

Serenity

July 2012

Little Sisters of the Poor

no. 156



the poor are Our LORD
Jeanne Jugan



Our Mission

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

Cover photos

Front cover: Stained glass window of Saint Jeanne Jugan by Nick Parrendo, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The window is in the chapel of Sts. Peter and Paul Home, Pittsburgh.

Back inside cover: Illustration of Saint Jeanne walking the roads of Brittany collecting alms for the poor, by Mayalen Goust.

Back cover: drawing of the elderly Jeanne Jugan walking in the motherhouse garden with a novice, by Mayalen Goust.

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Finding faith in the weakest

WITH THIS ISSUE OF SERENITY WE INTRODUCE THE YEAR OF FAITH, which will be celebrated throughout the Roman Catholic Church from October 11, 2012, the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of Vatican II, until November 24, 2013, the feast of Christ the King. Two articles specifically address the subject of faith. The first recounts the story of Sister Marie Simon-Pierre, a French religious cured through the intercession of Pope John Paul II. The second examines the faith of our foundress, Saint Jeanne Jugan.

As this magazine was being prepared, the International Eucharistic Congress took place in Dublin, Ireland. In a homily during Mass in a Dublin hospital just days before the Congress, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin shared a powerful insight about the faith of the sick. It seems uniquely relevant to our mission among the elderly.

Recounting the scene in St. Mark's Gospel where Jesus visits his home town and cannot work any miracles because of their lack of faith, the Archbishop reflected, "There was no way in which faith could emerge from such smugness and self-sufficiency....

"The only trace of true faith that Jesus encountered in his own town was that of the sick people, who in their weakness were able to recognize their need for redemption and the limitedness of what each of us can attain on our own. There is a sense in which it is only when we become like the sick that we can enter into the kingdom. It is only when we recognize our own limitedness that we permit the saving power of Jesus to work in us and transform us."

What great advice — with which Sister Marie-Simon Pierre and Saint Jeanne would definitely concur — as we begin this Year of Faith! 



If you believe you will see the glory of God

John Paul II once said that the saving power of God is manifested when signs and miracles are performed through the intercession “of saints, of devout people” — just as the first of Jesus’ signs at Cana of Galilee was worked through the intercession of his Mother. Miracles remind us that through the saving power of Christ, the human person is destined for glory. But they undoubtedly raise questions of faith: Are we ready to believe that God acts so directly in our lives? This was the question posed by Sister Marie Simon-Pierre Normand and her superior, Sister Marie Thomas Fabre, as they addressed the annual conference of Healthcare Professionals for Divine Mercy May 1–2, 2012 sharing the story of Sister Marie Simon-Pierre’s miraculous cure through the intercession of none other than Blessed John Paul II himself.

“HE DID NOT DO MANY MIGHTY WORKS there because of their unbelief” (Mt 13:58). These sad words reveal how much Jesus linked faith with his proclamation of the Kingdom. Where he was met with unbelief, Jesus was unable to perform the signs and miracles that defined his mission. But among those who believed, anything was possible — as he told Martha when he raised her brother Lazarus from the dead: “Did I not tell you that if you believe you would see the glory of God?” (Jn 11:40).

These words from St. John’s Gospel took on a very special meaning for a young French religious in the spring of 2005. Sister Marie Simon-Pierre, a member of the Little Sisters of the Catholic Maternities (Petites Soeurs des Maternités Catholiques) heard them resonate in her heart, even as her body was wracked with pain and the incapacitating effects of Parkinson’s disease. On June 2, 2005,

exactly two months after the death of Pope John Paul II, she experienced in her own flesh a singular manifestation of the glory of God as she literally felt herself being healed of Parkinson's disease — a cure officially attributed to the late Pontiff and which led to his beatification on May 1, 2011.

Together with her superior general, Sister Marie Thomas Fabre, Sister Marie Simon-Pierre Normand recently spoke at the annual conference of Healthcare Professionals for Divine Mercy, giving witness to the revelation of God's glory in and through her. Several Little Sisters of the Poor attended this conference, happy to welcome the two French Sisters — our two Congregations are quite friendly in France — to the United States. The story of Sister Marie Simon-Pierre and her community is one of humble confidence in the power of prayer and of living faith working through charity.

A professed member of her community since 1985, Sister Marie Simon-Pierre was working as a registered nurse in one of her community's maternity centers in the south of France when she began to experience generalized pain and fatigue. In 2001, at the age of 40, she was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Sister Marie Thomas, then her local superior, remembers that on the day she received the diagnosis, the two religious stopped at a well-known place of pilgrimage to confide to Our Lady "the present and the future of Sister Simon-Pierre, asking her for the strength to live these events in full confidence." Sister Marie Thomas continues, "It was Parkinson's disease in a very young person ... I could not conceive that such a young and active Sister could, from one day to the next, find herself in such a dramatic situation. Why was God imposing on us such an ordeal when we needed so many vocations and Sisters who could be active professionally? I never rebelled, but I painfully accepted the reality. I wanted to believe that God had a loving plan for her and that we had to trust in his Providence."

Despite her illness Sister Marie Simon-Pierre continued working in the neonatal unit, where she was responsible for a staff of forty-five. Her superior felt that it was important to allow her to go



Sisters in Christ: our own Little Sisters were eager to greet — and practice their French with — Sister Marie Simon-Pierre (center) and her superior general, Sister Marie Thomas.

on serving for as long as possible. “It gave her joy and happiness in the Lord ... It was important to let her fight to the end, since this struggle would give her so much joy,” Sister Marie Thomas recalls.

Sister’s struggles to go on serving evoke a passage from John Paul II’s letter on suffering, which he wrote after the 1981 attempt on his life: “Suffering as it were contains a special call to the virtue ... of perseverance. In doing this, the individual unleashes hope, which maintains in him the conviction that suffering will not get the better of him, that it will not deprive him of his dignity as a human being, a dignity linked to awareness of the meaning of life” (*Salvifici Doloris*, n. 23).

In fact, Sister Marie Simon-Pierre held John Paul II in great esteem and found in him a source of courage. “After the Parkinson’s diagnosis I found it very difficult to watch John Paul II on television. However, I stayed very close to him in prayer. Pope John Paul II was for me a pastor according to the heart of God, a great man,” she recalls. “He was a man of prayer and an Apostle of Mercy.... He was close to all, to the weakest, the poorest, the smallest, the sick. He was a defender of life and of peace.” Sister felt that he could understand

what she was experiencing: “His example was encouraging me to confront and to love this suffering, because there is no meaning to it without love. It was a daily struggle, but my only desire was to live it in faith and submit with love to the will of the Father,” she adds.

Even though it had grown increasingly difficult to see John Paul because his condition reminded her of “what she would become in a few years,” Sister Marie Simon-Pierre had planned to watch the Pope on television Easter Sunday, 2005, sensing that it would be the last time she would see him. Her duties kept her away from the T.V. that morning, but together with her community she was watching the prayer vigil in Rome the evening of April 2, 2005 when the Pope’s death was announced. “At that moment, I became very upset,” Sister reminisces, “I was distressed, I had just lost a friend, the one who could understand me and give me strength and energy to continue. In the days leading up to his funeral I felt a great void, while at the same time, I was sure that he was always present.”

Although no one except Sister Marie Simon-Pierre noticed it, her condition progressively worsened following the death of John Paul II. Despite her exhaustion, she recalls, a verse from the Gospel of St. John was always with her: “If you believe, you will see the glory of God” (Jn 11:40). At that point she had no idea of the prophetic nature of these words! Nor did she know that beginning on the night of John Paul’s funeral, many members of her community felt compelled to pray for her.

On May 13, 2005, the day that Pope Benedict XVI announced a dispensation from the normal five year waiting period before opening John Paul’s beatification process, the Congregation’s superior general asked the whole community to pray for a cure for Sister Marie Simon-Pierre through his intercession. Speaking of her predecessor Sister Marie-Marc, Sister Marie Thomas recalls, “She had a very strong intuition from the Holy Spirit. I believe that each one of us has been placed where the Lord wants us in order to accomplish his mission. This miracle is the fruit of the prayers of the whole Congregation. Each community started praying with one heart and

one faith, humbly, discreetly, with strong hope. Sister Marie Simon-Pierre was very touched by it.”

The simple, discreet faith of the Little Sisters of the Catholic Maternities in interceding together for their Sister is deeply moving. “The more a person learns to pray,” we read in the new *Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “the more profoundly he realizes that he has ties to a spiritual family through which the power of prayer is made effective.... I stand in the midst of the family of mankind and may receive strength from the prayers of others and may call down divine assistance for others.” How beautifully the Little Sisters of the Catholic Maternities lived these words on behalf of Sister Marie Simon-Pierre!

As much as she was touched by the prayers and support of her community, Sister grew increasingly exhausted. On June 1, she recalls, “I had reached the end. The pain was unbearable and the tremors were growing much worse.... I was really at the end of my strength.” Her story evokes words Pope Benedict XVI would write in his first encyclical: “In all humility we will do what we can, and in all humility we will entrust the rest to the Lord.... We offer him our service only to the extent that we can, and for as long as he grants us the strength” (*Deus Caritas Est*, n. 35). The next day she met with her superior, asking to be relieved of her professional responsibilities.

Sister Marie Thomas recalls this meeting, “She quickly told me, ‘You know, I reflected and I think I will always be able to be a Little Sister, even in a wheelchair — my consecration will always be active.’ Interiorly,” confides Sister Marie Thomas, “I was deeply moved and happy to witness an interior grace of healing in her that I had desired and for which I had prayed for so long. Her struggle was ending; she was accepting who she was — a sick Little Sister but entirely a Little Sister. What an amazing reversal! I remember having said interiorly: ‘What a victory! Thank you, Lord!’ It was as if the mission given to her had reached its acme, its highest point. We were fully in the hands of God, hopeful and serene. There was no more fear for the future. Isn’t this the paradox of the Cross?”

And then Sister Marie Thomas did something quite strange. Sister had just told her that she could no longer write, and yet she handed her a pen and asked her to write the name of John Paul II on a piece of paper. Sister Marie Simon-Pierre refused three times, but her superior persisted. At the time Sister Marie Thomas did not know why, but she later felt this was a sure sign of the presence of John Paul II. “Did I interiorly obey an intuition of the Holy Spirit?” she questions. “I felt through this writing, the glory of God would one day be manifested...” However, Sister Marie Thomas now admits, when she looked down at the illegible writing of her Little Sister, she was speechless; the two sat in silent prayer. As Sister Marie Simon-Pierre then got up to leave, she tried to encourage her with these parting words: “John Paul II has not had his last word.”

That night — Sister Marie Simon-Pierre would later realize that it was at the precise moment that John Paul II had died two months before — she suddenly had the desire to write. “Deep inside, I tell myself, ‘Take the pen and write,’” she recalls. “To my great surprise, the few lines written are very legible. I do not fully understand what is happening, but I go to bed.” Sister woke up at 4:30 the next morning and jumped out of bed. She had no stiffness and felt very different interiorly. She rushed to the chapel, eager to thank God for what was happening within her. “I go down to the oratory, I pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament,” she recounts. “A great peace, a sensation of well-being, envelops me, something very big, a great mystery too hard to put into words.” She prayed the luminous mysteries of the rosary, remaining alone in the oratory until 6:00 a.m. and then joining the community for morning prayer. During the Eucharist she was overcome with peace and joy. Afterwards she found Sister Marie Thomas, who observed certain outward changes, and simply exclaimed, “I am healed! I have been healed through the intercession of John Paul II!” It was June 3, 2005, the feast of the Sacred Heart.

We might say that for Sister Marie Simon-Pierre there is a “before” and an “after.” She easily speaks of her healing as a rebirth:

“Today I can say that nothing is the same anymore.... This healing is physical, but it has touched my inmost being and my whole existence. As I often say, ‘I was sick and I am healed.’ This is like a second birth, a new life, and my spiritual life has been renewed. What the Lord has given me to live through the intercession of John Paul II is a great mystery, difficult to put into words, being so wonderful, so powerful. I am more drawn to the Eucharist and nocturnal adoration, and the rosary is constantly with me. On the second of every month, at 9:00 p.m., I spend a long time in a prayer of thanksgiving for the great things the Lord has done within me, and a time of supplication for the sick and all people who confide in our prayers.”

Sister Marie Thomas emphasizes that the community’s prayers for their Little Sister’s healing were always oriented toward their mission in the Church. “It was primarily so that Sister Marie Simon-Pierre could continue her nursing work ... that the whole Congregation in one accord prayed for her healing,” she notes. Sister Marie Simon-Pierre concurs, “A lot of ink has been spilled over this, but the media sensation did not transform my life. I did not become a star. Today, more than ever, I remain a Little Sister among

“If you believe you will see the glory of God ... This glory I saw on May 1, 2011, the day of the beatification of John Paul II,” recounts Sister Marie Simon-Pierre. Here she carries his relic during the beatification ceremony.



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the other Little Sisters of the Catholic Maternities, and I exercise my nursing career in one of the health centers owned and operated by our Congregation.”

Reflecting a living faith that works through charity, Sister Marie Simon-Pierre adds, “I have passed through sickness myself; this unique experience allowed me to understand and to live in a new manner, which is that of compassion. It expresses itself by the attitudes, gestures, the tenderness of one’s gaze, words, and sometimes even silence.... This experience of having been healed gives me an interior and exterior ardor for desiring to bring hope into situations of distress that can appear humanly perplexing.... Jesus lends us his hands, his gaze and his heart.”

“The healing has touched my whole being and my relationship with others,” Sister Marie Simon-Pierre concludes. “This is reflected in my professional work. There is a great closeness with Christ and thus with others. I have always wanted to do good.... I am in peace when I approach families in order to care for them. I see in faith what I ought to do. I possess a great confidence and hope, and I approach each situation, even painful ones, with the focus of transmitting this confidence. To parents who battle before a difficulty, I say, ‘Today, you do not understand this trial, but it might have meaning. In some years, by reflecting again on this difficult moment, you will realize that it opened a path for you.’” And Sister Marie Simon-Pierre might be tempted to add the phrase that has come to define her life, “If you believe you will see the glory of God!”

These two religious from France, special friends of our Congregation, greatly touched the Little Sisters of the Poor who were privileged to hear them speak at the Divine Mercy conference. Although the vocation of the Little Sisters of the Catholic Maternities focuses on the beginning of life, and ours is concerned with those reaching life’s end, we desire to share in their profound faith and trust in God’s Providence and like them, we are committed to fostering the Gospel of Life through the humble daily tasks of our health care apostolate. 🌸

The faith of Saint Jeanne Jugan

AROUND THE WORLD THE CHURCH is preparing for a special Year of Faith, to be celebrated October 11, 2012 through November 24, 2013. Pope Benedict's wish for this year is that every believer will aspire "to profess the faith in fullness and with renewed conviction, with confidence and hope." In announcing the Year of Faith, he wrote, "To rediscover the content of the faith that is professed, celebrated, lived and prayed, and to reflect on the act of faith, is a task that every believer must make his own, especially in the course of this Year."

So where do we start? Quoting Saint Augustine, the Pope suggests that believers "strengthen themselves by believing." To grow in faith by believing — this seems like quite a paradox! Is there a how-to manual for faith, or a secret formula for believing? Perhaps we should take a cue from the start date for the Year of Faith — for it coincides with the anniversary of Saint Jeanne Jugan's canonization — and ask her to share with us the secret of her deep faith and confidence in Providence. After all, Jeanne possessed the heroic faith of a saint!

If Jeanne were here today, she might suggest that if we wish to exercise our faith, we should begin by looking to our neighbor. For her, faith was practical. She saw God in people and events. Jeanne's spirit of faith consisted in approaching her brothers [and sisters] as though she were speaking to "other Christs," especially where the poor were concerned. "With the eye of faith we must see Jesus in our old people," she would say to the young Little Sisters. "You must see the suffering members of Our Lord in them; for in them you are caring for Jesus himself ... The Poor are Our Lord" (cf. *Positio*).

Gabriel-Marie Garrone, a French Cardinal who was a very good friend of the Little Sisters and an expert in the spirituality of Saint Jeanne Jugan, felt that our foundress was able to see Christ in the poor because everything in her life was oriented toward him: “The whole gamut of things to be believed and of things to be loved, can be summed up in one simple truth. Jesus was her reason for believing. He was also truly the object of her faith. In him converge all individual truths, not one of which would she have been willing to sacrifice. For, not one of them, for her, was separable from Jesus. In him, she saw the Father. In him, she saw herself. In him she saw her fellow-man.

“And of this, what better sign or proof can we find than the way in which she habitually regarded her old people, the poor whom Jesus had confided to her, and of whom he said that she must find him in them? ‘This is Jesus,’ she tells the young novices, with that marvelous simplicity of faith, as though her very soul were exploding with joy, in awareness of the gift given to her and of what that would entail in self-giving for her. ‘It’s Jesus.’ All Jeanne’s faith is concentrated in this single point” (Garrone, *Poor in Spirit*).

Saint Jeanne would certainly agree with Pope Benedict in *Porta Fidei*: “Faith without charity bears no fruit. Faith and charity each require the other, in such a way that each allows the other to set out along its respective path.... Through faith, we can recognize the face of the risen Lord in those who ask for our love. ‘As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me’ (Mt 25:40).... It is faith that enables us to recognize Christ and it is his love that impels us to assist him whenever he becomes our neighbor along the journey of life” (*Porta Fidei*, n. 14).

Jeanne would also tell us that if we want to grow in faith, we must learn to trust — to trust fully in the loving action of God’s Providence in our lives. Cardinal Garrone can help us understand this point of Jeanne’s faith: “Faith consists, primarily, then in saying: Christ is right, this is true; and in saying it without reservations from the bottom of our heart.... Jeanne Jugan is not the one

*I*t is faith that enables us to recognize Christ and it is his love that impels us to assist him whenever he becomes our neighbor along the journey of life."

(*Porta Fidei*, n. 14)



the poor are Our LORD
Jeanne Jugan

to know how to distinguish between truth and truth and to know which one to believe and which one not to believe; and indeed, she absolutely and instinctively refuses to do anything of the sort. For her, what God says, what she reads in the Gospel, what the Church has taught her through her catechism: this is all true. 'God speaks': this is enough for her.

"The area in which her faith is apparently most tested and where it appears in full perfection," wrote Cardinal Garrone, "is precisely that of poverty. She believes that the Father watches over us and will no more forsake his children than let the birds of the air go hungry. Her faith in the divine promises, contained in Revelation and concerned with the fatherhood of God, this she lives directly and heroically. She believes that 'God will provide,' from the moment that he summons her.

"Divine Providence was her repose, in joy as in sorrow: 'God is our Father, let us put our trust in him!'" she often said. "Yes, indeed, it does seem mad, it does seem impossible, but if God is with us, it will be done." "And events proved her right, the Cardinal insists, "as against the arguments of human prudence. 'It does seem mad,' yes, if God is left out of account. But wise, if you take him into account and also count on him."

Finally, if Saint Jeanne Jugan were to speak to us about faith she might warn us — or rather issue a challenge — that faith is not really faith until it is tested in the darkness that leads a soul to complete abandonment to God. A contemporary once said of her that "In the midst of difficulties she would adore God's plans and abandon herself to Divine Providence with complete confidence." This is what she did when her work was taken away from her and she was relegated to the shadows.

Jeanne would surely identify in a deeply personal way with Saint Peter and his current successor: "The words of Saint Peter shed one final ray of light on faith: 'In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable

is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls' (1 Pet 1:6-9).'

"The life of Christians knows the experience of joy as well as the experience of suffering," Pope Benedict wrote; and how well Saint Jeanne knew this truth! "How many of the saints have lived in solitude! How many believers, even in our own day, are tested by God's silence when they would rather hear his consoling voice! The trials of life, while helping us to understand the mystery of the Cross and to participate in the sufferings of Christ (cf. Col 1:24), are a prelude to the joy and hope to which faith leads: 'when I am weak, then I am strong' (2 Cor 12:10)" (*Porta Fidei*, n. 14).

This is the level of faith lived by Jeanne Jugan; it permeated her every action, her every word, whether she was traveling the roads of Brittany in search of alms for her poor, or grasping the crucifix tight to her heart during her long night of darkness. Although she was almost blind in her old age — like the first woman she had welcomed into her home — Saint Jeanne would one day say, "I no longer see anything but God; he sees me, that is enough." As we prepare for this Year of Faith, may Jeanne intercede for us, obtaining for us a lively and active faith like hers. Saint Jeanne Jugan, disciple of living faith, model of divine abandonment, pillar of strength and courage, pray for us! 🙏

Poor in Spirit, Cardinal Garrone's book on the spirituality of Saint Jeanne Jugan, is available through the Publications Office or any home of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Paying it forward: Sharing the joy of vocation

A FEW YEARS AGO A NUMBER OF LITTLE SISTERS were gathered for a jubilee celebration and our superior asked the happy jubilarian what her greatest source of joy was. A worthy question, and one that generated lively and inspiring conversation! Now it is my jubilee year and I find myself contemplating this very personal question myself.

What is the greatest source of joy in my vocation? Certainly making the elderly happy — seeing a smile on the faces of older persons who know they are loved and esteemed, who have discovered new talents, made new friendships or found peace in our home — this is all a source of joy for me. But I think my greatest joy is what I call “paying it forward” — making a return to the Lord for all that he has done for me by introducing new generations of young women to our vocation and sharing the joy of hospitality with them — helping them to experience what Saint Jeanne Jugan so often repeated: “It is a great grace God has given you in calling you to serve the poor ... What happiness for us, to be a Little Sister of the Poor!”

The priest who celebrated my jubilee Mass, a religious himself, helped me to “pay it forward” by clarifying a few things about consecrated life for those present at the celebration. “Many people have odd ideas about religious life. There are some who think that it is just a refuge for those who cannot make it in the real world,” he began. But what is more common, he went on to say, is what may be called “the penal servitude idea of religious life: that there are people, noble people, who give up all happiness and earthly satisfaction; who, drawn by an unrelenting sense of duty and obligation sacrifice everything — friends, family, pleasure — so that they can store up for themselves treasure in Heaven in a sort of ‘Purgatory now, Heaven later’” theology.

He suggested that this idea of religious life falls far short of what really inspires us to leave all in order to follow Christ. “Ultimately it

is love that compels us,” he rightly said; “the love of God, the love of Christ, the love of those whom God loves, the love of those for whom Christ gave his life.... It is the love of God, the love of Christ Crucified which animates us, draws us, leads us forward. Jesus Christ is truly a seal upon our heart. It is for him that we offer our bodies, our deepest selves, as a living sacrifice to God, as our spiritual worship.”

Father then gave a lesson in our charism, “Charity is the greatest of the virtues, and in the great Garden of Charity, in that way of divine love, there are many flowers, many ways of manifesting that love. For the Little Sisters it is particularly in their fourth vow, in their vow of hospitality, in the compassion and loving-kindness that they show to the elderly that this love is manifest.”

He got it right — thus helping me to pay it forward to the young people at Mass that day. The truth is that my greatest joy lies in sharing the beautiful secret of this compelling love of Christ with others so that they too will know the fullness of joy.

Recently a young woman in discernment with our community told me that once she began volunteering at one of our homes she was hooked. “I can’t even describe it sometimes,” she confessed. “It took me by surprise. The journey that God takes you on is unbelievable! You just know; you can’t explain it, you just know. It’s the same whether you’re called to religious life or marriage — you just know, and when you know, you know!” Yes, as Blessed John Paul II once wrote, “Those who let themselves be seized by this love cannot help abandoning everything to follow him” (*Vita Consecrata*, n. 18).

If you know someone who may be considering a religious vocation, pay it forward by helping them discover the joy of being seized by the compelling love of Christ! 💜

— Sr. C. M.



An honorary degree from Stonehill College

SISTER MARGARET REGINA, provincial superior of our homes in the northeastern region of the United States (referred to as the Brooklyn province) recently received an honorary doctor of humane letters degree from Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts. The bestowal of this singular honor finds its roots in a young boy's love for Saint Jeanne Jugan and the elderly. Had there been "Little Brothers" to complement the Little Sisters of the Poor, Mark Cregan probably would have become one. Instead, he pursued a life of service in the Church as a member of the Congregation of Holy Cross, becoming Stonehill's ninth president in 2000.

Like the other degree recipients, Mother Provincial was surrounded by family at the various events of graduation weekend, May 19 – 21, — both her religious family and her siblings, who traveled from Philadelphia for the occasion. Although not accustomed to all the pomp of a college graduation, Sister Margaret Regina and the Little Sisters happily took in all the celebratory sites and sounds and mingled with the graduating students and their families.

The Baccalaureate Mass and Presidential Dinner Saturday evening were but a foretaste of Sunday's festivities. Graduation day began with a continental breakfast and then the Little Sisters and other guests were fortified with water, sunscreen, hats and visors before taking their places out on the lawn. To the strains of *Pomp and Circumstance* 561 graduates, countless faculty members and the four honorary degree recipients took their places on a stage surrounded by purple and white flowers, Stonehill's official colors.



Little Sisters from around the Brooklyn province attended the graduation; they are pictured here with Rev. Mark Cregan, C.S.C., college president, and Bishop George W. Coleman of Fall River, Massachusetts. Sister Margaret Regina is standing between them.

When the time came for Mother Provincial to receive her degree, the citation — which had been written by Father Mark — was read by Rev. Hugh Cleary, C.S.C., director of campus ministry. The black doctoral hood, with its white velvet band symbolizing the Doctor of Humane Letters and its purple and white striped lining, representing the colors of Stonehill College, was then placed over her shoulders. The other honorary degree recipients were Massachusetts Suffolk County District Attorney Daniel Conley, business executive William Devin and homeless advocate Dr. James Joseph O’Connell III. The four recipients shared a common commitment to serving and advocating for those in need.

Throughout the festivities the Little Sisters were struck by how beautifully the Congregation of Holy Cross at Stonehill College forms their students in the Christian life and gives them the knowledge and principles that will guide them for life. Noted one Little Sister, “This weekend was a privileged encounter with yet another beautiful apostolate within the Church and how grateful we are to have been part of it!” 🌸

“Blessed be God!!” These words of St. Jeanne Jugan, Foundress of the Little Sisters of the Poor, have shaped your life and ministry. As a member of an international congregation



of religious women dedicated to the service of the elderly poor, you and your Sisters affirm the dignity of every human person and proclaim to the world the preciousness of all human life. From St. Jeanne opening her small apartment and giving up her own bed to a blind, paralyzed old woman out in the cold in the streets of Saint Servan, in 1839 France, your Congregation has expanded to over 3,000 sisters serving the elderly poor in thirty-one countries spanning six continents. Yet despite such growth, each person in your care is cherished and loved and, in caring for them, the words of your Foundress resonate, “I no longer see anything but God.”

A native Philadelphian you have served the Church, your Little Sisters and the poor as a vowed religious for over 40 years. Throughout your ministry you have served as nurse, nursing home administrator and local superior guiding the care of those in your charge. And for over twenty years you have served as provincial superior guiding the works of your religious family, first in the mid-western and western United States and currently here in the Northeast. In this role you have given leadership to hundreds of Little Sisters and thousands of lay colleagues and volunteers in the care of “God’s little ones” to quote your Foundress. While serving in the Midwest you led the opening of a foundation in Gallup, New Mexico to serve the elderly of the Navajo nation. Like St. Jeanne Jugan, you and your Little Sisters have shown a willingness to go where God’s poor need you and to open your hearts and your homes to them.

For living your vow of hospitality so faithfully and for welcoming into your life those who have been marginalized or forgotten; for remaining true to your Congregation’s charism to be beggars and to depend upon Divine Providence to sustain your work; and for being light and hope for those you serve and for those with whom you collaborate, Stonehill College is proud to confer upon you, Sr. Margaret Regina, honoris causa, the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters.

– from the Doctoral Citation

140 years of caring in Pittsburgh

“THIS IS AN OCCASION TO THANK GOD and to make the word of God alive and meaningful,” said Bishop William J. Winter, retired auxiliary bishop of Pittsburgh, during a special Mass at Sts. Peter and Paul Home on April 29th. “During these 140 years,” he continued, “the Little Sisters made present the compassion and love of Jesus by word and work day after day. St. John wrote, ‘You must love one another as Jesus has loved you.’ The Little Sisters remind us of our responsibility to each other.”

The Sisters who participated in the April 29th Mass at our recently renovated home on Benton Avenue are heirs of the charism brought to Pittsburgh by the seven Little Sisters who arrived there on April 25, 1872 after a long journey from France. The group first settled into a property in Allegheny City, a neighborhood later annexed by the city of Pittsburgh.

For many years the Little Sisters operated two homes in Pittsburgh — one on Penn Avenue in Garfield and the other on Benton Avenue.



Bishop Winter greets Peg Neal after the April 29th anniversary Mass.



Resident Flo Thomas and her daughter, Loretta Mangin, are happy to meet Bishop Winters.

Since 1872 more than 12,000 elderly Pennsylvanians have found a home with the Little Sisters in this “City of Bridges.” “Although this day has honored the Sisters’ contribution to the city of Pittsburgh,” said Sister Judith, the home’s superior, “we, the Little Sisters of the Poor, would like to return the honor back to the great people of Pittsburgh and beyond who have graciously helped us continue our mission through essential financial support.”

A month after the April 29th Mass, the Little Sisters headed to city hall at the invitation of Councilwoman Theresa Smith to receive a special proclamation recognizing the home’s 140th anniversary. The event took place in the city council chambers on May 29th. Council president Darlene Harris called forth the entire contingent of Little Sisters, Residents and friends, while Councilwoman Smith read aloud the proclamation. It was a true honor for all involved!

Then on May 31st the Little Sisters welcomed Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett for a tour of the home. The governor had heard about Sts. Peter and Paul’s recent inclusion in *U.S. News and World Report’s* list of top nursing homes in the United States, and wanted to congratulate the Little Sisters in person.

New visitors to the home never leave empty-handed and the



Above: The delegation of Little Sisters, Residents and friends receives the proclamation recognizing the Little Sisters' 140 years of service in Pittsburgh.

Right: Governor Tom Corbett visits with Mother Judith and Resident Dorothy Fairley May 31st.



governor was no exception. Mother Judith gave him books about St. Jeanne Jugan and a Little Sisters' t-shirt, with instructions that he only needed to wear the shirt to half of his social engagements! The Resident Schola and Bell Choir provided the musical entertainment, performing both *God Bless America* and *America the Beautiful*. After introductions to all in attendance, Governor Corbett capped off his visit with a full tour of the home, meeting many Residents along the way. Congratulations to everyone at Sts. Peter and Paul Home! 🌸



Above: The young women who completed their global youth service project at Sacred Heart Home include (left to right) Natalia Gaidarji, from Moldova; Dina Teeti, from Palestine; Olga Borodko, from Ukraine; Mina Rodonjic, from Montenegro; and Laura Comesana, from Spain. Pictured with them is Beck Massey, food service director at Sacred Heart Home.

Left: Natalia interviews Resident Virginia Kania about her faith.

Global youth service project focuses on faith

WHEN BECKY MASSEY, food service director at Sacred Heart Home in Oregon, Ohio, inquired how the home might be served by a group of foreign exchange students she mentors, Mother Cecilia Mary suggested that the five young women help prepare for the upcoming Year of Faith by interviewing the Residents about their personal faith stories. Her idea was to have them gather the testimonies and accompanying photos for a booklet to be produced at the home and distributed to the Residents and their families.

In addition to interviewing and photographing the Residents, the young women gave presentations about their respective countries, served ethnic snacks at an afternoon reception and made a banner for the Year of Faith. The young women also shared a bit of their own faith stories.

For Olga, an Eastern Orthodox Christian from Ukraine, “Faith is trusting without seeing.” She says she had to have faith in God and herself to be an exchange student. Dina, a Muslim from Palestine, describes faith as “believing in a higher power, in God, who is always there for us.” Natalia, from Moldova said, “I believe that God is living with me and giving me protection and love. I believe he’s very busy answering all the prayers, but he is still taking care of everybody.... I believe he is the love and the kindness in humans’ hearts.” Mina, a sixteen year old from Montenergo who aspires to be a human rights lawyer, concludes, “Faith ... helps you get through obstacles and hard times in life. Faith is there to give you inspiration and push you through life when you need someone or something to guide you. Faith is there to show you the meaning of life when you need to be reminded.” 🌸

Right: Mother Provincial Charlotte is welcomed in Hong Kong with the traditional Lion Dance (“traditional” except for the Nike’s on the lion’s feet!).



Center: In Suwon, South Korea the Residents welcome Mother Marie Odile and Mother Maria del Monte Auxiliadora with a lively dance.



Right: The two travelers from Eurpoe pose with the community of Kwang Ju, South Korea. In the course of their trip they visited the two homes in Hong Kong and each of the four homes in South Korea.



Getting to know you in the Far East

THE INSTALLATION OF A NEW PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR for our homes in the Far East was recently the happy occasion for a visit to the province by Mother Assistant Marie Odile de St. Pierre and Mother Assistant María del Monte Auxiliadora. The former is no stranger to our Asian homes, having served in Taiwan for many years before being elected to the General Council, but for Mother María del Monte Auxiliadora, a native of Spain, this was her first opportunity to discover the cultural riches of the Far East.

Mother Provincial Charlotte Mary of the Holy Face, a native of Hong Kong, served in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Penang, Malaysia, before assuming responsibility for the province. She is pictured below distributing traditional red envelopes — a must at Chinese celebrations — to the Residents of Sheung Shui, Hong Hong, the provincial residence. 🌸



Little Sisters “quietly” celebrate 60 years in Penang

ALTHOUGH THE HOUSE THEY NOW OCCUPY was only built in 2009, the Little Sisters recently marked sixty years of presence in Penang, Malaysia. Since they had celebrated the home’s golden anniversary in a big way ten years ago, the Sisters decided to mark this milestone quietly — but as their account of the day reveals, their June 1st celebration was anything but subdued!

The day began with torrential rain, which the Little Sisters chose to interpret as a sign of God’s blessings. Mass was celebrated by Archbishop emeritus Anthony Fernandez. In the afternoon the Residents were treated to a tea with very unusual entertainment. A “recycled instruments” band made up of six blind young men put on quite a show, with songs in five languages: English, Malay, Tamil, Mandarin and a mixture of English and Spanish.

As impressive as their language skills were, it was the band’s choice of musical instruments that really stole the show. These young, blind musicians played everything from frying pans to empty barrels and detergent bottles. “It was simply fantastic,” commented our Little Sisters, “and the Residents responded with much clapping, even joining in the singing.”

The climax of the day was the presentation of special gifts to two Residents, both in their eighties, who have been in the home for twenty-five years, as well as to five employees who have worked at the home for over thirty years. All of the home’s staff members were given certificates of appreciation by Mother Theresa Catherine.

Finally, everyone was treated to their favorite laksa, a spicy noodle soup characteristic of the region. Surely all retired for the night dreaming of the next sixty years! 🌀



Top: The Little Sisters pose with the five employee honorees on June 1st (left to right): Mrs. Kuan Yoke Heng, Mrs. Lam Kooi Kang, Mrs. Ooi Ah Phong (also pictured at right) and Mrs. Bong See Mooi; back row and right: Mr. Raveentharan.

Above: Mrs. Regina Chan, a Resident for over 25 years, receives a gift in honor of the anniversary.

On pilgrimage in New Caledonia

THIS SPRING OUR LITTLE SISTERS IN NOUMEA participated in the 25th annual Pilgrimage of the Bible and the Cross to Téné, on the western coast of New Caledonia. The pilgrimage, which culminates with a huge Liturgy on the feast of Pentecost, is a highly significant moment in the life of the Church in New Caledonia and the surrounding islands. For four months before the event the Cross and Bible travel around the island on pilgrimage. The Little Sisters and Residents were honored to host them in March, welcoming others to their chapel for prayer, song and rest (*opposite page, top photo*).

The days in Téné are filled with prayer and catechesis animated by priests and catechists from around the island. Various religious communities set up displays to educate the pilgrims about the priesthood and consecrated life.

Over 6,000 pilgrims gathered at Téné for the final Mass on May 27th. Although the pilgrimage is primarily for young people, it is really a family gathering with many children and people of all ages. The oldest reported pilgrim was a 93 year old woman making the trek for the third time!

Our Little Sisters were impressed by the faith and fervor of those gathered at Téné, and by their beautiful voices. 🐦





Top: The Little Sisters welcome the Cross and Bible to our home in March. The Cross is intricately carved from local wood.

Left: The Sisters pose with pilgrims in Téné.

This page, bottom: The Sisters pose with the celebrants on Pentecost, including Bishop

Charles Daniel Balvo, the Apostolic Nuncio for the Pacific, a native of Brooklyn, New York who is based in Wellington, New Zealand.

Opposite page: a T-shirt bearing the pilgrimage logo and theme, "Called to live in fraternity."



An unexpected honor from the Queen

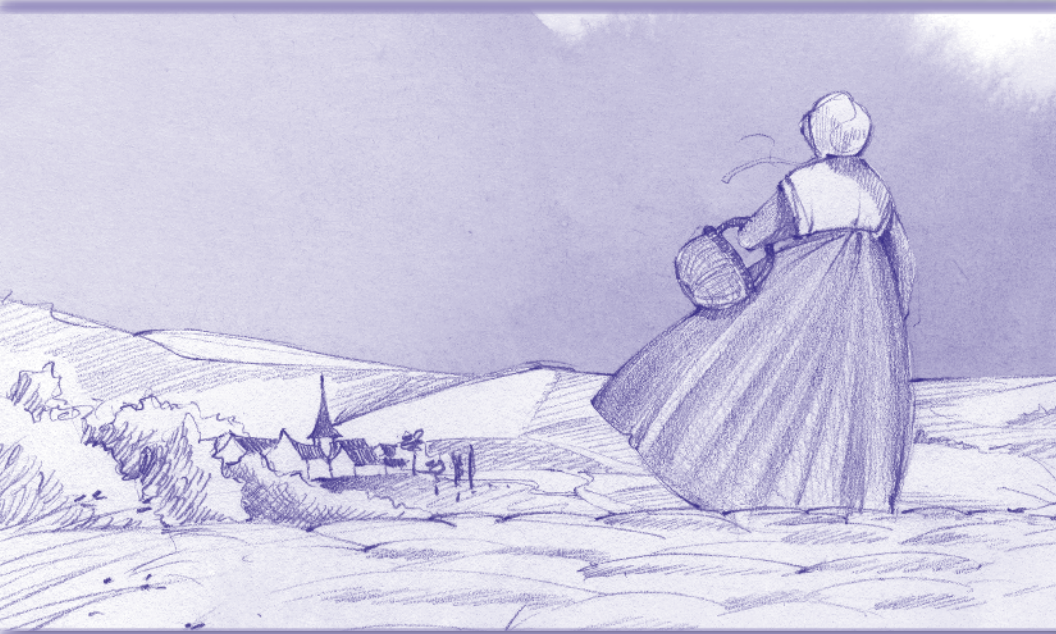
SISTER MARIE OF THE HOLY REDEEMER, a 98 year old Little Sister from our community in Dunedin, New Zealand, found herself on Queen Elizabeth's Birthday and Diamond Jubilee Honors list for service to the community. Sister received the Queen's Service Medal.

Sister Marie left New Zealand to follow her vocation at age 19. Her travels included formation in Australia and a first assignment in Shanghai, China. In 1940 she left for France to prepare for her perpetual vows. While there she and other British Little Sisters were imprisoned by occupying Nazi forces. After World War II and her final profession, Sister Marie served in Hong Kong, Canton and, when the Little Sisters were forced to leave China, in Sri Lanka. She returned to New Zealand in 1962 and served as superior in two homes in her native country. She recently celebrated 75 years of religious life.

While she has reluctantly slowed down in recent years, Sister Marie still helps the infirm Residents with their meals each day. Sister Marie's dedication to caring for the elderly — many of whom are younger than she is — as well as her fellow Little Sisters has earned her the Queen's Service Medal. "I was amazed. I feel I don't merit the award," said this humble daughter of Saint Jeanne Jugan. 🌸



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NOVENA PRAYER TO SAINT JEANNE JUGAN

JESUS, you rejoiced and praised your Father for having revealed to little ones the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. We thank you for the graces granted to your humble servant, Jeanne Jujan, to whom we confide our petitions and needs.

Father of the poor, you have never refused the prayer of the lowly. We ask you, therefore, to hear the petitions that she presents to you on our behalf.

Jesus, through Mary, your Mother and ours, we ask this of you, who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit now and forever.

Amen.

Saint Jeanne Jujan's feast day is August 30th.

In her old age Jeanne
would often say,

*"I no longer see
anything but God."*

Serenity

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