

Serenity

no. 166 Little Sisters of the Poor April 2015



We are called to wear God's smile!



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: Resident Wasylina Onulak enjoys a holiday party with the Little Sisters, Jeanne Jugan Residence, Washington, D.C. "We are called to wear God's smile": excerpt from *Rejoice!*, letter to consecrated persons from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in preparation for the Year of Consecrated Life.

Serenity

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Family and
consecrated life
converge in
the gift of self

2015 is certainly giving us a lot to cover in *Serenity*! In January our Little Sisters in Sri Lanka and the Philippines were thrilled to participate in the first visit of Pope Francis to their countries; their experience is presented beginning on page 27.

Here in the United States we look forward to our Holy Father's visit in September. The Pope is scheduled to arrive in Washington, D.C. on September 22. In our nation's capitol he will visit the White House, address a joint session of Congress and celebrate Mass at the Basilica Shrine of the Immaculate Conception before traveling to New York two days later. His visit there will include an address to the United Nations general assembly, a visit to Ground Zero and an "interethnic" meeting with a diverse representation of New York residents. On September 26 Pope Francis will arrive in Philadelphia for the international Festival of Families, the primary purpose for his visit to America.

Even as we prepare for the Holy Father's visit and the World Meeting of Families, we are also enthusiastically celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life. Marriage and family versus religious life: these two themes — two specific vocations — might seem quite disparate, but they are more closely aligned than we might think. "Celibates and married couples need one another to sustain and grow the 'family of families' that is called Church," as we



The Holy Family, by Neilson Carlin

The official icon for the World Meeting of Families was designed to remind us of Christ's role as the focal point of our lives. From front to back, the figures have been intentionally layered to indicate the proximity of their relationship to Christ. In the extreme foreground, practically walking out of the canvas, stands the infant. His hand extending a sign of blessing is situated in the exact center of the painting. Next to him is the Blessed Mother, with a gaze slightly beyond her Son as she looks toward his passion. Just behind stands St. Joseph, gently resting a loving and protective hand on his wife. His hand completes the chain of connection that begins with Christ's hand, which rests gently on his mother's. Behind the Holy Family stand Mary's mother and father, Saints Ann and Joachim. They, along with Mary and Joseph, all turn in the direction of Christ (Artwork by NeilsonCarlin.com).

read in *The Family Fully Alive*, the preparatory document for the World Meeting of Families.

Let's take a look at several passages from this document:

Celibacy is ... allied to marriage, making a similar interior offering of our whole self to the Lord. Both celibate people and married people pledge their lives to God's covenant according to their respective vocations. There are practical differences in every particular individual's vocation, but the internal motion of soul, the heart's offering of itself, is similar at its core.

Celibacy follows in the footsteps of Jesus, flourishing by offering the self to God and trusting his plan, and building a life premised on loving others with mercy, patience, generosity and service.

Celibacy is not sterile, nor is it "single" in the sense of isolated or autonomous. In the Church, we are all interdependent, created for communion, created to give and receive love. This vision of human life generates an inexhaustible variety of creative vocations.... Celibates and married couples need one another to sustain and grow the "family of families" that is called Church.

This interdependence of the married and consecrated vocations finds many expressions in the life of the Church. On the one hand Saint John Paul II asserted that the Church depends on religious, especially consecrated women, to foster Christian morals, family and social life, and respect for human life (cf. *Vita Consecrata*, n. 58).


On the other hand, in the same document John Paul II recognized the important role of families in bringing religious vocations to birth: "We must remember that if parents do not live the values of the Gospel, the young man or woman will find it very difficult to discern the calling, to understand the need for the sacrifices which must be faced, and to appreciate the beauty of the goal to be achieved. For it is in the family that young people

have their first experience of Gospel values and of the love that gives itself to God and to others. They also need to be trained in the responsible use of their own freedom, so that they will be prepared to live, as their vocation demands, in accordance with the loftiest spiritual realities. I pray that you, Christian families, united with the Lord through prayer and the sacramental life, will create homes where vocations are welcomed.”

Celibates and married couples need one another to sustain and grow the “family of families” that is called Church.

As Little Sisters we experience both of these realities. First, we often witness the graces our own families and friends receive through our vocation. This may be thanks to their active involvement in our mission, or our sharing of faith experiences or Church teachings with them. Sometimes the simple example of our way of life — our charism of hospitality and our trust in God’s Providence — serves as a channel of grace for family and friends.

At the same time, we see how decisive family support can be in helping young women to pursue their vocation to consecrated life. This is especially true during the period of discernment and initial formation, when both the young women and their families feel the sacrifice of separation most acutely; but family support also helps to sustain fidelity and vocational perseverance through the years.

With this in mind, we invited family members of our Little Sisters to contribute to this issue of *Serenity* by reflecting on how their families have shared in the vocation journey of their daughters and sisters, and how they have come to feel themselves a part of the larger family of the Little Sisters of the Poor. We believe that these personal reflections help to illustrate the interdependence of family life and consecrated life in the Church. 



The Congregation, *a loving mother*

by Sister Judith

The Congregation is like a mother. She wants what is best for her children.” This statement regarding the family spirit of the Little Sisters of the Poor was one I learned during my novitiate, but until May 31, 2013, when I found myself in great need, I wasn’t sure exactly what it might mean for me personally.

During my novitiate I felt that the grand adventure I’d begun when I left my “normal” life of career, home, car, friends and a wonderful parish community, to follow the call I’d heard decades before, was unfolding just as it should. Without a doubt, I rapidly felt very comfortable as a novice, despite the initially unfamiliar surroundings and people.

In each of the homes to which I was sent on mission after my first profession in 2010, I felt quickly “at home” among a new group of Sisters and a new superior. The spirit of the community and Residents was the same, despite any differences in the size of the home, its décor or the language spoken within its walls. When staying at another home for a day or two, I was always warmly welcomed with an embrace and the phrase I’ve come to love: “ma Petite Soeur” (which means “my Little Sister” in French, the official language of the Congregation). I felt part of a bigger family, but in retrospect, I have to say that I’d compartmentalized this new religious family from my family of origin.

There were some opportunities during the time of my formation for my family to visit me, and they did. I felt that with each visit, they left with a greater understanding of what my “new life” involved, and with the certitude that I was very happy.

As with nearly all Little Sisters, I went to France to prepare for perpetual vows. This year of study and prayer, called the “second novitiate,” brings together Little Sisters in temporary profession from all over the world, speaking the common language of French. Prior to leaving the United States, I spent fifteen wonderful days with my widowed mother, driving with her to visit some of my other siblings and their families, as well as old friends. This was my first time “back home” since having entered almost five years earlier, and we had a marvelous time of sharing.

Once in France, I spent a few months acquiring the basics of conversational French before I was sent on mission to St. Servan, the “cradle of the Congregation,” so-called because it is in this town that Saint Jeanne Jugan first took in a poor, elderly, blind and infirm woman, giving birth to what would later be known as the Little Sisters of the Poor. It was while I was serving in St. Servan that my mother became seriously ill back in the States. I

spoke with my mother superior shortly after I’d made a visit to Jesus in the chapel and found in her a listening ear and a great support. During the weeks that followed, both she and the Little Sisters of the community periodically asked me how my mom was making out, and would promise their prayers. It was as though she was THEIR mother, too.

On at least one day that spring, my superior approached me privately after seeing my tears in the chapel (despite my valiant effort to conceal them!). When I told her that I was feeling very pulled to be with my mother, not knowing if her condition would suddenly deteriorate, she explained to

We enter into the bigger family of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and over time, we draw our families of origin into that religious family along with ourselves.



Surrounded by both of her families, Sr. Judith (centering, center) receives her obedience on the day of her perpetual profession.

me that as Little Sisters, we do the best we can to be present if our parent is dying, and so that if I felt I needed to go to be with her, I needed only to let her know, and then we'd go through the process of trying to make it happen. I was very consoled by this thought. However, our vow of poverty would not permit multiple trans-Atlantic trips, and so I didn't want to "jump the gun," so to speak, and go back to the States too quickly.

I had the opportunity to accompany fifteen Residents to Lourdes in May, and while there, was able to pray for my Mother in a special way. She had two hospitalizations that month in quick succession, and when I learned of the second, I decided that I needed to go to her. I went to my superior and told her my mother was back in the hospital, and that I felt it was the right time for me to ask permission to go to be with her. She understood right away, and handed me her cell phone to call Mother Provincial, who answered immediately, and encouraged me with "You need to follow your heart, Sr. Judith." How did she read my mind that I was second-guessing myself and my desire to leave?

*I don't feel I've
lost a sister —
I feel I've gained
a whole family!*

She gave me the phone number for our Superior General, who agreed that I should go to be with her.

It took less than five minutes to speak with my superior, then Mother Provincial, and then Mother General, but it was an almost magical five minutes, and made me realize the truth of that statement I'd learned as a novice. The Congregation really IS a mother! I felt SO understood and loved that night of May 31st. Although we welcome Residents and love them as our own family, it does not negate the feelings of love and tenderness that we have for our family of origin, nor the filial responsibilities that we retain, even after giving our lives totally to the Lord as a religious. We enter into the bigger family of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and over time, we draw our families of origin into that religious family along with ourselves.

My mother was sleeping peacefully, and was deemed stable, when I called from the airport on my arrival back in the States. Her condition changed quickly however, and although I spoke with her by phone and she knew me, the Lord came for her while I was still enroute to the hospital in an adjoining state. I will always be grateful for that very short but important last exchange by phone. It was my religious family that made that possible for me. The Congregation is like a mother, they'd told me. She wants what's best for her children. And now I'd experienced that part of the family spirit personally.

Family spirit. Making another feel welcomed ... connected, even VERY connected, despite the absence of blood ties. Feeling understood, appreciated and loved. Perhaps my brother said it best, when he came with my sisters and a nephew for my perpetual profession in La Tour. While sharing a meal in the dining area designated for visiting families, one of the Sisters who was helping to serve the meal thanked my siblings for "giving their sister to the Congregation." My brother spontaneously responded, "I don't feel I've lost a sister — I feel I've gained a whole family!" 🌸



Part of the family

A recent study of women religious who professed their perpetual vows in 2010 found that for more than half, a parent or other family member had discouraged them in the pursuit of their vocation. Why would so many families try to dissuade their daughters, sisters or nieces from embracing religious life? Some parents may fear that their daughter will be lonely or waste her talents, or that she will have to give up her independence. But for many parents, the desire for grandchildren and the fear of losing their daughter seem to explain the survey results.

We thank God that many of our Little Sisters' families, like Sr. Judith's brother in the previous article, come to the happy conclusion that they have not lost a daughter or sister, but have gained a whole family! We thank the family members of our Little Sisters who witness on the following pages how they are truly "part of the family" of Saint Jeanne Jugan!

For as far back as I can remember, the Little Sisters have been family, starting with an early memory of visiting my grandmother in the Bushwick [Brooklyn] home, where my sister and I were both dressed up like postulants by the Sisters. This had a lasting effect on my older sibling, who became a Little Sister later on, but I needed children and animals in my life, so God made other plans for me.

I have so many stories of my family of Little Sisters, from all their prayers when my youngest son wasn't speaking much at age four (although, when I showed him the tiny icon of Jeanne Jugan, he kissed it

and said "beautiful lady"). We were told not to be too optimistic about his progress, but



I just had to look into his eyes to know that all the prayers being said by the Little Sisters would help him on his path in life, wherever God would lead him. To meet him now you would never know

of his struggle, and I know that all the prayers of the Little Sisters to Jeanne Jugan gave us this small miracle.

There were also extra prayers said by the Sisters

this past May, when my son needed to pass just one more math class in order to graduate from college. He did, the Sisters once again having

When
you just
can't
do it
alone

Kathy O'Brien

stepped in and offered prayers to Saint Jeanne Jugan in a way that I can only imagine.

I could also tell about the time I brought my oldest son, at age three weeks, to the door outside the convent at Queen of Peace Residence, and a dozen Little Sister “aunts” came out and whisked him away inside, bringing him to the convent chapel to dedicate him to Jesus, Mary & Joseph.

If I were to narrow down what to me is the true meaning of family, it would be trusting and allowing someone to take over, to help, when you just simply cannot do it alone. This was made so clear to me when Mother and the Little Sisters of the Bronx home stepped in, helping my entire family get through the sudden death, funeral, and burial of our mother. The wake and Mass were at the home, the funeral Mass and luncheon as well. But it was the day of the burial, when friends and family returned to my house afterwards, that I truly knew the kindness of the family of Little Sisters.

Back home after the burial, while I clung to my two little boys, Mother and the Little Sisters brought in coolers filled with food and drink, tending to everyone and cleaning up afterward as well. I have this vivid memory of the Sisters in my kitchen, extending their vow of hospitality beyond measure. It was one of the kindest things I have ever experienced. The next day, when everyone was back about their usual lives, I was once again sitting with my little ones, heartbroken, missing my mom, when Mother from the Bronx called to see how I was. A small gesture, perhaps, but one that helped me beyond words.

I know that I am so fortunate in my life not only to have one family member who is a Little Sister, but so very many. May God bless them all as they continue to spread the love and kindness of Saint Jeanne Jugan throughout our world. 🌿

In 1962 our family moved two blocks from the Little Sisters' Mullen Home, Denver, Colorado. Our mom, Julia Cruz, went inside to inquire about a job. She immediately was hired as a cook and told us the Little Sisters wanted to meet our family. The following Saturday, our dad, Leo, stayed home while our mother, with us six daughters in tow, went to meet the Sisters. During our visit, they asked if we would volunteer, and thus began our lifelong connection with the Little Sisters. Our mom worked there for seventeen years.

Twin sisters Mona and Tina volunteered in the infirmary and the kitchen. Tina helped Sister Anne in the kitchen and recalls an incident that upset Sister. Tina had failed to read the instructions on a box of tapioca and made a mess, overflowing the blender. Sister never demonstrated her disapproval but offered advice and prayed for the Cruz girls. Mona helped Sister Timothy in the ladies' infirmary. The Cruz sisters helped on Saturdays to sham-

poo and set the women's hair, returning Sundays to style it. After completing their tasks, the pair attended Mass, served dinner to the Residents and returned home. To this day, Tina continues to volunteer her time.

Rosalie, the eldest of the Cruz girls, volunteered a short time but requested full-time employment when she married. She worked in the infirmary, laundry and other departments, which also gave her the joy of caring for the Sisters who were ill. In September 1972, she gave birth to her third child, Lori, who was born with Down syndrome. Rosalie continued on a part-time basis, and the Sisters allowed her to bring Lori to work. Rosalie continued her employment for forty years and to this day crochets items to be sold or raffled at Mullen Home.

Victoria began volunteering as a sophomore. In September 1975, Victoria and her fiancé were married in the Mullen Home chapel. Twenty years later, Victoria was employed for ten years as

a nursing assistant.

Theresa continued her contact with the Little Sisters. When she was thirteen and walking home from school on a snowy day, Sister Monique and another Little Sister stopped their begging van and offered a ride. When Theresa was in eighth grade,

Mother Rose asked her if she would like to attend the Little Sisters' high school Juniorate in Los Angeles, California. Theresa indicated her interest, and our parents supported her decision. Two years later, Josie, our youngest sibling, joined her. Theresa met her husband, Jim, a nephew of Sister Monique, at the Little Sisters in Denver when they were teenagers. They married in 1968 and worked at Mullen Home until they both



The Cruz Connection

The Cruz Sisters

found employment in their respective fields.

Josie reflected about the initial spark that ignited her desire to respond to God's call. She was aware of his call when, from a distance, she observed a Sister praying in the garden. Josie, being too young to volunteer,


remained content to be with our mother in the kitchen. Years later, after attending the Juniorate, Josie entered the Congregation and continues to serve the elderly as a Little Sister. Through the years our family vacations have been spent in the Little Sisters' homes where Sr. Monique and Sr. Joseph Marie were serving.

Our family became one with the Little Sisters the day our mother began working with them. Ultimately, our

family bond was sealed when Josie entered the Congregation. The Little Sisters, true to their mission of serving the elderly, demonstrated love and compassion for our family as they intuitively arrived at the hospital minutes before our dad's passing. Years later, they delivered a hospital bed to our mother when she was in home hospice and also sent their

Our family's first encounter with the Little Sisters happened many years ago. Our children were babies, and we met the Sisters at a church collection. They made a fuss over our little girls, anticipating, no doubt, there was a vocation among them — which, as it turned out, there was!

It wasn't until our eldest daughter went off to college that we began to understand the universal reach of the Congregation. Our daughter met the Sisters on campus, and did some of her nurses' training with them,

chaplain to administer the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. The twelfth Station of the Cross on the grounds of Mullen Home is dedicated to our parents and our brother, Lorenzo, who died as an infant. The Leo and Julia Cruz family continues to value and nurture its unique relationship with the Little Sisters of the Poor. 

although she wasn't aware of our earlier contacts. Gradually she came to know them and their work, and began to discern a vocation. Her father

and I looked more specifically at the Congregation, seeing it now as a living family, rather than just another charity we tried to support.

"Firsts" can sometimes be difficult in large families — first day of school, First Holy Communion, first graduation, first move to a college three hours away from home! We painfully weathered all of these, but our daugh-

You're
our
mother
now too!

Kathy Berlinghieri



ter's decision to enter the Little Sisters of the Poor was a life-changing event for all of us. We were truly happy that she had found God's will for her life, but to give her up to a new family was another "first" experience. On the tearful day we left her at the home where she entered, her advice to us was: "If you want to know what's going on in my life, volunteer at the home!"

We would come to see the wisdom of those words. Over the years, we have been welcomed by the Sisters in whatever home we visited or worked, and have been called "Mom" and "Pop" by more than one of our daughter's contemporaries! Twenty-six

years later, as we anticipate our daughter's Silver Jubilee, we are part of their family.

But I remember most of all the first Mothers' Day after she entered. I was struggling with many "goodbyes" that year — my mother's death, my daughter leaving for her postulancy, other children to college and abroad, high school for our soon-to-be Eagle Scout. Mother at the home where we volunteered called to wish me a "Happy Mothers' Day." I was too moved to answer right away, and she said, "After all, you're our mother now too." That day, the Little Sisters of the Poor truly became part of our family. ✨



The Little Sisters of the Poor have always been in my life. In fact, I wouldn't know life without them — from my earliest memories as a child to my home now in Wooster, Ohio, the Little Sisters of the Poor have always been there as a constant, steady reminder that God is present in the 21st century.

My second oldest sister, Sr. Gabrielle (Mary) entered the Congregation while I was still an infant; then my sisters Germaine, Barbara, and Elizabeth all went to the Juniorate in Detroit to attend high school and learn about becoming a Little Sister of the Poor.

My very
special
family

Therese Upperman

Mary and Germaine entered the convent after graduation from high school. The family visits to see Sr. Gabrielle and “the girls” in whatever home they were assigned, were the high-light of our lives. I always looked forward to the visits, which included Mass, prayer with the Sisters, presents, serving the Residents dinner from the huge metal carts, and an endless stream of cream soda in the fridge and cookies in the cupboard. These experiences ingrained in me the basic attributes of Christian hospitality: preparing for, welcoming and

treating others as if they were Christ. It was also the groundwork for my being accepted into their home as not only a medication aide but also as a valued, lay member of their community.

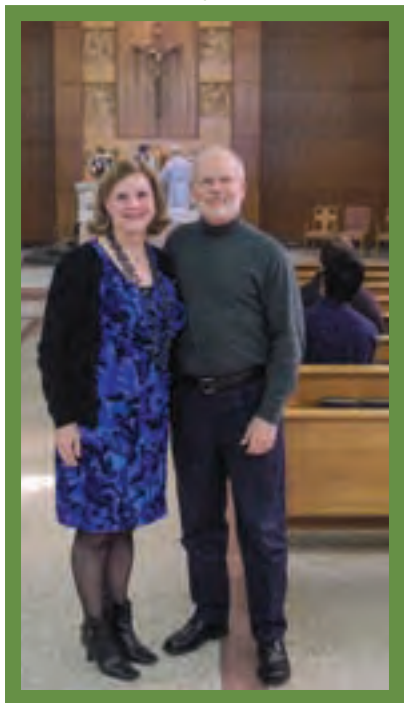
It was with great reservation and as an obedient younger sibling that I went to the interview, scheduled by my older sister Germaine, with the director of nursing at SS. Mary and Joseph Home. That interview and subsequent job as the medication aide on St. Mary's independent unit, changed my life by giving me a place that became my physical and spiritual home every weekend for a year.

In his book *Finding My Way Home — Pathways to Life and the Spirit*, Henri Nouwen stated: "Christian community

is the place where we keep the flame of hope alive among us and take it seriously so that it can grow and become stronger in us." The job at the home became my connection to a

faith-filled past and a source of hope for the future by grounding me in Christ's work in the present. In addition to my job as a medication aide on the independent ladies wing, I spent many hours in the kitchen with Sr. Mary Imelda watching her bake


cakes, make doughnuts, and prepare three meals a day for the Residents and Sisters. I also spent some of my free time with the ladies on my floor by listening to their stories and advice, attending daily Mass, and serving them meals from the big metal carts I had known as a child. All



these experiences allowed me to feel like I was a part of a special family that not many others have experienced. In fact, one day I asked Sr. Mary Imelda why she permitted me to hang out in the kitchen and help with the kitchen chores. Her answer was, “because you are family.”

The community spirit of the Little Sisters was so strong, and my parents had passed away years before; so when I was about to get married, I asked Mother Regis for permission to get married at the home. I could not imagine a wedding without the Little Sisters and the Residents, for they had become my friends, my family, and my Christian community. Mother Regis got permission from Mother General to have the wedding at the home, and the first wedding in the home became a communal effort that gave a depth and meaning that has sustained both my husband and myself throughout our married lives. The respect, love, and prayers shown by the Sisters and Residents at the Little Sisters of the Poor

in Cleveland were the seeds that have grown and made our home one where each person who enters is treated as Christ and given the same love, prayers and respect I received while I worked at the home.

The Little Sisters’ foundress, Saint Jeanne Jugan said, “Be kind, especially with the infirm. Love them well ... Oh yes! Be kind. It is a great grace God is giving you. In serving the aged, it is he himself whom you are serving.” Her words are felt in every Little Sisters home. I encountered that kindness when my parents first brought me to the Cleveland home long ago, and I still experience it every time I visit a home. The Little Sisters of the Poor will always be my very special family. 

The family spirit of the Congregation is one of the many things that attracted me.

When I was 18, I started to go to volunteer in the home. The Residents were just like my

own grand-
parents. Every weekend, I got up early and went to the home to give baths and serve the Residents while the Sisters were saying their morning prayers. My friends used to ask

me if I wanted to become a nun, I answered, "not at all!" I just loved the Residents and the atmosphere of the home. Afterwards, I even went to serve them before I went to work.

After four years, I decided to be a live-in member of the family. This special spirit of ours remained the

same, no matter which home I visited. Despite language barriers I was able to settle down easily in my new destination because it was my home. The relationships between the

Little Sisters, Residents and staff were always so close, the mutual respect and concern for one another just like members in a real family. The Residents treated us like their grand-children, giving

us council and encouragement. We showed concern and love for all those who worked, helped and lived in the home and vice versa. Often, I noticed the Residents

loved to have activities with the Little Sisters and staff together. Once for the feast of St. Jeanne Jugan, we decided to play Bingo together with



Just like
members
in a real
family

Sr. Cecilia Marie Therese

the Residents, staff and Little Sisters. Everyone was so happy being together, the whole hall was filled with laughter and excitement. After the feast, the Residents said that they had a wonderful time and that that was the first time the whole family spent quality time together and we should have more gatherings together like that.

Other times, after people came to visit, as they left, they would express how happy the Residents were and what respect they received from the staff. That's because we were all members of the same family. We did not only spend quality time together to play and have a good time, but we also spent spiritual time together to pray, especially during our daily Eucharist, the source and the nourishment for our bonding.

I also recall one Mother's Day, after I had entered the Congregation, my mom told me that the Sisters sent her a Mother's Day card and they addressed her as "mom" and signed it "your daughters." My mom felt so good and

said, "I lost one daughter and gained many!" I felt so assured. Even though I am far from my family I know they are well taken care of by their daughters. And he, my Spouse, is the most faithful and delicate One who knows and will provide all their needs.

Twenty years later, I still experience this strong family spirit that reigns in all of our homes. To be a religious, it is not how much I give up following Christ; rather it is how grateful I am for all that I have received from him. We are called to be at the service of the elderly, but in fact, we have received so much more from them, beyond our imagination! Thank you, our Mother Saint Jeanne Jugan, for this beautiful heritage! May this spirit continue to grow and be experienced by all those whom we encounter! ✨

Sr. Cecilia Marie Therese is a native of Hong Kong serving the elderly here in the United States.



Only three years separate me from my sister who is a Little Sister. It was heart-wrenching to let her go her chosen way when she entered the convent; but on deep reflection, I realize what she did was part of the Almighty's plan for all of us.

My parents, especially my mother, were volunteers at St. Joseph's Home for the Elderly run by the Little Sisters of the Poor in Sri Lanka. Following my mother, we her daughters used to tag along and Laureliya fell "hook, line and sinker" into their fold. She was so taken up with their sense of dedication and service that she,

at that early school-age, had privately decided to be one of them. After her advanced level studies, when she made her decision public, my parents

did not object. Far from objecting, they considered her decision as a calling from God himself and encouraged her in her new pursuit.

By this time, however, my mother became bed-ridden and soon after Laureliya took her first vows, my Dad was called to heaven for his eternal life. This was the most trying time of my life. All alone with an incapacitated mother, and a younger school-age sister, I was like a rudderless ship.

God's
plan for
all of us

J. Christianne

The encouraging and inspiring words of the Little Sisters and their assurance of prayers invigorated me and I continued to look after my family. The examples of humility, obedience and unostentatious service displayed by the Little Sisters edged me on. The tremendous work they put in during man-made and natural disasters like the tsunami opened my eyes to a new and challenging world. It was then that I realized my selfishness



in not wanting Sister Laurelliya to go away from the family.

She is serving a larger family and that thought consoles me. I shall not hesitate to encourage more and more young

girls to contemplate giving up their lives for the welfare of others. May the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor, like their foundress, Saint Jeanne Jugan, depend 100% on God and his undying grace and continue to serve the poor and needy elderly! ✨

In this year dedicated to the family and to consecrated life, how blessed our family has been, and continues to be, to be part of the family of the Little Sisters of the Poor!

Since we were children at Most Blessed Sacrament Parish in West Philadelphia, we knew of the Little Sisters from Holy Family Home, only two blocks from our home.

The love and goodness of the Sisters drew us, as they have so many, to spend time with them and with their Residents, on whom they lavish so much love and care.

All four of us as children volunteered at the home, as did our parents and other family members. Ultimately, through the grace of the Holy Spirit Kathleen entered the

Blessed by hospitality, from Philly to Sydney

The Halloran Family



community as Sr. Margaret Regina.

Subsequently our extended family has enjoyed the hospitality of the L.S.P. family across the U.S. and the world. As Sr. Margaret Regina's obediences have taken her from one home to another and from the East Coast to the West, the family followed, always being greeted by the Sisters in each home as if we were long-lost family members.

When the Australian branch of our family arrived at the Little Sisters' home in San Francisco with small children in tow at Christmas time, lo and behold the children were involved in a Nativity tableau

as three small kings, found small presents on their chairs at breakfast most mornings, and got to whiz down the halls on Sister's electric scooter (the most fun of all!). When life-threatening illnesses beset family members, the Little Sisters prayed and gave us a relic of Saint Jeanne Jugan for faith and comfort. The illnesses passed without difficulty, as we knew they would, with the support of the L.S.P. family.

Our aunt and uncle had been major supporters and fund raisers for the Little Sisters of the Poor. Despite their great admiration for the L.S.P., when the time came for them to surrender their indepen-

dence and enter a home, like most people they were reluctant to leave their own homes, even though both had become shadows of their former self-possessed and confident selves. However, within a few short months of living with the Little Sisters each began to blossom. The Little Sisters knew Aunt Cass well, and made sure she had a selection of elegant clothes and matching jewelry. With her hair regularly done Aunt Cass once again became the stylish woman she had always been. Uncle Jim, while never talkative, was persuaded to take part in entertainments, often having to dress up for some

I am blessed to have two sisters who live the consecrated life of the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor. One of my sisters entered when I was four years old, and I was nine when the other entered. From the time I was four, I can remember the long association I had with my second family! My dad would take all of us to visit my sisters wherever they

role or another. His wife Mary found that his depression lifted and he seemed to have a new-found contentment with his Little Sisters Family.

The Little Sisters' love, joy, prayer, goodness and hospitality have been so wonderfully given to us, no matter which homes we visit. Always they are welcoming! Our thanks to God for embracing our family and incorporating it into the family of the Little Sisters of the Poor family. As we celebrate family and this Year of Consecrated Life, what better gift could we be given! Thank you to the family of the Little Sisters of the Poor! 🌿

were stationed. Those trips were often incorporated into our summer vacations. During these visits my sisters involved me to whatever degree I was capable in their work with the elderly and I loved it. Some of the Sisters would dote on us little ones. One, Sister Aurelie, knew me when I was very young but didn't see me again until about



Memories of a "little sister"

Theresa Tessarzik



forty-five years later. When she came to Latham and until her death, she looked after me and I after her. I had the privilege of sitting with her at her deathbed. Like a sister she loved me and I her!

When I was only five years old I was "accepted" into the community for a day as a postulant. While visiting my sister, a postulant herself, the Little Sister in charge of

the linen room made a postulant's habit for me. My dad, an amateur photographer, took many pictures of me and other Sisters with me. I barely remember this myself but I think the photos help! So there I was accepted into the community so to speak for a day, "my family"!


As a teen, I volunteered at the home in Albany and later, as a mom of two school age

kids, at the home in Latham. My parents lived in St. Joseph's apartments for eleven years until their deaths. They always wanted to be with the Little Sisters of the Poor the last years of their lives. What better way to die than to be bathed in the love of their "two" families?

As a volunteer, I was invited to be a member of the Association Jeanne Jugan. After a year of formation, I made my promise along with others. We promised to share in the charism of Saint Jeanne Jugan, and to be an extension of the hands of the Little Sisters of the Poor as they care for the corporal and spiritual needs of the elderly. We knew that our efforts would draw us closer to God.

I did not know then that the Church would one day raise Jeanne Jugan to sainthood and I would have the opportunity and the privilege to travel to Rome for that day with the group from Our Lady of Hope. I saw that God had put a rainbow in the sky that day as our bus drove away from Vatican City.

My husband and I always brought our son and daughter along for each visit to the home where one or the other of my sisters lived. The Residents love babies and children and also like to be entertained. Knowing this from my own youth I made a point to bring the kids around to talk to the Residents and to entertain them in various ways. Our kids grew to know and love the Sisters as their family as well.

And so, from a five year-old dressed as a postulant in 1958 to my pilgrimage to Rome in 2009 for the canonization of Jeanne Jugan, my involvement with the Little Sisters spans many years. Years filled with many fond memories and with prayers, support, love and affection! 



Pope Francis *brings peace and joy on his second visit to Asia*

In Janury Pope Francis made his second trip to Asia, visiting Sri Lanka and the Philippines. In both nations our Little Sisters participated enthusiastically in the festivities surrounding our Holy Father's visit.

While the vast majority of Filipinos are Catholic, Sri Lanka is spiritually and ethnically diverse; Catholics make up only 8% of the population. The country is still recovering from a long civil war between the Sinhalese majority and its Tamil minority, so much of the Holy Father's focus was on peace and reconciliation.

On January 14th Pope Francis canonized Joseph Vaz, a seventeenth-century Oratorian priest and missionary to Sri Lanka, in Colombo, the country's largest city. Our Little Sisters assisted event organizers by hosting a group of sick and handicapped persons and their caregivers who were enroute for the Mass. One of our Residents, along with a Little Sister, joined this group and ultimately received a personal blessing from the Holy Father!



It was at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary in Madhu that Our Little Sisters from Batticaloa greeted the Holy Father later that day. Despite making a day-long journey and arriving hours ahead of time, they found themselves far from the Pope as he made his way through the crowd upon his arrival, but

they could see him clearly once he arrived in the sanctuary of the shrine church for a Marian prayer service.

They related, “His Holiness was welcomed by three couples representing the three major communities of Sri Lanka. No Pope had ever traveled to this northern Tamil region before. Francis came to bring peace and joy to the war-affected folk ... and also between Tamil, Sinhala and Muslims. He released a dove as a sign of peace.”

Our Little Sisters were especially touched by our Holy Father’s words about Mary, “We are in our Mother’s house. Here she welcomes us into her home. At this shrine of Our Lady of Madhu, every pilgrim can feel at home, for here Mary brings us into the presence of her Son Jesus. Here Sri Lankans, Tamil and Sinhalese alike, come as members of one family. To Mary they commend their joys and sorrows, their hopes and needs. Here, in her home, they feel safe. They know that God is very near; they feel his love; they know his tender mercy, the tender mercy of God.... Our Lady remains always with you. She is the mother of every home, of every wounded family, of all who are seeking to return to a peaceful existence. Today we thank her for protecting the people of Sri Lanka from so many dangers, past and present. Mary never forgot her children on this resplendent island. Just as she never left the side of her Son on the Cross, so she never left the side of her suffering Sri Lankan children.”



Prayers of intercession followed and then Pope Francis was presented with a wooden replica of the statue of Our Lady of Madhu, which he gazed upon and hugged intently, and with which he blessed the people. As they looked forward to his visit, our Little Sisters had noted how much the people of Sri Lanka venerate our Holy Father, regardless of their religious beliefs. “He is the Pope of the people,” they remarked, “the Pope of the poor.” Our Little Sisters and their Sri Lankan brothers and sisters were not disappointed by Pope Francis’ fatherly embrace!

Our Little Sisters in the Philippines decided that their best chance of seeing the Pope would be his closing Mass in Manila's Rizal Park on Sunday, January 18th. In the Philippines the third Sunday in January is celebrated as Santo Niño (Holy Child) Sunday. Reflecting on this feast Pope Francis spoke about the importance of safeguarding children and family life.

Our Little Sisters recount, "Together we confided the day to Our Lady. We asked her to obtain us a seat where we could get a good glimpse of the Vicar of Christ and good weather.... The temporarily built sanctuary was located on the stage of Quirino Grandstand, where every new president officiates the opening of his mandate. The decorations of the sanctuary were beautiful and meaningful, representing the various regions' cultures and arts. We were lucky enough to find seats just in front of the altar! What a blessing!"

"But the Blessed Virgin Mary forgot our petition! Beginning at about 8:00 a.m. the sky distilled showers and we were wet! We had been reminded to bring raincoats but we are like the negligent virgins in the Gospel. Fortunately the prudent ones did not





Pope Francis and Cardinal Luis Antonio Gokim Tagle of Manila tell the crowd “I love you” in sign language.

abandon us, though the supply was not enough for everybody. ‘Mercy and compassion’ was the theme for this apostolic visit — how beautiful to see that the faithful would live out this calling immediately! We offered this uncomfortable situation in solidarity with the faithful who listened to Pope Francis in Tacloban as the typhoon signal was hoisted....”

“During the entire Mass we welcomed the rain to soften our hardened hearts so as to be more receptive to the words of Pope Francis, and let it penetrate into our innermost being and return to God! At the end of the celebration the Holy Father summoned all of us to spread the light of Christ. The congregation lifted up their lighted candles while the choir sang *Tell the World of His Love* (the theme song from the 1995 World Youth Day celebration in Manila).”

Reflecting on their experience our Little Sisters relate, “These days of grace will accompany our spiritual journey for the rest of our lives. The Holy Father taught us the heart of the message of Jesus’ Gospel by his own simplicity and poverty.” The novices added, “What better way to celebrate the Year of Consecrated Life totally given to God in joy and confidence! We were overjoyed!”

A plea for


Life

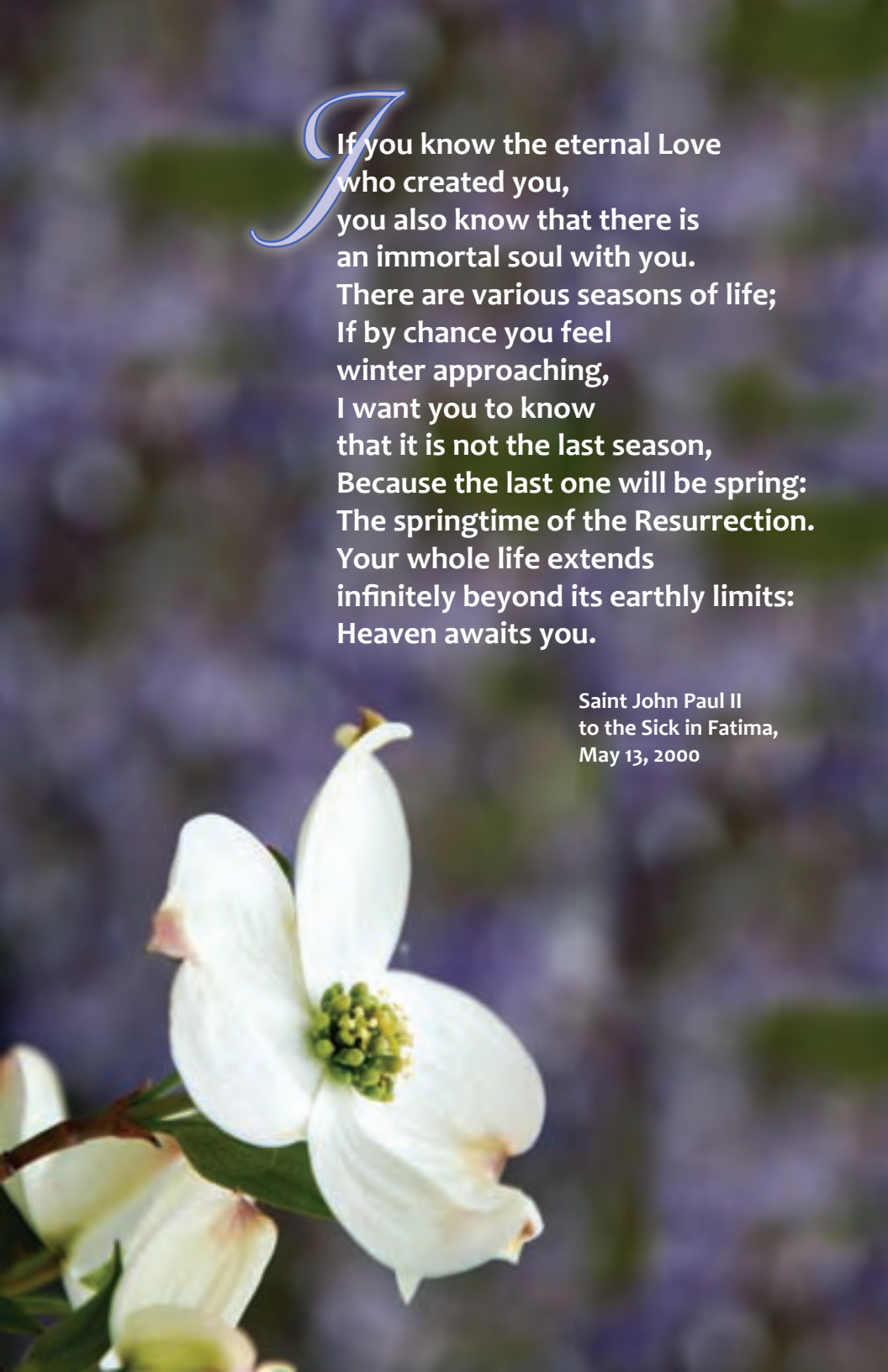


Propelled by recent positive media coverage — itself driven by “Compassion and Choices,” the pro-euthanasia group formerly known as the Hemlock Society — the movement to legalize physician-assisted suicide has rapidly gained ground in recent months. The practice is already legal in four U.S. states: Oregon, Washington, Montana and Vermont; and so far this year assisted-suicide legislation has been introduced in fifteen others: Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Montana, New York, Oklahoma, Wisconsin and Wyoming (www.patientsrightscouncil.org).

Obviously this issue is of great concern to us Little Sisters of the Poor. We beg you to join us in praying and advocating for reverence for the inviolable dignity of every human life from beginning to natural end, regardless of each person’s level of ability or disability. Your prayers may literally be a matter of life and death.

With the U.S. Bishops we affirm that “when we grow old or sick and we are tempted to lose heart, we should be surrounded by people who ask ‘How can we help?’ We deserve to grow old in a society that views our cares and needs with a compassion grounded in respect, offering genuine support in our final days. The choices we make together now will decide whether this is the kind of caring society we will leave to future generations” (U.S.C.C.B., *To Live Each Day with Dignity*).

Stay informed about what is going on in your state by consulting the Patients Rights Council website or your local diocese and join us in building the Culture of Life! 



If you know the eternal Love
who created you,
you also know that there is
an immortal soul with you.
There are various seasons of life;
If by chance you feel
winter approaching,
I want you to know
that it is not the last season,
Because the last one will be spring:
The springtime of the Resurrection.
Your whole life extends
infinitely beyond its earthly limits:
Heaven awaits you.

Saint John Paul II
to the Sick in Fatima,
May 13, 2000



Serenity

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Become a beggar.

Learn to beg from those to whom you give.
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— cf. Pope Francis

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