTAINING SAINTHOOD, Jeanne Jugan has been showing up in some unexpected places! In August she took up residence at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. Then, in October she found a home at an out-of-the-way shrine in Manorville, a small town on Long Island, New York.

The idea of bringing Saint Jeanne to the Shrine of Our Lady of the Island was born last year when a delegation of Little Sisters visited the Montfort Fathers' shrine. Rev. Roy Tvrdik, SMM, the shrine's director, showed them the newly established "Avenue of the Saints," and several Little Sisters began to entertain the idea of bringing Saint Jeanne to the Avenue. Efforts soon got underway to make the dream a reality, procuring a bronze statue of our foundress from Spanish sculptor Angel Acosta.

October 3rd was chosen as "dedication day" in order to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Jeanne's beatification. The Montfort Fathers had taken care of having the statue set on a pedestal in the woods, not far from the beginning of the Avenue. The day was a bit damp, but the rain held off, thanks to St Joseph's intercession!

Buses carrying the Little Sisters, Residents and friends from nearly all the homes in the New York province arrived one by one, until nearly 200 pilgrims had assembled to honor Saint Jeanne. Mass began a little before noon, with Father Roy as the main celebrant. The Liturgy featured many festive elements, including musical animation by the novices' choir, with flute, violin and clarinet accompaniment. The relic of Saint Jeanne was carried in the entrance procession; the liturgical texts were taken from the Mass of Saint Jeanne Jugan.

At the conclusion of Mass Mother Provincial Margaret Regina thanked everyone for coming, sharing how she found this day a perfect preparation for the Year of Faith. Before adjourning for lunch, everyone was given the opportunity to venerate the relic of Saint Jeanne as her litany was sung by the novitiate choir.

photo by Gregory A. Shemitz



After a quick picnic lunch everyone headed to the Avenue of the Saints for the dedication of the new statue. Father Roy introduced the ceremony and then invited our good friend Father Sean Suckiel to read the Gospel of the Beatitudes.

With excitement at a high, Mother Provincial slowly raised the veil covering the statue. Saint Jeanne looked beautiful in her new setting of autumn-colored trees! Father blessed the statue with holy water; he then blessed the whole assembly, as the litany of Jeanne Jugan was sung again.

As an immediate preparation for the Year of Faith, the dedication of Jeanne Jugan's statue, in the shadow of Our Lady of the Island, gave us a privileged opportunity to reflect on the heroic example of these two models of faith. ❀

photo by Gregory A. Shemitz



photo by Gregory A. Shemitz





SAN FRANCISCO



*Mother General's
latest visit to America*

In September Mother General Celine de la Visitation visited our Sisters in South America, and then she headed north, visiting our three U.S. provinces. Although her detour through the United States was intended primarily to give her the opportunity to visit her family, she and her companion, Mother Assistant Gerard Patricia, were happy to meet Little Sisters, Residents, staff and many of our collaborators from California to New York.

At their first stop in San Francisco, Mother General's hometown, the travelers were greeted by Residents portraying the biblical scene of Abraham's angelic visitors (cf. Genesis 18; pictured at left), as well as many old friends.

On this page, Mother General and Mother Gerard Patricia greet a multi-cultural group of employees at St. Joseph's Home in Palatine, Illinois.

Below, Mother Assistant Gerard was happy to tag along on the collecting rounds at Chicago's produce market.



PALATINE



From Palatine Mother General went on to Baltimore, where she was greeted by Rose Dente (right), a Resident of the home for almost 40 years, who celebrated her 100th birthday in June. Baltimore's newly-formed bell choir gave their first performance for our travelers (below).

On October 18th Mother General and Mother Assistant were happy to meet our new postulants, who had just arrived at our home in Washington, D.C. (bottom).



BALTIMORE

POSTULATE





WASHINGTON, D.C.



NOVITIATE



QUEEN OF PEACE

Mother General's last stop was New York, where our travelers visited St. Ann's Novitiate and Queen of Peace Residence in Queens Village, New York.

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*God accomplished his greatest work
through the cooperation of two human
beings through the obedience of faith.*

– Rev. Frederick L. Miller



*My just one
shall live by faith.*

Hebrews 10:38

*— a favorite Scripture quote
of Saint Jeanne Jugan*

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