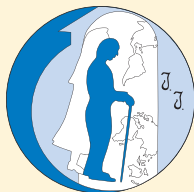


Serenity

no. 170 • Little Sisters of the Poor • April 2016



*Jesus Christ is the face
of the Father's mercy.*



Our Mission

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

Cover Photos

Front Cover: Detail of a traditional Breton crucifix at the Little Sisters' home in Dinan, France. Inside front cover: Portrait of Saint Jeanne Jugan by Dina Bellotti. Back cover: Official Vatican logo for the Jubilee of Mercy by Father Marko I. Rupnik, S.J., used with permission of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization.

Serenity

APRIL 2016, No. 170

Published quarterly by the
Little Sisters of the Poor
with ecclesiastical approval
©Little Sisters of the Poor
Please contact St. Jeanne Jugan
Communications
for reprint permissions
or change of address.
serenitys@littlesistersofthepoor.org

Annual donation: \$5.00
Standard Postage paid at
Baltimore, MD



We've moved and changed our name!

In honor of our foundress we have renamed
our Publications Office
St. Jeanne Jugan Communications!

We are now located at
Jeanne Jugan Residence,
4200 Harewood Rd, NE
Washington, D.C. 20017

Contents

- 2 Introducing Mother General María!
- 5 Thanks to our Amici
- 11 Practicing the corporal works of mercy
between generations
- 23 Our Holy Mother, Undoer of Knots
- 28 Opening and blessing of Our Lady
of China Home, Taipei, Taiwan

Acknowledgments

Page 5: Graphic courtesy of the Becket Fund; Page 9: Photo courtesy of the Becket Fund; Page 27: Image courtesy of Nippert & Co Artworks, www.catholicartworks.com



As we were preparing for the canonization of Jeanne Jugan in 2009 Cardinal Francis George, whom we loved and greatly admired, sent us a congratulatory message in which he referred to our homes as “icons of mercy.” These were unforgettable words whose full significance we continue to plumb, especially in this Jubilee Year of Mercy.

What exactly is mercy? Rev. Michael E. Gaitley, MIC, has written and spoken extensively on this subject. “Mercy is love when it encounters suffering,” he says. Mercy is comprised of two movements that take place within us when we encounter the poor, the weak and the suffering. The first movement is an emotional, *affective* response springing from compassion. The second movement is *effective* — it leads us to reach out on behalf of the person who is suffering, to take action. Mercy, then, is a matter of both our hearts and our hands.

Saint Jeanne Jugan was an expert in both of these movements of mercy. From Saint John Eudes, the great apostle of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary and an ardent missionary, she learned that the Christian life is a continuation of the life and sentiments of Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, who went about doing good.

From Saint John of God she received the vow of hospitality, through which her sharing in the merciful love of Christ was made concrete and effective. Saint Jeanne Jugan gave her heart and her hands totally to elderly persons in need and thus became an icon of mercy for the people of her time. In this Year of Mercy we ask for the grace to do the same. ✨

Introducing MOTHER GENERAL MARÍA!

We recently had the opportunity to interview our new Superior General, Mother María del Monte Auxiliadora, who was elected by our General Chapter on September 8, 2015.

How did you come to know the Little Sisters of the Poor and what drew you to your vocation?

When I was 17, I was “obliged” to go to the Little Sisters to fulfill my Social Service, which was obligatory at that time in Spain. The Lord was awaiting me there for I was immediately struck by the kindness, joy and dedication of the Little Sisters towards the Residents, as well as by the great charity I saw they had for each other. I just saw that they loved one another and that really helped me.

Can you tell us how Saint Jeanne Jugan is known and loved in Spain?

Jeanne Jugan is very much loved by all the Residents, the Jeanne Jugan Associates, the staff and all those who come to our homes, but more could be done to make her known even better.

From your experience assisting in the formation of new Little Sisters, what would you say draws young women to follow in the footsteps of Saint Jeanne Jugan in the service of the elderly?

I believe that young women are drawn by the spirituality of Jeanne Jugan and her littleness, her charity towards the poor-

est and especially by her great confidence in God, our Father, without forgetting that Jeanne was always joyful. She always had “a cheerful face,” like she used to teach the novices to have. This strikes the young when they learn that Jeanne Jugan did not have an easy life, but that she knew how to find God in the midst of all her sufferings and that this filled her heart with joy.

Before being elected Mother General, you served on the General Council for six years, so you have already experienced the internationality of the Congregation. Can you share with us anything about this experience?

The internationality of the Congregation, and experiencing it oneself, is a great asset which opens us to global horizons, without neglecting the fact that it also requires us not to be closed-in on ourselves and our own little world.

Here in the United States we are facing challenges to religious liberty and respect for life at both the beginning and end of life. Are these same issues of concern to our Little Sisters in other parts of the world?

Yes, more and more, we are faced with the same challenges in nearly every country.

Are there other issues related to our mission to the elderly that our Little Sisters in other countries are facing?




The elderly are the same all around the world, even if the culture or circumstances may be different; the elderly, in no matter what country, will always long to feel loved, respected and appreciated, and our Holy Father Pope Francis constantly speaks of this in all parts of the world. It is therefore something that the Little Sisters notice in most places, while at the same time recognizing that there are also many very good things being done to acknowledge their full dignity, but we must keep trying to make progress along these lines.

What would you like to say to young women considering a vocation to consecrated life?

Following Christ in consecrated life is a beautiful adventure which is far from monotonous or boring; it fills our hearts with happiness provided that we offer him our whole person, with all that we are and all that we have. As he says in the Gospel, we receive a hundred times more now in this world.

We look forward to meeting you on your first visit to the United States (whenever that may be). Is there anything you are particularly eager to experience in America?

I have never been to the United States, but I believe that I will find a lot of joy there, a warm welcome and the simplicity of all the inhabitants of this beautiful and great country. We have a wonderful example in Mother Celine de la Visitation who has always shown us these characteristics in her life totally given to the service of the Congregation. 



What do over two hundred members of Congress, fifty Catholic theologians, thirteen law professors, nine professional associations and two prominent women's organizations have in common with the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, the American Islamic Congress, the General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists and the International Society of Krishna Consciousness?

These individuals and organizations are just a sampling of the many people who have come to the aid of the Little Sisters of the Poor in support of our lawsuit over the HHS Contraceptive Mandate. They signed on to one of forty-three amicus, or "friend of the court," briefs submitted to the U.S. Supreme Court January 11, 2016.

We Little Sisters of the Poor are profoundly humbled and grateful to so many people from diverse walks of life who have supported us on this legal journey, which reached its culmination in the Supreme Court on March 23, 2016. To all of them we wish to offer a very humble and heartfelt thank you!

Some of those who have signed amicus briefs, like our sisters in the consecrated life, are longtime friends. For others, we can only marvel at the way our paths have crossed. Though the amicus briefs considered our case from varying perspectives, all relied on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA) to bolster their arguments.

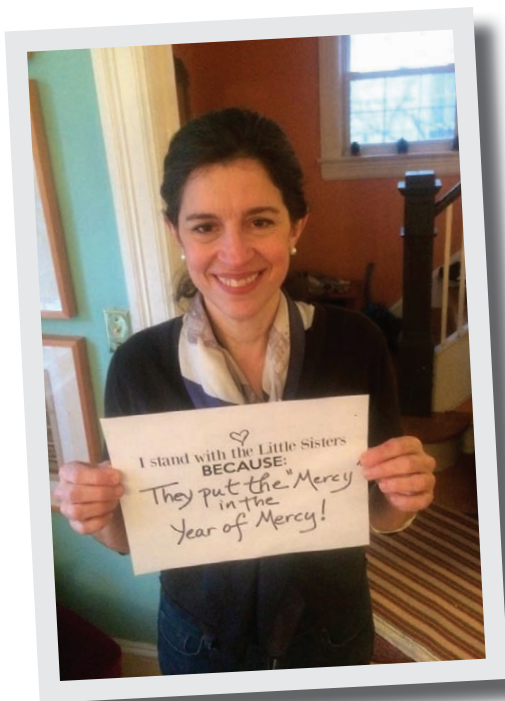
RFRA was passed by Congress in the wake of a 1990 U.S. Supreme Court decision limiting constitutional protections for religious liberty. It puts two qualifications on the government's ability to impose limits on religious freedom: a "compelling interest" in favor of the common good and use of the "least restrictive means" possible.

In his signing remarks in 1993, President Bill Clinton noted "what a broad coalition of Americans came together to make this bill a reality." Adding that this coalition crossed "ideological and religious lines," President Clinton praised "the shared desire ... to protect perhaps the most precious of all American liberties, religious freedom."

Paging through the amicus briefs written on our behalf, we Little Sisters were humbled by "what a broad coalition of Ameri-

cans" had come together again to help defend religious liberty. Especially striking were the concerns and fears expressed by our brothers and sisters of other faiths, especially those representing religious traditions with relatively few American adherents.

We are particularly grateful to our Southern Baptist friends for clearly articulating to the Supreme Court the reality that "a fundamental aspect of Christian doctrine is its requirement that faith must govern every aspect of a Christian's life.... The exercise of the Christian religion must guide and determine a Christian's decisions, words, and deeds in every facet of life, including seemingly 'secular' matters like the administration of insurance and



WSFT founder Helen Alvaré.

the provision of certain drugs and devices.” Their amicus brief describes Christian faith as holistic and broad in scope, noting that



At the March for Life with Russell Moore, President of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

Christians have “a spiritual obligation to interact with and influence the culture outside the church doors.”

A special thank you is also owed to Helen Alvaré and her army of women at Women Speak for Themselves, the organization she founded in response to the HHS Mandate. In the weeks leading up to our day in court WSFT sent us hundreds of encouraging messages to buoy our spirits. Then as our case was heard on March 23 a group of WSFT members rallied our supporters outside the Supreme Court while others offered a day of service in our homes around the country as a show of solidarity.

Whatever the final outcome of our case, we Little Sisters are indebted to every group and to each individual who has voiced their support for our cause. You can read the amicus briefs at www.becketfund.org/littlesistersamicus/.

The long-awaited day of our oral argument has come and gone, so what is left to do in order to ensure the success of our case? Our foundress, Saint Jeanne Jugan, often said, “Pray, you have need of grace ... If God is with us it will be accomplished.” And so we Little Sisters turn to prayer, and ask you to join us in praying for a just resolution to our case, so that we may continue to minister to needy elderly persons across this great nation for many years to come. ✨

Amicus Briefs in support of Our Supreme Court Case

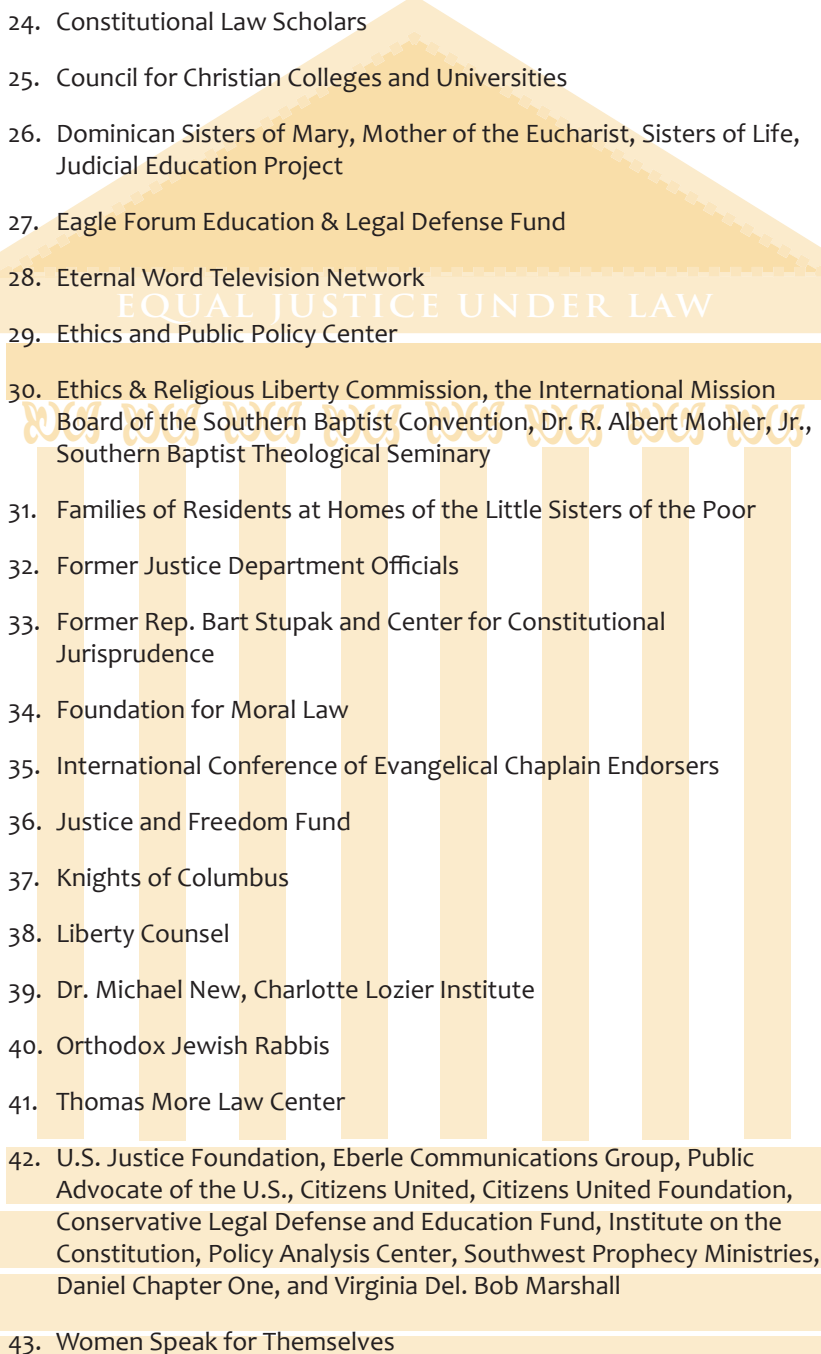
*We thank the following groups and individuals
for submitting briefs on our behalf.*

1. Thirteen Law Professors
2. Twenty States
3. Fifty Catholic Theologians and Ethicists
4. 207 Members of Congress
5. Agudas Harabbanim of the United States and Canada, Agudath Israel of America, National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs, National Council of Young Israel, Orthodox Union, Rabbinical Alliance of America, Rabbinical Council of America, Torah Umesorah
6. American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians & Gynecologists, Association of American Physicians & Surgeons, Catholic Medical Association, Christian Medical Association, National Association of Pro Life Nurses, National Association of Catholic Nurses U.S.A., National Catholic Bioethics Center, and Physicians for Life
7. American Center for Law & Justice
8. American Islamic Congress, Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty, Church of God in Christ, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Orthodox Church in America, Queens Federation of Churches
9. Anglican Church in North America Jurisdiction of the Armed Forces and Chaplaincy, Ave Maria University
10. Assemblies of God, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Colorado Christian University, National Association of Evangelicals, Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration
11. Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, Cardinal Newman Society, Catholic Relief Services, Family Research Council, Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance, Thomas More Society, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, World Vision
12. David Boyle



In front of the Supreme Court with some of our Becket Fund team members: Mark Rienzi, lead attorney; Kristina Arriaga, executive director; and Stephanie Barclay, attorney.

13. Breast Cancer Prevention Institute
14. Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles, Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, Michigan, School Sisters of Christ the King of Lincoln, Nebraska
15. Catholic Benefits Association
16. Catholic Defense League
17. Cato Institute and Independent Women's Forum
18. Christian and Missionary Alliance
19. Christian Legal Society, Association of Christian Schools International, American Association of Christian Schools
20. Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye, International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Islamic Center of Murfreesboro, Pastor Robert Soto and other members of the Lipan Apache Tribe
21. College of the Ozarks
22. CNS International Ministries and Heartland Christian College
23. Concerned Women for America

- 
24. Constitutional Law Scholars
25. Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
26. Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, Sisters of Life, Judicial Education Project
27. Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund
28. Eternal Word Television Network
29. Ethics and Public Policy Center
30. Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
31. Families of Residents at Homes of the Little Sisters of the Poor
32. Former Justice Department Officials
33. Former Rep. Bart Stupak and Center for Constitutional Jurisprudence
34. Foundation for Moral Law
35. International Conference of Evangelical Chaplain Endorsers
36. Justice and Freedom Fund
37. Knights of Columbus
38. Liberty Counsel
39. Dr. Michael New, Charlotte Lozier Institute
40. Orthodox Jewish Rabbis
41. Thomas More Law Center
42. U.S. Justice Foundation, Eberle Communications Group, Public Advocate of the U.S., Citizens United, Citizens United Foundation, Conservative Legal Defense and Education Fund, Institute on the Constitution, Policy Analysis Center, Southwest Prophecy Ministries, Daniel Chapter One, and Virginia Del. Bob Marshall
43. Women Speak for Themselves



Practicing the corporal works of mercy between generations

Saint John Paul II once wrote that for mercy to be authentic it must be reciprocal. In other words, the charitable acts we perform are only merciful if we realize that in giving we are at the same time receiving from the other person. This reciprocity is especially true in our relationships with older persons. We might assume that it is always our duty to practice the corporal works of mercy *toward* the elderly, since they are often weaker or needier than those of us still in our active years. This is certainly laudable! But quite often older persons are experts in the practice of mercy *from whom* we have much to learn and to receive.

In this reflection we will take a look at the corporal works of mercy from two vantage points. First we will explore concrete ways we might practice these works of mercy toward our elders. Then we will reflect on how seniors themselves can practice mercy in unique ways in the heart of the family and in society.

Feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty

The first two corporal works of mercy seem straightforward enough, but we are called to feed and give drink on many levels. Let's look first at the physical level. In the case of our elderly relatives or neighbors, there are some, especially those on severely



Our Residents embody Blessed John Henry Newman once wrote about the irresistible attraction of an “unconscious holiness” which “persuades the weak, the timid, the wavering, and the inquiring.”

fixed incomes, who may literally lack sufficient food and drink. They may also skimp on necessary medications as a way of making ends meet. They obviously need our help to survive.

There are others who have a sufficient amount of food, but who are deprived of healthy dietary options. Elderly persons living alone often experience mobility issues or lack the transportation needed to get out shopping on a regular basis, so it’s much harder for them to obtain fresh foods. Canned food and other processed items are generally cheaper and easier to store than wholesome fresh foods, but they are also lower in nutrients and higher in unhealthy ingredients such as sugar, fat and sodium. This is not good for seniors.

There are many ways we can practice mercy by helping to provide our elderly family members and neighbors with healthy food and drink. Here are a few suggestions: Take the elderly grocery shopping, offer to shop for them or help them to arrange for home delivery services or Meals on Wheels. Take a senior out to eat or bring them home-cooked meals and dine with them on

a regular basis. Many widows and widowers who live alone lack the motivation to cook for themselves and so, over time, tend to neglect their health. We can help to remedy this situation by offering companionship at mealtime.

If your loved one is hospitalized, try to be present at mealtime whenever possible to ensure that they have proper nutrition. If they reside in a long-term care facility, bring favorite treats or nutritional supplements to stimulate their appetite. The care team can give you recommendations in this regard.

Besides being the recipients of our charity, seniors can also practice mercy by feeding and giving drink to others. With many families overscheduled or in disarray today, countless children are growing up without the experience of sitting around the dinner table and eating a home-cooked meal while enjoying family togetherness, something we once took for granted. Older people can make a valuable contribution to family life by gathering loved ones together as often as possible for family celebrations, of which food is always an integral part. Even those who are no longer able to cook can share recipes and advice with younger generations, helping them to learn how to cook healthy food and to understand the importance of family gatherings.

Feeding the spiritually hungry

These are just a few of the ways we can give food and drink on a physical level. But as Christ said, no one lives on bread alone. Only Jesus can satisfy our ultimate hunger, since he himself is the Bread of Life. Just as it is often difficult for the elderly to get out grocery shopping, they may also be unable to get to church to satisfy their spiritual hunger. An important way of feeding our older friends and relatives is to ensure that they are able to get to weekly or even daily Mass. If they are housebound, make sure someone in the parish brings them Holy Communion, or take responsibility for this yourself; it's a beautiful ministry.

A group of our elderly Residents recently had a conversation about how they could practice mercy by feeding others spiritu-

ally. Focusing on loved ones who seem far from God, they suggested dropping discrete words and testimonies of faith into everyday conversations, even when others don't realize their need for God. The Residents believe that these subtle breadcrumbs of faith can serve as a path leading their loved ones back to him. Perhaps more than any other group, the elderly can influence others simply by their example. They embody what Blessed John Henry Newman once wrote about the irresistible attraction of an "unconscious holiness" which "persuades the weak, the timid, the wavering and the inquiring."

Clothing the naked

In the Bible clothing the naked is closely associated with feeding the hungry: "Give of your bread to the hungry, and of your clothing to the naked" (Tobit 4:16)... "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing" (Matthew 25:35-36)....

In our developed countries the elderly do not usually lack clothing in the strict sense, but they sometimes experience difficulties and humiliating situations related to clothes. As the infirmities of age begin to mount, dressing oneself can become more challenging — buttons, hooks, shoelaces and zippers may suddenly seem out of reach or too small to manipulate. Stains may go unnoticed, and doing one's own laundry may become too strenuous. Those who help older persons to maintain their independence by finding clothing adapted to their specific needs and assisting with laundry are practicing a corporal work of mercy!

Two issues related to clothing are of special concern for the elderly because they are linked to safety and independence — painful feet and incontinence. Yes, the latter is an embarrassing subject, but urge incontinence is directly linked to falls and fractures in the elderly, as are foot pain, poorly fitting shoes and going barefoot! Falling in one's own home is often a life-changing event — about half of those who suffer a hip fracture are never



able to live independently again. Helping seniors to obtain effective treatment and garments for incontinence, along with good footwear, is a real act of mercy!

Perhaps more than any other group, the elderly are often subjected to violations of privacy, humiliating nakedness and other indignities while receiving health care. Those of us who work as care providers practice mercy when we do all we can to respect the modesty and privacy of those in our care, and when we find ways to help them maintain their sense of personal autonomy and dignity.

Beyond cleaning out their closets and donating their unused clothes to charity, how can seniors help clothe the naked? They might be in a uniquely privileged position to teach the younger generations something about a very contemporary issue related to nakedness — immodesty. In his book on the works of mercy, Rev. Michael E. Gaitley, MIC, writes, “While in Western countries there are usually more than enough clothes to go around, at the same time, these days there seems to be a big problem with nakedness. In other words ... people often forget to put on their clothes, even at Mass! Of course, they’re not totally naked, but they don’t leave much to the imagination. ... One of the ways that we can ‘clothe the naked’ is to tactfully teach our

children and our friends about modesty in dress, letting them know that despite what ‘everybody else is doing,’ some things are still meant to be covered or hidden.”

Father Gaitley underlines the obligation of parents to teach their children about modesty and the other basic virtues. Grandparents and other older relatives can support these efforts of parents to teach their children; and in many cases today they find themselves replacing parents as the primary caregivers and teachers of children.

Early in his pontificate Saint John Paul II encouraged older persons to recognize their important mission in relation to the young: “How often you have to relieve the young parents, how well you know how to introduce the youngsters to the history of your family and of your home country, to the tales of your people and to the world of faith! The young adults with their problems often find an easier way to you than to their parents’ generation. To your sons and daughters you are the most precious support in their hours of difficulty.”



Sheltering the homeless

On another occasion Saint John Paul II recognized that “the elderly often have the charism to bridge generation gaps before they are made,” reflecting, “how many children have found understanding and love in the eyes and words and caresses of the aging?” These insights of our saintly Pope, shared nearly

The elderly often have the charism to bridge generation gaps before they are made. How many children have found understanding and love in the eyes and words and caresses of the aged?

John Paul II

forty years ago, are more relevant today than ever. According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), 5.8 million children in the United States live in households headed by grandparents. For 20% of these kids both parents are absent. As a result, about 2.5 million seniors in the United States are responsible for raising their grandchildren.

Although they may not think of them as among the homeless, it is clear that millions of senior citizens practice mercy on a daily basis by giving a stable home to their grandchildren in the midst of family disruptions. This contribution to their families and to society cannot be underestimated.

Millions of older persons in our country also volunteer for charities that serve the poor, the homeless, victims of domestic violence and single mothers. Each elderly volunteer puts a lifetime of experience to work on behalf of those in need, helping themselves by remaining active as they practice mercy toward their neighbors.

What about the needs of the elderly themselves related to shelter? It is widely recognized that, given the choice, today's seniors prefer to age in place in their own homes rather than to reside in institutional settings. We practice mercy when we help them to make this wish a reality by assisting with ongoing home maintenance and modifications to improve accessibility, by offering to cut the grass and shovel snow, by helping with grocery shopping or meal delivery, as already mentioned, and by providing the elderly with the security of knowing that there is someone close by who will check in on them from time to time.

When it is no longer possible for an elderly friend or loved

one to live on their own, we can practice mercy by helping them to find the residential setting that best responds to their needs and desires, and then helping them to navigate through what can be a complex application and admission process. We continue to practice mercy when we advocate for their rights and personal choices, when we keep them connected to the outside community and help them to pursue their lifelong interests as fully as possible and when we continue to provide them with companionship. This brings us to the next corporal two works of mercy.

Visiting the sick and the imprisoned

In *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis writes that an evangelizing community is “supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be.... Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time.... Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way.” These remarks on evangelization also capture the attitudes that should condition our resolve to stand by the elderly, no matter how long their earthly journey may last and how painful it may become. For some older persons the disabilities of age and the limitations imposed by institutional living constitute a form of imprisonment. It is our faithful love and attention, manifested through regular visits, that will help our elders to maintain their sense of hope and their desire to live.

Saint John Paul II said it so well in his landmark encyclical, *The Gospel of Life*, when he spoke of the love and mercy our common humanity compels: “The request which arises from the human heart in the supreme confrontation with suffering and death, especially when faced with the temptation to give up in utter desperation, is above all a request for companionship, sympathy and support in the time of trial.”



If we are faithful to visit the sick and elderly we soon realize how much we receive from them and what a treasure they are! The elderly can help the young to outgrow the fears and immaturity that often imprison them in self-absorption. Saint John Paul II once told a group of seniors exactly this: “You are the occasion for [those for whom you dislike being a burden] to meet the Lord, the opportunity to outgrow themselves, and by your turning to them you let them share in the already mentioned fruits of life which God allowed to mature in you!” The Pope then told his elderly friends, “Do not bury your requests in a timid, disappointed or reproachful heart, but express them in all naturalness — being convinced of your own dignity and of the good in the hearts of others.”

It is, perhaps, in the encounter between those in their prime and those reaching life’s end that we most clearly experience the reciprocal nature of mercy: “An act of merciful love is only really such when we are deeply convinced at the moment that we perform it that we are at the same time receiving mercy from the people who are accepting it from us (John Paul II, *Rich in Mercy*, n. 14).”



Burying the dead

As they approach the end of their lives we owe the elderly the consolation of our presence and the grace of the Church's sacraments. In their turn, the elderly have much to teach us as they depart this life. In a society intent on avoiding suffering and death at any cost, "the Creator has arranged it so that in old age accepting and standing the test of death is being prepared, made easier and learned in an almost natural manner" (John Paul II). If we do not shy away — but remain with the elderly until the very end — they can help us to accept, along with them, the inevitability of death as a natural stage of earthly life and the passage to eternity.

We Little Sisters witness on a regular basis how grace-filled and formative the death of an elderly person can be for one's loved ones. Time spent with the dying can truly be the final gift we receive from them.


An act of merciful love is only really such when we are deeply convinced at the moment that we perform it that we are at the same time receiving mercy from the people who are accepting it from us.

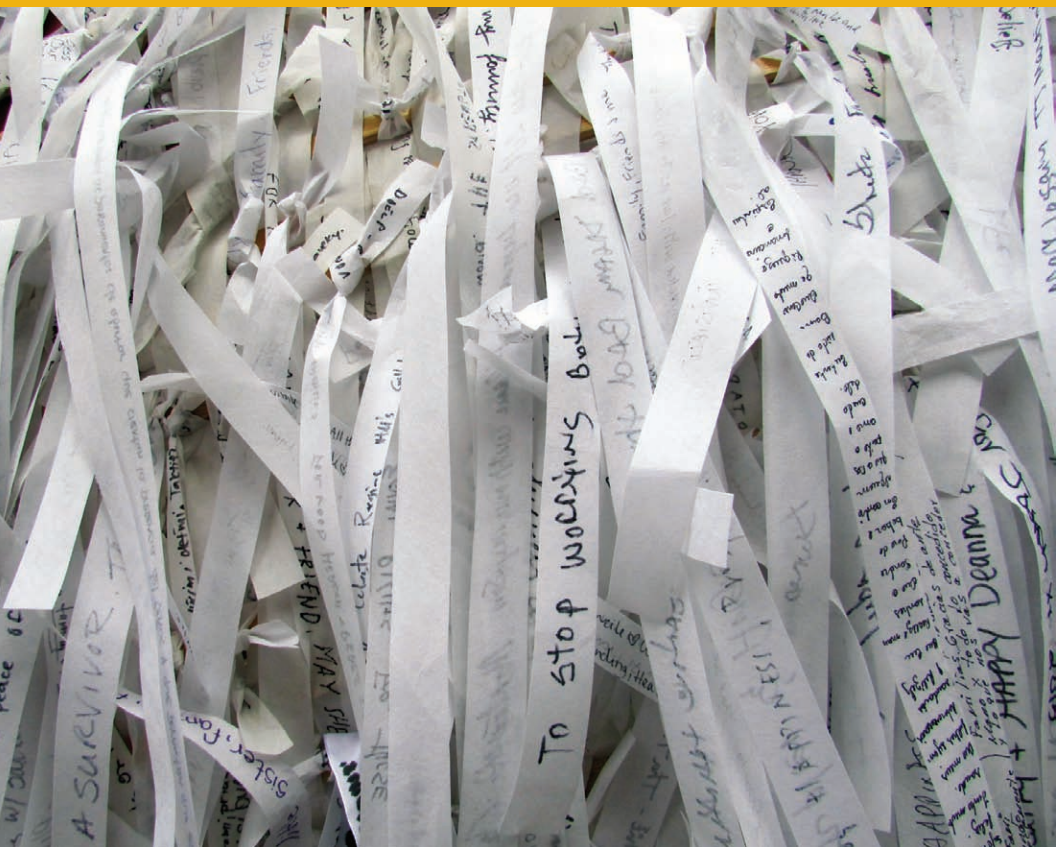
John Paul II

Depending on our relationship to the elderly person who has died, arranging the details of their funeral and burial, or simply attending these ceremonies, is one of the final acts of affection and respect we can offer them. At the same time it is an eloquent witness to the value and dignity of human life. Attending the funeral services of loved ones and visiting their graves is also of inestimable importance to those who remain, including ourselves, for it is a way of affirming our relationship with them, and of finding consolation in reflecting on the legacy they have left us.

Let us open our eyes and our hearts

In announcing the Jubilee of Mercy Pope Francis expressed his “burning desire” that we use this year to reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. He asked us to open our hearts “to those living on the outermost fringes of society,” to open our eyes to see the misery of the world and “the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity.” “Let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help!” Francis exclaimed. “May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity!”

In these pages we have presented a variety of ways in which we can open our eyes and respond to the needs of the elderly, who are so often disregarded in what Pope Francis calls our throw-away society. At the same time, we have highlighted the ability of the elderly to perform acts of mercy on behalf of others. During the Jubilee of Mercy may we generously perform acts of mercy, and may we rejoice in our mutual interdependence and the reciprocal gifts shared between young and old! 



Our Holy Mother, Undoer of Knots

We had so much to write about our Holy Father's visit to the United States in our last issue of *Serenity* that we had to omit a unique and beautiful aspect of the World Meeting of Families. During the weeklong gathering in Philadelphia we, along with thousands of pilgrims, visited a public art installation outside the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul called the Knotted Grotto.

This initiative, sponsored by a local charity for the homeless called Project HOME, was inspired by one of Pope Francis' favorite devotions, Mary, Undoer of Knots. According to Sister Mary Scullion, R.S.M., co-founder of Project HOME, the intent of the Knotted Grotto was to draw attention to the stories of those in need, while inspiring people "to acknowledge a higher power and to also acknowledge the power within themselves to act."

The Grotto, designed by artist Meg Saligman, consisted of a large dome-shaped lattice-work frame, onto which were tied thousands and thousands of prayer requests hand-written on long strips of white fabric. These had been collected from local prisons, soup kitchens, workshops and houses of worship, as well as the website of the World Meeting of Families Hunger and Homelessness Committee. In addition, pilgrims from all over the world visited the Grotto and added their own prayer intentions.

Our visit to the Knotted Grotto was a surprisingly prayerful respite during a week filled with constant activity. Volunteers were on hand answering questions and distributing strips of fabric and pens. According to the creators' intentions, it was suggested that as we tied our own prayers to the Grotto, we untie someone else's ribbon, taking it with us and praying for the intentions written on it. "You leave one, and you take one," Meg

Saligman explained, adding, “It’s a meaningful exchange.”

Some prayers were written neatly and succinctly; other strips of fabric were entirely covered in print. Diverse languages were represented. Although we visited the Cathedral early in the week, the lattice-work of the Grotto was already virtually hidden under thousands of strips of fabric. By the time Pope Francis visited on Saturday the countless prayer ribbons that could no longer fit on the Grotto had been woven into tapestries which hung from the outside walls of the Cathedral, surrounding the large image of Our Lady Undoer of Knots and flapping in the early autumn breeze like the wings of doves.

During an interview about the project she had set in motion Sister Scullion reflected, “We need God’s grace to untie the knots, but we also need each other.” As we mingled among the pilgrims busily recording their notes to Our Lady we thanked God for this experience of unity amid diversity in the Body of Christ.

Untying the knot of disobedience

The concept for the Knotted Grotto was thoroughly original, but the title of Mary, Undoer of Knots is actually quite old. Its origins can be traced to a seventeenth-century painting on display in the Church of St. Peter am Perlach in Augsburg, Bavaria. The painting was donated to the church by a monk in Augsburg in celebration of the reconciliation between his grandfather and grandmother. The couple had experienced marital difficulties but chose not to divorce, thanks to the assistance of a Jesuit priest who asked the Blessed Virgin Mary “to untie all knots and smooth them” between the couple.

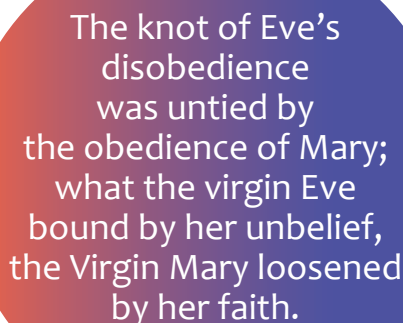
In 1986 Rev. Jorge Bergoglio, S.J., the future Pope Francis, traveled to Germany for advanced studies in theology. During his sabbatical he visited the church of St. Peter am Perlach and became acquainted with the painting of Our Lady, Undoer of Knots. No one knows exactly why, but Father Bergoglio was so struck by the painting that he brought a postcard of the image back to Argentina and spread devotion to Our Lady under this

title throughout Latin America. As archbishop of Buenos Aires he attached an image of Our Lady, Undoer of Knots to all his letters.

During his first year as Pope, Francis gave a catechesis on Our Lady in which he explained the theology of his favorite devotion. “Mary’s faith unties the knot of sin (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 56). What does that mean? The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council took up a phrase of Saint Irenaeus, who states that ‘the knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by the obedience of Mary; what the virgin Eve bound by her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith’ (Adversus Haereses, III, 22, 4).”

Pope Francis continued, “The ‘knot’ of disobedience, the ‘knot’ of unbelief. When children disobey their parents, we can say that a little ‘knot’ is created. This happens if the child acts with an awareness of what he or she is doing, especially if there is a lie involved. At that moment, they break trust with their parents. You know how frequently this happens! Then the relationship with their parents needs to be purified of this fault; the child has to ask forgiveness so that harmony and trust can be restored. Something of the same sort happens in our relationship with God. When we do not listen to him, when we do not follow his will, we do concrete things that demonstrate our lack of trust in him — for that is what sin is — and a kind of knot is created deep within us. These knots take away our peace and serenity. They are dangerous, since many knots can form a tangle that gets more and more painful and difficult to undo.”

“But we know one thing: nothing is impossible for God’s mercy! Even the most tangled knots are loosened by his grace. And Mary, whose ‘yes’ opened the door for God to undo the knot



The knot of Eve’s
disobedience
was untied by
the obedience of Mary;
what the virgin Eve
bound by her unbelief,
the Virgin Mary loosened
by her faith.

of the ancient disobedience, is the Mother who patiently and lovingly brings us to God, so that he can untangle the knots of our soul by his fatherly mercy. We all have some of these knots and we can ask in our heart of hearts: What are the knots in my life? 'Father, my knots cannot be undone!' It is a mistake to say anything of the sort! All the knots of our heart, every knot of our conscience, can be undone. Do I ask Mary to help me trust in God's mercy, to undo those knots, to change? She, as a woman of faith, will surely tell you: 'Get up, go to the Lord: he understands you.' And she leads us by the hand as a Mother, our Mother, to the embrace of our Father, the Father of mercies."

We can see from this catechesis, given several years before the Jubilee of Mercy, that Pope Francis envisions Our Lady, Undoer of Knots within the context of God's merciful love. He gives us valuable advice for this Jubilee Year: to ask Mary to help us trust in God's mercy and his ability to untie the knots in our lives that are keeping us far from his love!

Thanks to Pope Francis the devotion Our Lady, Undoer of Knots is now known around the world. The internet offers us numerous prayer resources, articles, images, rosaries and medals of the Mother of God under the title of Undoer of Knots. Why not treat yourself to a little mercy this year by confiding your difficulties and needs to our Holy Mother Mary, Undoer of Knots! 🙏

Through your grace,
your intercession,
and your example,
deliver us from all evil,
Our Lady, and untie
the knots that
prevent us from being
united with God,
so that we, free
from sin and error,
may find him in all things
may have our hearts
placed in him
and may serve him
always in our
brothers and sisters.

Pope Francis





Opening and Blessing of Our Lady of China Home *Taipei, Taiwan*

Just over two years after the ground breaking ceremony in September 2013, our newly reconstructed home in Taipei's Bali District was officially opened and blessed by Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Ti-kang on January 23, 2016.

Amid the fanfare of firecrackers, Archbishop Ti Kang Joseph was joined by Dr. Oh Chin-der, Mr. Samuel Yin's representative; the Mayor of New Taipei City's representative; Mother Provincial Charlotte Mary of the Holy Face; two Residents and five other special guests as he cut the ribbon at the threshold of the home. The commemorative plaque located to the left of the glass entrance was then unveiled and just below it, Mother Marie Odile de St. Pierre placed a time capsule containing a newspaper

of the day, St. Jeanne Jugan's relic and a handwritten list of the Little Sisters in the community, among other relevant items.

"What would we do without our good benefactors?" St. Jeanne Jugan often asked, and how right she was! We owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr. Oh and Mr. Yin, whose support and backing were invaluable for the successful completion of this project," our Little Sisters in Taipei wrote. "Our benefactors new and old, many of whom had made sacrifices large and small, in cash and in kind, were also present to celebrate the reconstruction of the home. Also on hand to share our joy and underscore the family spirit uniting us were various religious congregations, families of Little Sisters and a group of twenty-nine Residents, volunteers and Jeanne Jugan Associates from Malaysia and Hong Kong. We were also happy to have Sr. Imelda de l'Immaculée, one of the founding Little Sisters in Taiwan."

After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Archbishop Emeritus Ti-kang led everyone in prayer at the entrance of the chapel, and then handed over the key to Mother Marie Odile, who opened the doors. As soon as Monsignor Ti-kang and the thirteen concelebrants had reached the sanctuary, the side doors were also thrown open and about 400 people filed into the unlit chapel. The homilist made everyone smile when he explained it was not because the Little Sisters were trying to save electricity that the lights were still off! After the homily, the relics of St. Jeanne Jugan and St. Louis Gonzaga were placed into the base of the altar as the litany of the saints was sung. Finally, after the dedication and lighting of the altar, bright light filled the chapel as the beautiful voices of the choir led the assembly in a hymn, reminding us that Christ is "a light to enlighten the nations."

After Mass everyone adjourned to the auditorium for the plaque presentation ceremony. The Mayor of New Taipei City, Mr. Eric Chu arrived at about noon and gave a brief speech, acknowledging his appreciation of the work of the Home. He repeated his pledge to care for the two most vulnerable in society, the very young and the very old. Mother General's message,





Opposite page, top: Mother Marie Odile unveils the commemorative plaque.
Opposite page, bottom: The celebration proceeds in the brightly lit chapel.
Above: The large tableau created by the construction company features a field of wheat; with the names of the home's benefactors inscribed inside each of the wheat grains.

delivered in Mandarin, was much appreciated. Mother Provincial Charlotte Mary of the Holy Face also expressed heartfelt thanks for the generosity of our many benefactors and reaffirmed the Little Sisters' commitment to caring for the elderly poor in Taiwan according to the founding spirit of Sister Mary of the Cross.

"We thank God for the gift of a joy-filled day passed with the Residents, benefactors, friends and family," our Sisters recounted. "We were sure that St. Joseph heard our prayers by allowing the rain to sufficiently water our beautiful garden with its "patch" of nearly eighteen varieties of vegetables; and to give the mini-exercise area, long benches and pavilion a thorough cleaning before our guests arrived!"

In his homily at Mass Archbishop Emeritus Ti-kang shared his appreciation for our apostolate. Once when he tried to help



Guests to the celebration signed a poster depicting the architect's rendering of the new home.

an elderly gentleman enter our home, he related, a Little Sister had asked him if he had any family. He admitted he found it a strange question. But he now finds that the explanation of the Little Sister about our homes receiving the poor elderly and those without family corresponds with what our Holy Father Francis keeps exhorting us to do — that is, to care for the marginalized in society.

It gives us great joy to be able to celebrate the Jubilee Year of Mercy in such an eloquent way by offering the love and compassion of Christ to God's eldest children in this beautiful and comfortable new setting here in Taipei! ✨

Want to know more about the Little Sisters of the Poor?

For general information about the Little Sisters of the Poor, St. Jeanne Jugan, or to report a favor received through her intercession, contact St. Jeanne Jugan Communications at:

serenity@littlesistersofthepoor.org

St. Jeanne Jugan Communications
4200 Harewood Rd, NE
Washington, DC 20017 USA

For vocation/discernment information in the United States contact:

vocationsbrooklyn@littlesistersofthepoor.org

St. Ann's Novitiate
110-39 Springfield Blvd
PO Box 280356
Queens Village, NY 11428-0356 USA

For vocation information in Oceania contact:

voc.oceania@lsp.org.au

Little Sisters of the Poor
70 Market St
Randwick, NSW 2031
Australia

For vocation information in Asia contact:

Philippines:
mmnvtbolinao@yahoo.com

South Korea:
mmlsp@hanmail.net

www.littlesistersofthepoor.org

MERCIFUL LIKE THE FATHER



Serenity

April 2016, No. 170

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

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage

PAID

Baltimore, MD
Permit No. 7175