

Serenity

no. 163

Little Sisters of the Poor

July 2014





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 photo: Enjoying a moment in the garden, Jeanne Jugan Residence, San Pedro, California.

Back inside cover: painting of Saint Jeanne Jugan on wood by the Benedictine Sisters of a'Abbaye Notre Dame, Venieres-Boyer, Tournus, France.

Back cover: A job well done: prize-winning narcissus at our home in Aberdeen, Hong Kong. In Chinese culture the narcissus represents the culmination of talent and hard work and is said to bring forth hidden talents.

Serenity

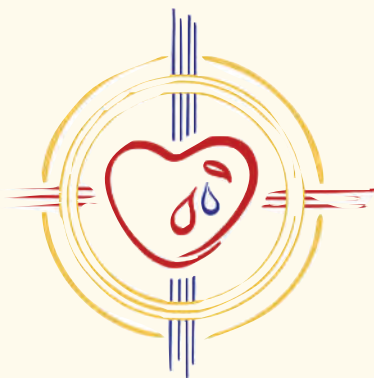
JULY 2014, No. 163

Published quarterly by the
Little Sisters of the Poor
with ecclesiastical approval
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Annual donation: \$5.00
Standard Postage paid at
Baltimore, MD



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It is in giving that we receive

IN THIS ISSUE OF *SERENITY* we devote significant space to a reflection on the virtue of mercy as practiced through the “merciful outlook.” The first attribute of this outlook is reciprocity, as Saint John Paul II once wrote: “An act of merciful love is only really such when we are deeply convinced at the moment that we perform it that we are at the same time receiving mercy from the people who are accepting it from us (*Dives in Misericordia*, n. 14).”

The college students who spent their spring break doing volunteer work in our homes learned this lesson well, as they so beautifully attest in *Spring break encounters: so much joy, so little time!* (page 18). One young woman writes of finding God in the elderly, “He smiled at me from faces creased with age; he reached out to me with frail hands; he spoke from the voiceless.”

Pope Francis would be very pleased with these young people, for they have understood a central tenet of his World Youth Day message for 2014: “The poor are not just people to whom we can give something. They have much to offer us and to teach us. How much we have to learn from the wisdom of the poor! ... In a very real way, the poor are our teachers. They show us that people’s value is not measured by their possessions or how much money they have in the bank. A poor person, a person lacking material possessions, always maintains his or her dignity. The poor can teach us much about humility and trust in God.”

This is truly a hope-filled message at a time when our population is rapidly aging. The growing number of elderly brothers and sisters in need of assistance should not be perceived as a burden, but as so many opportunities for “occasions of grace” in our busy lives! 🐾

Help me, O Lord, that my eyes may be merciful, so that I may never suspect or judge from appearances, but look for what is beautiful in my neighbors' souls and come to their rescue.



Help me, O Lord, that my ears may be merciful, so that I may give heed to my neighbors' needs and not be indifferent to their pains and moanings.

Help me, O Lord, that my tongue may be merciful, so that I should never speak negatively of my neighbor, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all.

Help me, O Lord, that my hands may be merciful and filled with good deeds, so that I may do only good to my neighbors and take upon myself the more difficult and toilsome tasks.

Help me, O Lord, that my feet may be merciful, so that I may hurry to assist my neighbor, overcoming my own fatigue and weariness. My true rest is in the service of my neighbor.

Help me, O Lord, that my heart may be merciful so that I myself may feel all the sufferings of my neighbor. I will refuse my heart to no one. I will be sincere even with those who, I know, will abuse my kindness. And I will lock myself up in the most merciful Heart of Jesus. I will bear my own suffering in silence. May your mercy, O Lord, rest upon me.

You yourself command me to exercise the three degrees of mercy. The first: the act of mercy, of whatever kind. The second: the word of mercy — if I cannot carry out a work of mercy, I will assist by my words. The third: prayer — if I cannot show mercy by my deeds or words, I can always do so by prayer. My prayer reaches out even there where I cannot reach out physically.

O my Jesus, transform me into yourself, for you can do all things.

Practicing the merciful outlook among the elderly

DIVINE MERCY WAS A CORNERSTONE of the pontificate of Saint John Paul II. During his last pilgrimage to Poland in 2002 he proclaimed, “Outside Divine Mercy, there is no hope for mankind.” The idea of a Divine Mercy Congress was born at a meeting of bishops in Cracow after John Paul’s death. The first such Congress was held in Rome in 2008, followed by a second in Cracow in 2011. The third World Congress on Mercy will be held this August in Bogota, Colombia, with the aim promoting the spirituality of mercy as a paradigm for the new evangelization. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, President of the Congress, has asked religious communities around the world to pray for its fruitfulness.

On their website, the Marianists of the Immaculate Conception, who administer the Divine Mercy Shrine in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, suggest that understanding and living the Divine Mercy message is “as simple as remembering ABC”:

- A:** Ask God for mercy;
- B:** Be merciful, for God wants us to let his mercy and forgiveness flow through us;
- C:** Completely trust in Jesus, because the graces of his mercy depend upon our trust.

Mercy is a key word in the apostolic spirituality of our Congregation of Little Sisters of the Poor. Jesus “placed before us the example of the Good Samaritan and invited us to follow it,” our Constitutions tell us. “He proclaimed ‘Happy the merciful.’ He identified himself with his neighbor, and recognized as done to himself all that was done to his brethren” (*Constitutions*, n. 53). Indeed, as Little

Sisters we are called by our vocation to be icons of mercy, living expressions of God's tenderness to the little ones. This is so by our fourth vow of hospitality: "Consecrated hospitality is, in the midst of the world, a witness to the mercy of the Father and the compassionate love of the Heart of Jesus" (*Constitutions* n. 57).

In preparation for August's World Congress on Mercy, we invite you to reflect with us on Divine Mercy, especially as it relates to our mission of hospitality to the elderly. We will focus on the second of the three elements of the Divine Mercy message — being merciful — since this relates directly to our hospitaller vocation. We will consider Divine Mercy both as part of the charism of hospitality *to be shared with the elderly*, and as a special gift which the elderly have the opportunity *to give to others*.

Rev. Michael E. Gaitley, a member of the Marians of the Immaculate Conception in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, has written two popular books entitled *Consoling the Heart of Jesus* and *'You Did It to Me': A Practical Guide to Mercy in Action*, in which he defines mercy in concrete, practical terms:

Mercy is love when it encounters suffering. It's when love meets the poor, the weak, and broken — the "least," as Matthew 25:40 puts it. More specifically, mercy is two movements that take place within us when we see



CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

1. feed the hungry
2. give drink to the thirsty
3. clothe the naked
4. shelter the homeless
5. visit the sick
6. ransom captives
7. bury the dead

SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

1. instruct the ignorant
2. counsel the doubtful
3. comfort the sorrowful
4. admonish the sinner
5. gladly forgive injuries
6. bears wrongs patiently
7. pray for the living and the dead

someone (or something) suffer. The first is an emotional movement, a movement of compassion that we feel in our hearts or even, when the suffering of the other is particularly intense, deep in our guts. The second is a movement of action. In other words, as we see someone suffering and feel compassion for him, we soon find ourselves reaching out to alleviate his suffering. In sum: Mercy is love that feels compassion for those who suffer (heart) and reaches out to help them (arms) (*'You Did It to Me': A Practical Guide to Mercy in Action*, p. 19).


This “reaching out to help” has traditionally been conceptualized in terms of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Father Gaitley’s most recent book, *You Did It to Me*, serves as a practical guide to living these works. His earlier book, *Consoling the Heart of Jesus*, takes another approach by explaining the “the merciful outlook.” The remainder of this article will be devoted to exploring the merciful outlook as it relates to the elderly.

There are infinite ways of doing deeds of mercy, says Father Gaitley, but one of the simplest is the “merciful outlook,” which he explains using the following ten qualities:

THE MERCIFUL OUTLOOK IS:

- a bilateral reality;
- evangelizing;
- a response to existential loneliness;
- the gaze of God;
- wonderful;
- a terribly loving gaze;
- like deep-sea diving;
- to truly delight in each person we meet;
- an effort that takes courage and perseverance;
- loving others with the Heart of Christ.




 **Mercy is a “bilateral” reality.** A truly merciful outlook realizes that mercy never flows in only one direction, for in giving we also receive. The merciful outlook is not about pitying, patronizing, or feeling sorry for people. Saint John Paul II articulated this conviction clearly in *Dives in Misericordia*: “An act of merciful love is only really such when we are deeply convinced at the moment that we perform it that we are at the same time receiving mercy from the people who are accepting it from us (D.M. n. 14).”

To accept the bilateral nature of mercy we must recognize our inherent inter-relatedness. In 1999 the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops published a pastoral letter on aging, in which they spoke to senior citizens: “You fear becoming dependent on others, perhaps even becoming a burden. However, we must say this to you: There is nothing wrong with being dependent on others; interdependence, not independence, is the true gospel value. From birth to death, no one is ever truly independent. All of

us need each other, more at some times than at others. Do not fear asking for and accepting help. Your dependency can be an occasion of grace both for yourself and for others.”

Saint John Paul II expressed similar sentiments when he spoke to the elderly in Munich, Germany in 1980, telling them what a grace it is that they give to “those for whom you dislike being a burden the occasion to meet the Lord, the opportunity to outgrow themselves. Therefore do not bury your requests in a timid, disappointed or reproachful heart,” he said, “but express them in all naturalness — being convinced of your own dignity and of the good in the hearts of the others.” How differently we who are younger might look upon those we are called to assist if we were convinced that they are simultaneously helping us by offering us “an occasion for grace”!


 **The merciful outlook is evangelizing.** It does not look upon others with what Father Gaitley calls “a proselytizing attitude” or “phony friendliness.” Rather, it proclaims the good news of Christ’s love through an authentic love and respect for the other as a person. In his first apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis proves himself an experienced teacher in the ways of evangelizing, advising:

Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey. In this preaching, which is always respectful and gentle, the first step is personal dialogue, when the other person speaks and shares his or her joys, hopes and concerns for loved ones, or so many other heartfelt needs. Only afterwards is it possible to bring up God’s word, perhaps by reading a Bible verse or relating a story, but always keeping in mind the fundamental message: the personal love of God who became man, who gave himself up for us, who is living and who offers us his salvation and his friendship. (E.G., n. 127, 128).

It would be a mistake to assume that each older person we encounter has already heard and assimilated the Good News. Even those who have long practiced their faith may not have had the grace of developing a truly personal relationship with Jesus Christ. For others, life's struggles and wounds, or the sorrows and disappointments of the later years, may lead them to doubt God's love. Many a Resident in our homes has voiced the question, "Why does God leave me here, has he forgotten me?"

In our encounters with older persons, we are called, therefore, to announce to them the Good News that they are still loved by God. Pope Benedict seemed to have an intuition regarding this need to be reassured that we are loved. During his two visits to homes for the aged as pope he repeated, "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."

For their part, elderly persons who are strong in their faith are often the most convincing witnesses to others of God's fidelity and provident love. Each of our recent popes has called upon older persons to share their wisdom and experience with the younger generations as a precious legacy.

 **The merciful outlook is a response to existential loneliness.** As humans, we often experience this world as a land of exile where we know a deep and sometimes painful loneliness. This is because, as Saint Augustine wrote so long ago, we are made for God and our hearts are restless until they rest in him. Although we may glimpse a foretaste of the union with God for which we were created through Christ's abiding presence in the Eucharist, and through loving relationships with family and friends, we will always experience an unquenchable thirst that the things of this world cannot satisfy until we rest definitively in God.

The merciful outlook, Father Gaitley writes, "is a way of giving drink to the thirsty. It gives a cup of love to another and to ourselves as we make our pilgrimage through this desert of life to the Ocean of



Love, the Holy Trinity.” It is “a subtle way of seeing others — not an intense staring — that communicates to them a simple and sincere message, ‘I delight that you exist.’” This affirmation of another’s existence is a refreshing cup of love, “a simple thing but beautiful to a thirsty heart.”


The process of aging can bring with it a “crisis of meaning” through which an older person may wonder if his life has meaning, and if it has made a difference to anyone. Reminiscence and life review help seniors to look back over their lives in order to recognize their accomplishments and the signs of God’s fidelity. While the repetition of old stories may be annoying to the young, one who has mastered the merciful outlook will see in them an older person’s need for the resolution of unfinished business, the forgiveness of past hurts and for affirmation — for someone who will say, “Yes, your life has been worthwhile. You have made a difference and you will not be forgotten.”

Because they generally experience life at a slower pace, the elderly have a wonderful opportunity to share the cup of merciful love with others, especially the young, who increasingly find themselves in single parent households or situations where both parents work full-time. Saint John Paul II once told the elderly that they “have the charism to bridge generation gaps before they are made. How many children” he said, “have found understanding and love in the eyes and words and caresses of the aging?”

In his *Letter to the Elderly* John Paul II exclaimed, “How many people find understanding and comfort from elderly people who



may be lonely or ill and yet are able to instill courage by their loving advice, their silent prayers, or their witness of suffering borne with patient acceptance! At the very time when their physical energies and their level of activity are decreasing, these brothers and sisters of ours become all the more precious in the mysterious plan of Providence.”

 **The merciful outlook is the gaze of God.** In his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI recognized the universal human longing for love: “In God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know ... Going beyond exterior appearances, I perceive in others an interior desire for a sign of love, of concern ... Seeing with the eyes of Christ, I can give them the look of love which they crave” (DCE, n. 18).

Sharing the merciful gaze of God with others is at the very heart of the message our Lord communicated to Saint Faustina: “These rays of mercy will pass through you, just as they have passed through this Host, and they will go out through all the world,” he revealed to her. “I am Love and Mercy itself. When a soul approaches me with trust, I fill it with such an abundance of graces that it cannot contain them within itself, but radiates them to other souls.”

Marie Romagnano, founder of Health Care Professionals for Divine Mercy, has interpreted the messages given to Saint Faustina

for today's nurses. Anyone who serves the elderly will find her words inspiring:

We carry Jesus always present with us in our heart, taking the tenderness and compassion of Jesus right to the souls of our patients. When you rush to help the sick, you become the merciful presence of Jesus, the Divine Mercy, as he transforms our hearts and hands into his merciful Heart and hands. So be excited and happy that Jesus, the Divine Mercy, is using your hands and heart to reach the sick, injured and dying.



The merciful outlook is wonderful. It draws out the good and brings back to life because it sees each person as God sees them — created in his image and likeness as an unrepeatable manifestation of divine beauty. It is a gaze which helps us to echo the words of Psalm 139:

For it was you who created my being,
Knit me together in my mother's womb.
I thank you for the wonder of my being,
For the wonders of all your creation.

This sense of awe and wonder is much needed today to combat the tendency to ignore the inviolable dignity of the human person. As our former superior general, Mother Marie Antoinette de la Trinité, once wrote, "We must be convinced that each elderly person remains a person, even in a state of physical or mental decline. A person does not lose his/her dignity either because of a condition of dependency in old age or because of the judgment of others."



The merciful outlook is a terribly loving gaze. Father Gaitley writes that this God-like gaze is sometimes "terrible," because it can evoke the "terrible day of reckoning" when Christ will return in glory to judge the living and the dead. The person who receives the merciful outlook from another, he writes, sees reflected

in the eyes of the other person the words, “You are great;” but he receives these words as a call to conversion, to examine his life and to commit himself to becoming all that God intended.

We look upon the elderly with this terribly loving gaze when we help them to see the unresolved conflicts in their lives and nudge them toward reconciliation with God and others. We share this gaze with them when we encourage them to benefit from the graces of the Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation, or when we help them to understand that their sufferings have redemptive value if offered in union with the sufferings of Christ. Ultimately, we offer them this terribly loving gaze when we assist them to prepare spiritually for the moment of their definitive encounter with God.

Today we often encounter Residents who suffer because of family members or friends who have left the faith or who are living in serious moral error. These Residents sometime struggle to reconcile their natural affections for their loved ones with their understanding of right and wrong inspired by faith. Although it is never easy, the elderly are sometimes in a privileged position to share this “terribly loving gaze” with those who have gone astray, in hopes of leading them back to God and his commandments.

In his book, *Mercy, the Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, Cardinal Walter Kasper warns against a phony, sentimental sense of mercy which would easily excuse serious offenses against the commandments. One must not, he writes, advise or provide assistance for an abortion or an act of assisted suicide in order to help someone escape from what is perceived as too great a burden or suffering. Such “pseudomercy” dismisses God’s commandment “Thou shall not kill.”

Cardinal Kasper suggests a balance which, through their wisdom and life experience, the elderly often know how to find:

Not to be guilty of phony mercy does not mean dealing unsympathetically with people who, in their situation, struggle with God’s commandment or who have, in fact, broken it. For the sake of mercy properly understood, one

will have to set forth and explain God's commandment, but will have to do this in a compassionate way. One, however, will have to help people, in word and in deed, to carry out the demands of the commandment in their often complex and difficult situation ... In cases when people have burdened themselves with guilt, which often lies heavy on their souls for their entire lives, one should respond to them pastorally, just as Jesus responded to sinners. One should not sit in coldhearted judgment over them, but rather should help them, not to suppress the guilt, but to acknowledge it and then to entrust themselves to the ever-greater mercy of God and his readiness to forgive (p. 147).

The merciful outlook is like deep-sea diving.

Saint Jeanne Jugan was an expert on this, but not because her father was a fisherman! The merciful outlook is like deep sea diving when we approach the other person *convinced* that there is a buried treasure deep within, and that it is only a matter of swimming through the “murky waters” of his or her hardened heart to find it. Saint Jeanne had such a gaze on the elderly she welcomed into our first homes, many of whom were from the margins of society. She saw in each person a suffering member of Christ and treated each one with com-



In Jeanne's care the poor were transformed — in some cases the local townspeople no longer recognized them.



passion and respect, helping them to rediscover their dignity as persons created and loved by God. In Jeanne's care the poor were transformed — so much so, it was recounted, that in some cases the local townspeople no longer recognized them!



The merciful outlook truly delights in each person we meet, because we see in each one a unique member of the Body of Christ. While it is true that love is not a feeling but an act of the will, if our love is to convey the warmth that will melt hardened hearts, says Father Gaitley, it ought to be expressed with warmth and affection. Pope Francis has said that we must recover and deepen our enthusiasm, “that delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing;” his natural tenderness and affection for those who suffer are obvious in his encounters with the faithful. The Christian, the Pope has said, should never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 10)!

Pope John Paul II also understood the importance of joy in bringing others to Christ. At the special audience following the beatification of our foundress, Saint Jeanne Jugan, he encouraged the elderly to “stay smiling, receptive, benevolent.” And he shared with them excerpts from a prayer written by Joseph Folliet, a French priest, writer and the cofounder of a lay movement called the Pil-

grims of Saint Francis. The piece is entitled *Prayer for a Good Old Age*; in it Folliet asks God to save him from becoming “one of those old grouches, always putting people down, moaning and groaning ... unbearable to be around.”

Folliet continues with a bit of humor: “Let me keep my smile and my laughter, whether my open mouth reveals a full set of teeth or my last set of dentures. Let me keep a sense of humor that puts things and people, including me, in their rightful place ... God, make me a smiling old person, someone who may not be able to be of great help to my brothers and sisters, but can at least bring them a bit of joy.” This is the merciful outlook expressed as delight in oneself and in other people. Such an attitude can do much to lighten the burdens of the old. The elderly can, in their turn, do much to lighten the burdens of those who care for them through their own graciousness.




The merciful outlook is an effort that takes courage and perseverance because it sometimes meets with misunderstanding or rejection, despite our best efforts. Pope Francis understands well the patience and perseverance needed by those who wish to share God’s mercy with others: “An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others.... An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 24).

We Little Sisters can attest to the fact that it often takes much time, many prayers and untold gestures of kindness before a conversion in the lives of the elderly or their loved ones is effected. Not infrequently such “miracles” occur only as death approaches. An important element of the Divine Mercy devotion is praying with the dying, as Jesus tells us through Saint Faustina: “Pray as much as you can for the dying [we would add: and for their loved ones]. By your entreaties, obtain for them trust in my mercy, because they have

most need of trust, and have it the least. Be assured that the grace of eternal salvation for certain souls in their final moment depends on your prayer.” Saint Faustina herself wrote on this subject:

I often attend upon the dying and through entreaties obtain for them trust in God’s mercy, and I implore God for an abundance of divine grace, which is always victorious. God’s mercy sometimes touches the sinner at the last moment in a wondrous and mysterious way. Outwardly, it seems as if everything were lost, but it is not so. The soul, illumined by a ray of God’s powerful final grace, turns to God in the last moment with such a power of love that, in an instant, it receives from God forgiveness of sin and punishment.... Oh, how beyond comprehension is God’s mercy!

 Finally, **the merciful outlook means loving others with the Heart of Christ**, “because each of us is a member of his body and thus shares the same Heart with him” (Gaitley, p. 414). Speaking to the elderly in Munich in 1980, Saint John Paul voiced this conviction:

We are one body in many members: those who bring help and those who receive help; those who are more healthy and those who are more sick; those who are younger and those who are older; those who have stood the test of life, those who are still standing it, and those who are just growing into it; those who are young and those who once have been young; those who are old and those who are going to be old tomorrow.

From our reflections on the merciful outlook it is clear that there is much we can do to communicate Divine Mercy to the elderly and the sick. For their part, older persons and those who suffer have many opportunities to share this gaze of love with others. The importance of the merciful outlook cannot be underestimated as

Pope Francis calls the Church to engage with renewed enthusiasm in evangelization. “Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved,” our Holy Father has said. “An evangelizing community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father’s infinite mercy” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 24).

Pope Francis has compared the Church to a field hospital with countless wounds in need of healing; the same could be said of the world. We



We must be there, he insists, close to the people, in order to treat their open wounds. Even when, because of shame, these wounds are hidden deep within, they remain in need of a healing balm. Our Holy Father recently asked a group of priests — but he could ask each of us who are at the service of others — Do you know the wounds of your people? Are you close to them? How is your relationship with those who call out for mercy, and with those who help you to be more merciful — with children, the elderly and the sick? Do you know how to reassure them — *do you look upon them with a merciful outlook* — or are you embarrassed to caress an elderly person?

We are living in a time of mercy. The organizers of this summer’s third World Congress on Mercy in Bogota have said that “Mercy is not a movement of the Church. Mercy is the Church on the move.” Please join us in praying for the success of the Congress and in spreading the merciful outlook to those around you, especially the elderly and the sick. 🌸

Spring break encounters: so much joy, so little time!

EACH YEAR OUR HOMES WELCOME COLLEGE STUDENTS for alternative spring break experiences, enabling the young to experience the truth of what Pope Francis wrote about in his World Youth Day message for this year: *“The poor are not just people to whom we can give something. They have much to offer us and to teach us. How much we have to learn from the wisdom of the poor!”* On the following pages our Little Sisters and the young people themselves share their impressions of these spring break experiences, as well as a vocation outreach trip made by two Little Sisters.

Three times the fun in Cincinnati

This March we were again blessed with college students who graciously gave up their spring break trip to Florida or Cancun to give of their time here at St. Paul’s Home. We had students from not one, not two, but three different colleges! — Michigan State University, Marquette University, and Miami University.

They came with lots of energy and ready to work — and so they did! They put in numerous hours sorting canned good donations, washing windows, cleaning and organizing our craft room and storage spaces, working outside in the yard, and serving meals to the Residents.

But it wasn’t all “hard work and no play!” Students also joined in on a range of Resident activities including playing cards, giving manicures, a Monte Carlo afternoon, Bingo, a dinner and a movie night, and Wii bowling. They were invited, as well, to our daily Mass, rosary and special prayer times. ~ *from our Sisters in Cincinnati*



From spring break to vocation discernment

Over spring break, eight girls from the College of William and Mary spent a week living with the Little Sisters in Richmond. We had a busy schedule planned out so that we could learn about social justice and serve various Christian organizations including Catholic Charities and Boaz and Ruth. However, God laughed at our plans and sent snow our way. So we ended up spending more time at the Little Sisters' home than we anticipated. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

Each morning, the Little Sisters guided us through morning prayer and shared breakfast with us. During the meal, we chatted with the Little Sisters and listened to their joyful and trying stories. One night while discussing vocations, we challenged the Sisters with the question: "What do you like least about your life?" and almost every Sister said "I wish we had more time with the Residents." I was surprised and confused. They didn't say giving up material goods, missing their families or exhaustion. No, they wanted to spend more time with the people they serve.

During the day, we visited, played bingo, danced, and ate meals with the Residents. They wanted to know all about us, but their lives seemed so much more interesting. I've never seen the elderly



be so silly, content and in love with Christ. For Mardi Gras we decorated the auditorium so the Residents could enjoy Sister Teresa's famous pancakes and waffles. We also cleared

snow off the Residents' and employees' cars and completed other small acts of service.

Each night, we spent hours reflecting on the day because we found living out the Catholic faith to be fascinating and fulfilling. One thing we immediately noticed was the Little Sisters radiating joy. They are at peace with themselves because each day they do God's will.

Just watching the Sisters intrigued me. I experienced an increase in joy, energy, and appreciation for the importance of community. So I decided a few weeks later to apply for the Live-In Service opportunity to continue my discernment for a religious vocation. Now I am spending the month of May with the Little Sisters in Richmond.

I join the Sisters in the liturgy of the hours. A few times I have eaten with them. I love to sit and watch their meal because they act like a family sharing their favorite moments of the day and exciting news. After one meal, the Sisters welcomed me to their recreation time and we played a few games of Rummikub. The Sisters know how to have fun! One time I even went begging with Sr. Ophelia and Sr. Teresa at St Bede's in Williamsburg.

I finally understand why the Sisters want to spend more time with the Residents. First of all, they are fun: we do yoga, knot rosaries together, and celebrate everything including birthdays and new Residents. Furthermore, each Resident has a beautiful personality to embrace. Some are affectionate, others are leaders, and a few are clowns who never fail to make you laugh. What strikes me the

most is that each Resident has suffered during their life. They have experienced pain I have never met before and I thought only happened in the saddest of movies. All of the Residents' pain is held in this beautiful house of love. However, each person also has memories of joy, has experienced miracles, and has played a part in God's creative plan. I have loved listening to each Resident's collection of cherished memories.

The Little Sisters and the Residents have welcomed me into their home with open arms and I am so grateful. They answered all my questions and I do believe one day I will be wearing a beautiful habit; I'm just not sure which one yet! ~ *Christine Swengros*

Florida sun and home-baked cookies

Bright smiles awaited us as Sr. Charles Patricia and I landed in Southwest Florida recently for a vocation outreach visit. On our first evening, the Catholic Student Organization at Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers welcomed us to a picnic by the lake, where we shared faith, fun and camaraderie. The students seemed fascinated by all that we shared with them about our precious Residents back home in Mobile and about our beautiful vocation.

On the following day, a Vocations Fest at Ave Maria University gave us the opportunity to mingle and share with the students dur-





ing meals in the cafeteria, at our exhibit table in the afternoon, and during an evening barbeque, where our religious family was chosen from among the twenty communities in attendance to share our testimony on stage.

A final stop at the united Catholic campus ministry of Ringling College, New College of Florida, and the University of South Florida found us conversing over supper with several young women, then offering them the experience of a vocation-oriented *Lectio Divina* (Scriptural reflection), for which Sr. Charles provided the music on a borrowed pink guitar!

At all three locations, the students enjoyed the home-baked cookies we had brought for them, made by our Residents as a gesture of caring and support. This deeply touched the young people, several of whom have already written thank you notes to the Residents.

We thank God for the graces of this visit as we now nurture the seeds that have been planted and follow up on the contacts that were made, praying and trusting in the Lord of the harvest to bring forth — here and on all the continents — a beautiful flowering of new vocations for our religious family. ~ Sr. Carolyn

God reached out to me with frail hands

Hello! My name is Grace Adams. This month I have had the pleasure of having a two week live-in service at Queen of Peace Residence. I came by train from Rochester, so naturally, I was a bit nervous. However, all of that melted away when I arrived and found a wonderful little family waiting for me. All of the Sisters are so sweet! They welcomed me with overwhelming warmth and friendliness. During this stay, I first helped on the third floor with Sr. Regina and Sr. Leema, and then moved down to the second with Sr. Cornelia. I helped serve meals to the Residents, assisted at some of their numerous activities, and had a marvelous time visiting them during the slower points of the day.

I also had the joy of attending prayer throughout the day with the Sisters, which gave me a lovely pearl of peace in the midst of my constant bliss. I could scarcely believe how quickly each day passed, and how happy I was! The family dynamic among the Residents, Sisters, and staff made me feel perfectly at home. I will always be grateful for the hospitality and graciousness with which they so lovingly surrounded me.



I was also blessed to be able to attend the Epiphany weekend discernment event at the novitiate. It was very peaceful and was a great retreat where I was able to dedicate a lot of time to prayer. Although the entire weekend was wonderful, my favorite part was the Lectio Divina on Luke 8:4-15. Mother Mary Richard, the directress of novices, gave us some pointers and I really enjoyed reflecting on the text. Just like Queen of Peace, everyone at the novitiate was really kind and I was happy to be with them!

Twice during my stay I was generously invited to go to market for the Little Sisters' weekly collecting rounds, and both times I was amazed by the kindness of the benefactors. I could hardly believe my eyes when they selflessly gave so much to the Sisters. I loved being around Sr. Elizabeth, Sr. Julie and Sr. Leema during these two trips, all of whom were indefatigable in both cheer and energy. Altogether, it was a great experience that I will cherish and reflect on for a long time to come.

During my stay, I learned that Saint Jeanne Jugan once said, "In serving the aged, it is he himself whom you are serving... They are the suffering members of Our Lord." I found this to be entirely true. He smiled at me from faces creased with age; he reached out to me with frail hands; he spoke from the voiceless; there was never a moment when I did not feel both surrounded by and a part of his love. In this modern age sources scream from all around that happiness can only arise from self-obsession and material possessions.

Now I have seen firsthand the best happiness which can be achieved by serving the Lord and loving him with all your might. The Sisters have created a beautiful family with that in the center, and I can hardly wait to come back again! 🌸

A privileged vantage point for the canonization of John Paul II

WITH THEIR HOME LOCATED NEXT DOOR to a shrine dedicated to John Paul II, and across the street from the National Shrine of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, our Little Sisters in Washington, D.C. had a privileged vantage point from which to take in the events surrounding the canonization of Popes John Paul II and John XXIII on April 27, 2014.

On the eve of the canonization a group of Little Sisters and a few Residents attended festivities at the John Paul II Shrine. These included an outdoor procession in the footsteps of John Paul, which took place under a light spring rain. Two of the Residents then stayed on for all night adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, which was animated by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, before watching the canonization ceremony live on TV.

On Sunday morning the Little Sisters took part in the renaming of the Shrine, which has been designated the Saint John Paul II National Shrine. This brief outdoor ceremony was followed by Mass and veneration of the first class relic of our new Saint. The relic, which is displayed in a stunning gold reliquary, was a gift to the Shrine from Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, longtime secretary to John Paul II. Now under the administration of the Knights of Columbus, the Shrine is undergoing renovations and promises to become a worthy tribute to John Paul the Great.

In the afternoon several Little Sisters attended the Mass for Divine Mercy Sunday at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception. Rev. Raniero Cantalamessa, O.F.M. Cap., preacher for the papal household, was the main celebrant and homilist.



Two weeks later the Little Sisters spent an enriching evening at a concert in honor of our new Saints. Entitled *Peace Through Music in Our Age*, the event was the inspiration of Cardinal Dziwisz and well-known conductor Sir Gilbert Levine. “Both these great Popes spent their entire pontificates seeking Peace and Love among all the world’s people, whatever their belief,” explained Levine. “This is the essence of the Vatican’s 1965 declaration called *Nostra Aetate* — from which we get our concert’s title: *In Our Age*.”

Finally, on May 11 the Little Sisters participated in the National Mass of Thanksgiving for the canonization of John Paul II and John XXIII at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. After the relics of our two new Saints were carried in the procession, Cardinal Wuerl, principal celebrant, began the Mass by noting that John Paul II and John XXIII were actually with us through the presence of their relics.

Though they are thankful for the graces of these days, our Little Sisters in Washington are most grateful for the privilege of living in the shadow of a Saint. Cardinal Wuerl said in his homily that John Paul II was “always there;” through the Shrine he is still here, just next door to our home, where he can watch over us and bless us. 🌺



The National Shrine of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception provided a gorgeous backdrop for the April 26 procession in the footsteps of Saint John Paul II. He had visited the Basilica October 7, 1979, during his first papal trip to the United States.

Happenings near and far

Melbourne's spirituality in the pub

TEN OR SO YEARS AGO, a group of young Catholics lit a spark of evangelization that spread into a fire across Australia. "TAP" or "Theology on Tap," gathers young people in a hotel or pub. A room near the bar is set aside for them where they can wine and dine — cheaply — and listen to a guest speaker. Sometimes people meander in from the bar to listen. Topics for speakers range from theology to bioethics, current issues and our Catholic faith, personal testimonies and more.

Melbourne quickly followed Sydney in this very successful venture, but changed the name to "SIP" — "Spirituality in the Pub."

Here at St. Joseph's Home in Melbourne, we decided to have our own SIP program. One evening a month a group of Residents meets in the Jeanne Jugan Centre for drinks, nibbles and spirituality. Our chaplain Fr. Michael Sims, MSC facilitates the group, which is currently studying and discussing *The Joy of the Gospel* (*Evangelii Gaudium*) by Pope Francis.



The witness of God's Love

A reflection written by an Association Jeanne Jugan member in Taipei, Taiwan, shows us that the spirit of Saint Jeanne Jugan is alive all over the world.

There is a unique home for the elderly in Taipei, Taiwan, which was founded by the Little Sisters of the Poor. In 2008, I was looking for some help to take care of an elder in my family. By chance, I came to the home for the elderly run by the Little Sisters of the Poor. As soon as I came to the gate, I was astonished by the sight of the large garden in front of the building. When I entered the house, I was attracted by the spacious, clean environment and warm, harmonious atmosphere inside. My elder never did come to the home, but I became a volunteer. And now I have become a member of the Association Jeanne Jugan....

The Little Sisters are from many different countries. They have faith in God; and their mother foundress taught them to see Christ in the poor. So the Sisters give themselves entirely to the elderly poor. They offer the neediest elderly of every race and religion a home, welcome each elder as Christ, care for them as family members and accompany them with dignity until God calls them to himself. How admirable!

One thing that surprised me about the home is that the Residents pay no fees. The Little Sisters offer themselves as their "little" sisters in the family. Funding depends on donations, without government grants. Many kind-hearted people are their benefactors, and in return the Little Sisters pray for them. Both the Little Sisters and the benefactors witness to the Love of God and his Providence.



Now the Little Sisters' home for the elderly in Taipei has to be renovated and updated. The Little Sisters have to update their facilities and quality of service. They have to build a new home for tomorrow's elders. The building must be consistent with the government's codes, standards of welfare institutions, etc. However, the renovation works will cost more than four billion NT dollars. How to raise such huge funds? The Little Sisters never say "No." They just do it. They begin a series of fundraising activities. They believe that "If God is with us, it will be accomplished" (Saint Jeanne Jugan).

For the time being, the first phase of the project has been carried out smoothly. Saint Jeanne Jugan, the foundress of the Little Sisters of the Poor has said, "Give us the house, if God fills it, God will not abandon it." Amen! ~ *Su Hsiang-Ling, Theresa, A.J.J.*

Still lending a helping hand at 100 years old!

On April 22, 2014 Sr. Marie of the Holy Redeemer, a Little Sister from our community in Dunedin, New Zealand, celebrated her 100th birthday in the presence of over seventy friends and family members, as well as a representation of Little Sisters from around the province of Oceania.

While centenaries are not all that uncommon in our homes today, what is so exceptional about Sr. Marie is that she continues to take an active part in our hospitaller mission, helping to care for the Residents even though most of them are younger than she is! Sr. Marie still assists the elderly at mealtime and sometimes sets the tables for the staff members' meals.

Born in Arrowtown, Central Otago, New Zealand, in 1914, Sr. Marie has had an adventurous life. Her desire to become a Little Sister was sparked in 1933 when she visited her aunt, a Little Sister of the Poor in Dunedin. She made profession in June, 1936, and soon found herself missioned to Shanghai, China. Sr. Marie traveled to our motherhouse in France during World War II, and at one point the Germans declared her a spy!



Top: Sr. Marie greets young nieces and nephews at her birthday party. **Middle:** Sr. Marie visits her childhood home as part of the festivities surrounding her centenary. **Left:** Sr. Marie, Annie Fitzpatrick, as a young girl with her siblings.

After making her perpetual profession Sr. Marie served the elderly in numerous homes in Asia. She then served as superior of the home in Dunedin from 1975 to 1981, spent time in other homes in the province of Oceania and returned to Dunedin to begin her “retirement” in 1992. As everyone there can attest, Sr. Marie of the Holy Redeemer has been anything but retired ever since! 🌸

I will betroth you to myself

On May 10 three novices made their temporary profession at Saint Jeanne Jugan Novitiate, Bolinao, Philippines. With each Little Sister coming from a different country — the



Philippines, Malaysia and Sri Lanka, the Mass was sung in Latin with hymns in Tagalog, English and Tamil. Sr. Salvacion Maria (Filipino), Sr. Mary Ann Joseph (Malaysian) and Sr. Roshini Maria (Sri Lankan) have been assigned to Hong Kong, Angers (France) and Batticaloa (Sri Lanka), respectively.





Oh Jeanne Jugan,
sweet Jeanne Jugan,
we thank you for your graces.
Oh Jeanne Jugan,
sweet Jeanne Jugan
to you we sing our praises.

We pray to you for all our needs,
which seem to us so great indeed.
But if we listen for your call,
they really are so very small.

Oh Jeanne Jugan,
sweet Jeanne Jugan,
we thank you for your graces.
Oh Jeanne Jugan,
sweet Jeanne Jugan
to you we sing our praises.

We are your family now
and for ever more —
the Little Sisters of the Poor.
Oh Jeanne Jugan,
sweet Jeanne Jugan,
you are our very special one.

Oh Jeanne Jugan,
sweet Jeanne Jugan,
we thank you for your graces.
Oh Jeanne Jugan,
sweet Jeanne Jugan
to you we sing our praises.

~ Nita Mullins,
Jeanne Jugan Residence
Washington, D.C.

*The feast of Saint Jeanne
Jugan is on August 30.*

Serenity

JULY 2014, No. 163

PUBLICATIONS OFFICE
LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR
601 MAIDEN CHOICE LANE
BALTIMORE, MD 21228-3698
www.littlesistersofthepoor.org

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