

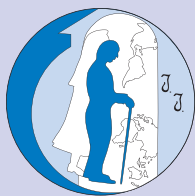
# Serenity

no. 168 • Little Sisters of the Poor • Oct. 2015

St. Jeanne Jugan,  
a Saint for old age,  
a friend to all ages!







## 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.

**Front cover:** Looking after Saint Jeanne Jugan's garden, Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska. In conjunction with the canonization of our foundress, Kathy Rowen, a friend of Dr. & Mrs. Edward Gatz, spearheaded an initiative to have a statue of Saint Jeanne Jugan placed on the campus of Creighton University (Dr. Gatz's cure from terminal cancer was the miracle permitting her canonization). Kathy continues to look after Jeanne Jugan's garden and sent us this photo of her grandchildren, Jamesy and Magee, helping to plant summer flowers around the statue.

## Serenity

OCT. 2015, No. 168

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



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## Acknowledgments

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## Online resources related to this issue

### Catholic end of life teaching:

<http://www.adw.org/transformfear/>  
<http://www.catholicendoflife.org>  
<http://www.patientsrightscouncil.org>

### Grandparents:

<http://www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.org>  
<http://www.grandparents.com/american-grandparents-association>  
<http://www.aarp.org/relationships/friends-family/>

### World Meeting of Families:

<http://www.worldmeeting2015.org>




Within the family each member  
is accepted, respected and honored  
precisely because he or she is a person;  
and if any family member is in greater need,  
the care which he or she receives  
is all the more intense and attentive.

– Saint John Paul II

**A**s this issue of *Serenity* goes to print the sense of excitement surrounding Pope Francis' visit to the United States is reaching fever pitch. Although our Holy Father will be speaking to major world and national leaders during his stay in America, his primary purpose for coming is to spend time with families.

As daughters of Saint Jeanne Jugan, we could not be more excited about the World Meeting of Families and its theme, *Love Is Our Mission, the Family Fully Alive*. Although she never married or had children of her own, family held great importance for Jeanne Jugan. Having lost her father at a young age, she knew the precariousness of growing up in a poor, single-parent household. But she learned precious lessons from her mother and the other strong, faith-filled women of her village who knew how to band together in mutual aid to sustain their families through good times and bad alike. Later, Jeanne Jugan chose the Holy Family of Nazareth as the model for the community she founded.

Saint Jeanne Jugan identifies with families, no matter their situation. But she has a special place in her heart for the elderly, who, unfortunately, tend to be marginalized due to the frenetic pace of today's world. She understands their desire to be accepted and honored despite their weakness and greater need.

We hope you will enjoy the advice of Pope Francis on family life in this issue, as well as the testimonies of our Little Sisters, Residents and collaborators on the valuable lessons they learned from their grandparents. 



Happenings





## A sister, a mother, a grandmother

On May 16<sup>th</sup> a group of Little Sisters from our community in Rome joined consecrated persons from their diocese in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall for an audience with Pope Francis. Two of our Sisters in wheelchairs were privileged to receive front row seats right in front of the steps where the Holy Father would pass by. There was a long row of elderly and disabled women and men religious, and Pope Francis greeted each one personally. When he reached our Little Sisters the Pope learned that Sister Candide, pictured at left in the wheelchair, is 97 years old. The Holy Father gazed intensely at Sister Candide, who was thrilled to be in his presence. Pope Francis then went on stage and continued with the general audience, at the conclusion of which he said to the group, "I would like to hold up as an example that Sister over there with her limpid eyes: she is a sister, a mother, a grandmother. At the age of 97 what an example of fidelity and perseverance for us all. And what a smile!" The whole assembly gave Sister Candide an enthusiastic round of applause as her face appeared on the jumbo screen and Sister excitedly waved back, full of joy. The next day our Holy Father's words were published



in *l'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper. In a year full of special occasions for consecrated persons, Sister Candide's encounter with Pope Francis was a source of joy and encouragement for the whole Congregation!

## Called, consecrated, sent to serve

Three novices made their first profession at our novitiate in Bolinao, Philippines, on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. The principal celebrant for the profession Mass was Most Reverend Socrates Villegas, DD, the archbishop of Lingayen-Dagupan. In his homily he encouraged the newly professed to stay focused on three words: "YES," "NO" and "Mercy of God." The first word denotes our yes to God and the yes of God to us. We celebrate the YES of God because it is strong, constant and eternal, he said, while our YES is frail and weak, prone to sin and failure. Bishop Villegas explained that the YES of God and the YES of man meet, leading to the unfolding of a divine love story.

The second word is “NO,” a word which must be said quietly. In the consecrated life we must learn to say “NO” — to husband, to comfort and convenience, to family and to temptations.

The third word is “Mercy of God.” We don’t rely on ourselves, Bishop Villegas said, but take shelter in the mercy of God. It is the mercy of God that sustains us until the end.

After Mass, our three newly professed Little Sisters received their obediences, or first assignments. Sr. Glorey Teresa, from Malaysia, received her obedience for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Sister Clémence, originally from Hong Kong, will be heading to Batticaloa, Sri Lanka; and Sr. Joan Teresa, from Hong Kong, will be returning there to serve in our Aberdeen home. May the Lord who called them to witness his mercy and compassion to our Residents be always with them and bless their generosity so that they will always say YES to God and NO to whatever is not of God!

## Four Little Sisters make profession in Queens

Several hundred people gathered at St. Ann’s Novitiate in Queens Village, New York, on July 18<sup>th</sup> to witness the first profession of four American novices: Sr. Jessica Marie, Sr. Mary Matthew of the Cross, Sr. Mercy Marie and Sr. Rachael du Bon Pasteur. Profession day was the culmination of nearly three years of formation and an intense eight-day retreat preached by Rev. Frederick Miller, a good friend of our Congregation.

Our four new Little Sisters hail from four different regions of the country. After graduating from college in Boston, Sr. Jessica Marie began volunteering in our home in Somerville as part of her vocational discernment. Sr. Mercy Marie, from Connecticut, met the Little Sisters while attending college in Washington, D.C. She also participated in our summer service program at Queen of Peace Residence in Queens Village, NY before entering.

From her native Washington (state), where we do not have



a home, Sr. Rachael went to college in Montana, where we also have no home! But her college chaplain knew the Little Sisters while in the seminary in Denver and encouraged her to apply for our summer live-in program. She got to know us in the Bronx before returning to Montana to finish her studies. Sr. Mary Matthew got to know the Congregation almost by mistake. From Florida, she found herself in a parish pastored by the priest-uncle of a Little Sister, who asked her to accompany one of his young nieces to our novitiate for a weekend event. As soon as she arrived in Queens Sr. Mary Matthew knew she was home!



At the completion of the profession Mass the four Sisters, and everyone else, learned where their first assignments would be taking them: Sr. Jessica Marie will head to Chicago, along with



Sr. Mary Matthew, who will begin her life as a Little Sister in Palatine, a northwest suburb of Chicago. Sr. Rachael is headed to Oregon, Ohio and Sr. Mercy Marie will make Totowa, New Jersey her home.

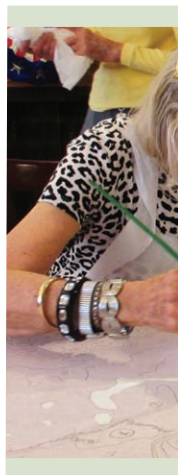
## Elderly participate in Philly Mural Arts Program

In July Little Sisters, Residents, staff and friends of Holy Family Home in Philadelphia participated in the creation of a mural that will be erected as a memorial to the Holy Father's Visit to the City of Brotherly Love.

The Mural Arts Program of the City of Philadelphia strives to create art that transform places and persons. A "Mural Tour" attracts 12,000 visitors each year.

The new mural that will honor Pope Francis' visit is called "The Sacred Now: Faith and Family in the 21st Century" (*see rendering of the mural below*). It will be installed on the external walls of St Malachy's School, in North Philadelphia. The 4,239-square-foot mural, by Cesar Viveros, is to be created from 153 panels to be installed





across the exterior of the school building in November. Some of the panels are being painted by Philadelphians and others will be painted by participants in the World Meeting of Families in September.

Our Little Sisters in Philly reported, “We worked on several of these panels in a ‘paint-by-number’ system. It was great to see how the members from the Mural Arts Program patiently showed the Residents where to paint — and not to paint. The intensity with which the Residents painted was extraordinary.”

“You could feel a real seriousness, as everyone was aware that their art work would last for decades. And then there was the excitement of knowing that the Holy Father would see the panels during his visit to Philadelphia! But even more so, the Residents were awed that they were going to leave a legacy of beauty for the children to play in where there had been only drab bricks and mortar.”





The Little Sisters concluded, “Some of the Residents stayed for the whole afternoon, patiently changing colors and brushes as needed. We also had invited volunteers and staff members to participate, and so the project became truly ‘collaboration,’ a work done by many hands.”



## Take up our cross!

The Residents and Little Sisters at Jeanne Jugan Residence in Washington, D.C. are just as excited about Pope Francis’ visit to the U.S. as their cohorts in Philadelphia. While in Washington our Holy Father will celebrate Mass outside the National Shrine of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, during which he will canonize Blessed Junipero Serra. Even if all the Residents are not able

to attend the Mass in person, a piece of Jeanne Jugan Residence will be there. Event organizers asked to borrow the large crucifix from the home’s chapel for the sanctuary platform being erected outside the Basilica. Everyone at the home feels incredibly honored knowing that Jeanne Jugan Residence will be represented at the Papal Mass in this way, and that once returned, the crucifix will serve as a deeply meaningful memento of the event. ✨



In our last issue we printed two texts from Pope Francis' year-long series of catecheses on the family, concentrating on his discussion of the elderly. In this issue we present excerpts from several more of these catecheses, dealing with various situations relevant to intergenerational relationships in the family.



## POPE FRANCIS *on the* FAMILY

### Three key expressions

“May I?”, “thank you,” and “pardon me.” These expressions open up the way to living well in your family, to living in peace. They are simple expressions, but not so simple to put into practice! They hold much power: the power to keep home life intact even when tested with a thousand problems. But if they are absent, little holes can start to crack open and the whole thing may even collapse.

Let's look at these expressions: the first expression is “may I?” When we take care to ask for something kindly — even something we think we have a rightful claim to — we help to strengthen the common life that undergirds marriage and the family. Entering into the life of another, even when that person already has a part to play in our life, demands the sensitivity of a non-invasive attitude that renews trust and respect. Indeed, the deeper and more intimate love is, the more it calls for respect for the other's freedom and the ability to wait until the other opens



Family picnic, Scranton, PA

the door to his or her heart. At this point, we can remember the words of Jesus in the Book of Revelation: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (3:20). Even the Lord asks permission to enter! Let us not forget that. Before doing anything in your family, ask: “Do you mind if I do this? Would you like me to do this?” This way of asking is well-mannered indeed, but it is also full of love. This does so much good for families.

The second expression is “thank you.” Sometimes we have to wonder if we are turning into a civilization of bad manners and bad words, as if this were a sign of self-liberation. It’s not uncommon to hear these bad words publicly. Kindness and the ability to say “thank you” are often considered a sign of weakness and raise the suspicion of others. This tendency is encountered even within the nucleus of the family. We must become firmly determined to educate others to be grateful and appreciative: the dignity of the person and social justice must both pass through the portal of the family. If family life neglects this style of living, social life will also reject it. Gratitude, however, stands at the

very core of the faith of the believer. A Christian who does not know how to thank has lost the very “language” of God. This is terrible! Let’s not forget Jesus’ question after he heals the ten lepers and only one of them returns to thank him (Luke 17:18). I remember once listening to a very wise, old person; very simple, but with that uncommon wisdom of life and piety: “Gratitude is a plant that grows only in the soil of noble souls.” That nobility of soul, that grace of God in the soul compels us to say “thank you” with gratitude. It is the flower of a noble soul. This really is something beautiful.

The third expression is “pardon me.” Granted, it’s not always easy to say, but it is so necessary. Whenever it is lacking, the little cracks begin to open up — even when we don’t want them to — and they can even become enormous sinkholes. It’s hardly insignificant that in the “Our Father” that Jesus teaches us — a prayer that sums up all of life’s essential questions — we find this expression: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us” (Matt 6:16). To acknowledge that we have fallen short, to be desirous of returning that which has been taken away — respect, sincerity, love — these make us worthy of pardon. This is how we heal the infection. If we are not able to forgive ourselves, then we are no longer able to forgive period. A house in which the words “I’m sorry” are never uttered begins to lack air, and the flood waters begin to choke those who live inside. So many wounds, so many scrapes and bruises are the result of a lack of these precious words: “I am sorry.”

So these three key expressions for family life are ... so simple that perhaps they even bring a smile to our face. But when we forget them, it’s no laughing matter. Perhaps we overlook our good manners too often. May the Lord help us to put them back where they belong: in our hearts, in our homes, and in our civic life. These are the words that truly enter into the love of a family.





Washington, D.C.

## Illness as a school of life

In this catechesis I would like to touch upon a condition common to all families, namely, illness. It is an experience of our own fragility, which we experience most of all at home, beginning in childhood, and then especially in the aches and pains of old age. Within the realm of family bonds, the illness of our loved ones is endured with an “excess” of suffering and anguish. It is love that makes us feel this “excess.” So often for a father or a mother, it is more difficult to bear a son or daughter’s pain than one’s own. The family, we can say, has always been the nearest “hospital.” Still today, in so many parts of the world, a hospital is for the privileged few, and is often far away. It is the mother, the father, brothers, sisters and grandparents who guarantee care and help one to heal....

In general, times of illness enable family bonds to grow stronger. I think about how important it is to teach children, starting from childhood, about solidarity in times of illness. An education that protects against sensitivity for human illness withers the heart. It allows young people to be “anaesthetized”

against the suffering of others, incapable of facing suffering and of living the experience of limitation. How often do we see a man or woman arrive at work with a weary face, with a tired countenance and when we ask them “What happened?” they answer: “I only slept two hours because we are taking turns at home to be close to our boy, our girl, our sick one, our grandfather, our grandmother.” And the day of work goes on. These are heroic deeds, the heroism of families! That hidden heroism carried out with tenderness and courage when someone at home is sick.

The weakness and suffering of our dearest and most cherished loved ones can be, for our children and grandchildren, a school of life — it’s important to teach the children, the grandchildren to understand this closeness in illness at home — and they become so when times of illness are accompanied by prayer and the affectionate and thoughtful closeness of relatives. The Christian community really knows that the family, in the trial of illness, should not be left on its own. We must say ‘thank you’ to the Lord for those beautiful experiences of ecclesial fraternity that help families get through the difficult moments of pain and suffering. This Christian closeness, from family to family, is a real



treasure for the parish; a treasure of wisdom, which helps families in the difficult moments to understand the Kingdom of God better than many discourses! They are God's caresses.

## The darkness of death confronted with love

Death is an experience that touches all families, without exception. It is part of life; yet, where familial love is concerned, death never seems natural. For parents, surviving their own children is particularly heartbreaking; it contradicts the fundamental nature of the very relationships that give meaning to the family. The loss of a son or daughter is like time stopping altogether: it opens a chasm that swallows both past and future. Death, which takes away a little child or young person, is a blow to the promises, the gifts and the sacrifices of love joyfully brought to the life to which we gave birth. Frequently parents come to Mass at Santa Marta with the photo of a son, a daughter, a baby, a boy, a girl, and they say to me: "He's gone, she's gone." Their faces are filled with grief. Death touches us and when it is a child's, it touches us profoundly. The whole family is left paralyzed, speechless.

The child left alone by the loss of one or both parents suffers in a similar way. She asks: "Where is my daddy? Where is my mama? — Well, she is in heaven" — "Why can't I see her?". This question covers the agony in the heart of a child left alone. The emptiness of abandonment that opens up in him is made all the more agonizing by the fact that he doesn't have the life-experience to even "give a name" to what has happened. "When is daddy coming back?" When is mama coming?". What do you say when a child suffers? This is what death in the family is like.

In the People of God, by the grace of his compassion granted in Jesus, many families prove by their deeds that death does not have the last word: this is a true act of faith. Every time a family in mourning — even terrible mourning — finds the strength to guard the faith and love that unite us to those we love, it has already prevented death from taking everything.

*(continued on page 18)*



# My New York summer

The Irish poet W.B. Yeats once wrote: *"The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper."*

As my time working here at the Jeanne Jugan Residence through the Spring Into Service program comes to a close, I've reflected on my time here and this quote has often come to mind. Although some of their more conventional senses may be dulled and muffled a tad, I believe the Residents here possess this sharpened ability to see magic things.

I've seen it in small instances; in a Resident marveling at the beauty of the flowers in the garden outside which I had overlooked for so long, in the thoughtful far-off gaze of a woman as she waits so patiently for her breakfast to be brought to her; or the quiet smiles of those I've accompanied on a group outing to the beach as they look out at the waves. There are flashing moments when it seems to me the Residents here are viewing a world completely separate from the world I am accustomed to taking in, and this world seems to be much more magical than the one my foggy eyesight beholds.




This is not to say everyone living here floats around all day in a cloud of ancient wisdom feeling nothing but harmony and peace and occasionally deigning to pass along snippets of sage advice to the lowly young ones around them. Just like all normal people, Residents have good days and bad days.

But on their good days I've seen instances of a casual comment or contemplative glance that convey this incredible awareness of life that they possess. After a full life, their sense of the world has grown sharper, and they see the world plainly for the magical place it is.

I think being young can very easily muddle one's vision. I have a thousand distractions bouncing around my mind which, although not inherently negative, create a sort of static that easily blurs the world around me. My picture of what is real, what I should be doing, and most importantly, for whom I should be living, often lacks clarity. The chance to work with the Residents, serve them and simply be around them has provided me with the opportunity to observe the clarity they possess. Their vision is clear, their priorities are not being constantly and frantically rearranged, and they know themselves.

I wish I could say this clarity of understanding the world and one's place in it totally rubbed off on me while I've been here this summer, but alas, it has not. I have a hunch it takes a few years to acquire. But it has made me aware of my own need to start attempting to see the world clearly, to start improving on my life awareness.

Because once I've aged and am a resident in a home I hope to be like Jeanne Jugan Residence, I'm not going to tell the story of that one time I got a 98% on my genetics midterm, or how I had really good fashion sense during my college years, or even my running personal records and times. I'm going to want to tell stories like the ones I've heard here, about the family I raised, the people I served, and the times I recognized God's love for me in the hands of others.

As my time with the Little Sisters and the wonderful Residents and workers here at Jeanne Jugan comes to a close, I look forward to carrying everything I have learned and experienced out into the bigger world, where I can continue to sharpen my own senses to observe the magic of the Lord's beautiful earth in which I live. 

- Danielle Medearis, University of Tulsa

## The darkness of death *(continued from page 15)*

The darkness of death should be confronted with a more intense work of love. “My God, lighten my darkness!” is the invocation of evening prayer. In the light of the Resurrection of the Lord, who abandons none of those whom the Father entrusted to him, we can take the “sting” out of death, as the Apostle Paul says (1 Cor 15:55); we can prevent it from poisoning life, from rendering vain our love, from pushing us into the darkest chasm.

In this faith, we can console one another, knowing that the Lord has conquered death once and for all. Our loved ones are not lost in the darkness of nothing: hope assures us that they are in the good and strong hands of God. Love is stronger than death. Thus, the way is to let love grow, make it stronger. Love will guard us until the day that every tear shall be wiped away, when “death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more” (Rev 21:4). If we allow ourselves to be sustained by this faith, the experience of grief can generate even stronger family bonds, a new openness to the pain of other families, a new brotherhood with families that are born and reborn in hope. To be born and reborn in hope, this gives us faith.

Today it is necessary that pastors and all Christians express in a more concrete way the meaning of the faith in regards to the family experience of grief. We should not deny them the right to weep — we must weep in mourning — “Jesus wept” and was “deeply troubled” by the grave loss of a family that he loved (cf. Jn 11:33-37). We can draw from the simple and strong testimony of the many families who have been able to grasp, in the most arduous transition of death, the safe passage of the Lord, crucified and risen, with his irrevocable promise of the resurrection of the dead. God’s work of love is stronger than the work of death. It is precisely of that love, that we must make ourselves hard-working “accomplices,” with our faith! And let us remember Jesus’ deed: “And Jesus gave him back to his mother.” So he will do with all our loved ones and with us when we meet again, when death will





Family picnic, Scranton, PA

be definitively conquered in us. It was conquered by Jesus' Cross. Jesus will give us all back to the family!

## The beauty of family celebrations

Celebration is the invention of God. Let us recall the conclusion of the story of Creation in the Book of Genesis, which we have heard: "And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation" (2:2-3). God himself teaches us the importance of dedicating time to contemplate and enjoy what has been done well in work. I speak of work, naturally, not only in the sense of employment and profession, but in the broader sense: every action by which we as men and women cooperate in God's creative work.


Thus celebration is not lazily lounging in an armchair, or the euphoria of foolish escape. No, celebration is first and foremost

a loving and grateful look at work well done; we celebrate work. ... It is the time to look at your children, or grandchildren, who are growing up, and to think: how beautiful! It's the time to look at our home, the friends we host, the community that surrounds us, and to think: what a good thing! God did this when he created the world. And he does so again and again, because God is always creating, even at this moment!

It may happen that a celebration occurs in difficult or sorrowful circumstances, and perhaps we celebrate "with a lump in our throat." Yet, even in these cases, we ask God for the strength not to empty it completely. You mothers and fathers really understand this: how many times, for love of your children, you are able to swallow your sorrows so as to let them enjoy the celebration, to savor the good taste of life! There is so much love in this!

Ultimately, the time for celebration is sacred because God is there in a special way. Sunday Eucharist brings to the celebration every grace of Jesus Christ: his presence, his love, his sacrifice, his forming us into a community, his being with us.... And like this every reality receives its full meaning: work, family, the joys and trials of each day, even suffering and death; everything becomes transfigured by the grace of Christ.

The family is endowed with an extraordinary ability to understand, guide and sustain the authentic value of the time for celebration. How beautiful family celebrations are, they are beautiful! Sunday celebrations in particular. It is surely no coincidence that celebrations that have room for the whole family are those that turn out the best!

Family life itself, regarded through the eyes of faith, looks better to us than the toils that cost us. It looks to us like a masterpiece of simplicity, beautiful precisely because it is not artificial, not false, but able to incorporate within itself all aspects of real life. It looks to us like something "very good", as God says at the completion of the creation of man and woman (cf. Gen 1:31). Thus, celebration is a precious gift of God; a precious gift that God gave to the human family: let's not spoil it! 

# What I learned from my *Grandparents*

**M**y paternal grandfather owned a pizza shop for many years. As a young girl, I remember sitting at my Poppy's shop eating fresh provolone cheese. I didn't realize it then, but he exemplified the values of hard work. Pop, my maternal grandfather, served in the Navy. He proudly recalls his time overseas, and from him, I learned the value of pride and service. I realized the importance of putting others first and working hard toward my goals.

My grandmothers taught me the importance of love and compassion. They both worked tirelessly as mothers, each raising four children. Each woman was a strong matriarch for her family as a

wife and mother. They showed me the value of being a strong and independent woman. These values have helped mold me into the woman I am today.

Marissa with her grandmother and sister



Only my paternal grandmother and maternal grandfather are still alive; I savor the conversations and hugs we still share. But I also hold on to the countless memories I have had with each of them. The values are timeless, the memories are incredible, and their legacies will last forever.

– Marissa Accamando,  
Pittsburgh, PA



My grandmothers were very different, yet both taught me many life lessons, which could be summarized by the word “love” — of God, family and our brothers and sisters throughout the world.

Each uncomplainingly raised three children on her own during the Depression. Both worked hard inside and outside their homes. They had a strong faith that they passed on to their children and grandchildren. I still remember watching Grandma Barbara saying her daily prayers and using the memorial cards from her deceased loved ones to pray for their souls.

Grandma Bridget had a large picture of the Little Flower over her mantle. She must have sensed that this young French nun, so recently canonized, was, like herself, a “little” person, unknown to the world but important in the eyes of God. Both grandmothers had a sick call set — a crucifix with a hollowed-out space holding all that was necessary for the Anointing of the Sick — in the home.

Grandma Barbara left



Grandma Barbara



Grandma Bridget

her family in Germany as a teenager. She was a serious woman, not given to flattery or external signs of affec-

tion. But we knew she loved us. We lived in a rural area and her house was only two “city-blocks” away and always open to us. I think she found in my mother the daughter she never had, because she made Mom her confidante. Most of what I knew about her earlier life, I learned from Mom. Grandma Barbara did all the mending for our family and she taught me to sew at a very young age. Practical and steady, she was always there for us.

Because Grandma Bridget lived in the city, we did not see her so often, but she was still an important part of our lives. She would regularly take a bus out to visit us and sometimes I got to stay overnight at her home. She lived on the second floor of a tenement house, a “cold-water flat.” It was dismal, but who cared? She was there. She expressed her joy at having us by immediately sending to the corner store for ginger ale and “Social Tea Biscuits.” What a comfort, as a small child, just to nestle in her ample lap as she rocked away in her old rocker! And,

oh, the delight to watch her as she put a 78 rpm record of *The Irish Woman* on the victrola, lifted her skirts ever so slightly, and did her version of the Irish jig! She was full of joy and affirmation, never dwelling on her own poverty, but finding fulfillment in her grandchildren.

My grandmothers enriched me with another special gift — a world view. They encouraged me to correspond with my cousins in Germany and Ireland, forming friendships that have lasted to this very day. I acquired a sense of my own roots and developed a real interest in other lands and cultures.

How can I ever thank God for the gifts of such beautiful and loving grandmothers? I know they are still watching over and praying for me. One of the joys of Heaven will surely be our reunion with those who have gone before us and certainly Grandmas Barbara and Bridget will be among the first in the welcoming line.

– Sister Maria Goretti,  
Mobile, AL

I retain fond memories of my grandmother's gentle personality and her selfless, loving care. She had come to live with her eldest daughter's (my mother) extended family when rumors of a second World War turned into reality. During the war years there was no water, no electricity, no food to buy, especially in the village district where we lived. We made full use of the raw materials God provided – well-water and fertile soil with plenty of crops. It was wonderful to notice how granny gathered coconut husks to be dried and how she used a magnifying glass to draw sparks from the sun's rays to start the "fire" she needed for cooking the day's meals.

Another lesson learned from observing her is the virtue of perseverance in toiling for success. She succeeded in turning the compound allotted to her into a farmyard and a garden of fruit-bearing trees!

When I was nine years old God called my mother to himself and Granny it was who took over my mother's role in my life. Her loving

CARE is unforgettable. Home from school, I would find the milk warmed up, clothes washed, things prepared and ready for use.

One day God sent us a trial. Granny suffered a stroke, followed by left-sided paralysis. My father got someone to help her for her physical needs but that did not last long. One by one, the helpers left. The parish priest recommended her to the care of the Little Sisters of the Poor and that was where God bestowed his best gift upon us — a religious vocation for Granny's "ward" (myself). It gave me real pleasure when after my first profession as a Little Sister of the Poor, standing in front of her, I noticed the delighted expression on her face! With God's grace, it is a joy as a Little Sister to be able to render back to her, with gratitude, the respect and honor due to her as a grandmother — and not only to her but also to elders of different societies in the world!

– from a Little Sister  
in Taipei, Taiwan



M My Grandma and I have had a special bond since I was very young. I have always spent every Friday night at her house since I was two years old. Even still today at almost sixteen I still spend at least one or two Friday nights a month with her. She is like a second mother to me and gives me many opportunities. She's always there for me to talk to and listen to me. I truly enjoy the time I spend with my Grandma. I feel our time spent together is so precious. She helps me along my journeys in life and I feel blessed to have a Grandma who loves me so much. I cherish all the memorable moments with my Grandma and love her very much. I wouldn't be the person I am today without my Grandma.

– Nicole Greene,  
St. Paul, MN

“Children should be seen and not heard”... I'm so grateful that my grandparents never ascribed to that childrearing mantra! Of course they didn't



Nicole with her grandmother

believe in coddling children either. But they always made me feel loved and worthy of their time and attention. In my eyes, my grandparents did everything (like Goldilocks said) “just right.” My grandparents were kind and humble people who modeled principled lives — by what they said and, more importantly, by their example. They followed The Golden Rule and abided by the Ten Commandments,

believing that both were foundational guideposts for their lives. Grateful to have survived the hardships of the Depression, they lived simply and resourcefully and they were good stewards of the resources that God gave them. They emphasized the importance of responsibility, honesty, and hard work. I witnessed their deep trust in God, their commitment to family, and their respect and compassion for others.

As former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani said, “What children need most are the essentials that grandparents provide in abundance. They give unconditional love, patience, humor, comfort, lessons in life ... and, most importantly, cookies.” I was blessed to have gotten all of these things from my grandparents and strive to pass on their wisdom and example to my own grandchildren.

– Mary Freundt, A.J.J.  
Richmond, VA



Sr. Cornelia's "Grossmutter"

I never really knew my father's parents, but my mother's mother was very dear to me — maybe because she made me feel special when I was growing up, even though she was very proud of all of her grandchildren. She took me to my first movie and my first opera. I learned from her to have an open mind and to appreciate different experiences and cultures. She came to visit me at college, slept in my dorm room when she was over sixty years old (with only one shower at the end of the hall!) and then visited me here in the United States where I lived

in a very multi-cultural neighborhood. She was thrilled. She would often say, when we tried to protect her, “I can rest later.” She was not inquisitive, but happy when we shared our lives and concerns with her.

My grandmother always had something to look forward to — a birthday, a journey, a family event (graduation, weddings). She would never make any fuss, would bring a little sandwich in case she got hungry, and just be happy with whatever was there to eat, to experience, to do, to meet. She had a very deep faith and confidence in God; “der Herrgott,” she would call him. He was her constant companion, although she was not much into devotions or litanies. She would very simply talk to him, and we could tell that it was this faith that had sustained her throughout her long, difficult life. She died when she was 99 years old. Her memory and her counsels have encouraged me and all those she met.

– Sister Cornelia Maria,  
Philadelphia, PA

**M**My name is Monika and I work with Little Sisters in Glendalough, Perth, Australia. I am grateful to share with you what I learned from my grandparents in India. My grandfather is 84 years old and my grandmother is 79 years old. Luckily, they are both still with us. My grandparents were my best friends. They loved me more than my own parents. They used to spoil me and take my side in all aspects of life. They seemed to understand me more than my parents. I felt more comfortable talking to my grandmother than my own mother. My grandma taught me how to cook, especially how to make chapattis. When there were guests at home, she taught me not to scrape the cooking pans to empty them while serving food, as this is not good manners. When I had any concerns regarding my day-to-day living, I would discuss them with my grandma, as she was a magic grandma and had solutions for everything.

My grandpa taught me accounting and how to look after and save money. He

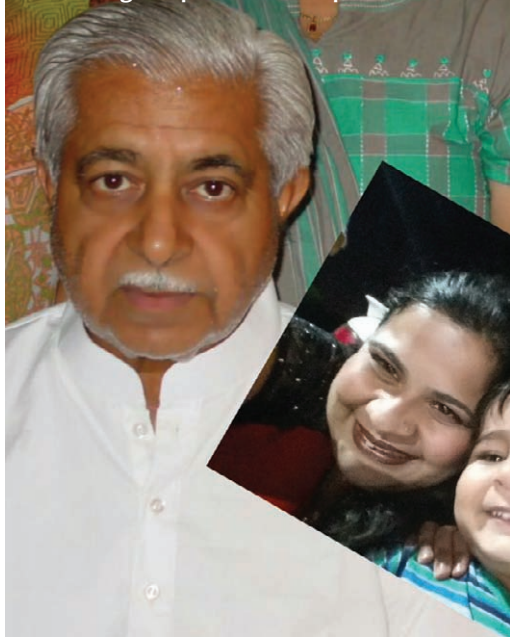


was a businessman and used to deal with money a lot. He would sit next to me and teach me how money flows and how money attracts more money. Today, I am a successful woman and my grandparents played a big part in this success. I love them and will always love them to the end. I can't see my life without them and it is scary to think that I will lose them one day.

**M**My maternal grandmother lived in town. My brother and I were sent there to live with her while attending Catholic primary school. There were other cousins staying with us as well. As I was the only girl, Grandma ensured that I learned good manners and behaved more like a lady than a tomboy! Grandma's daily routines and rituals were really a rude awakening for us all. At 5:00 a.m. we were awakened to the sound of her voice proclaiming the Angelus out loud. She would use a long duster to poke the bodies that were sleeping on the floor. In between the responses and

the Hail Marys we would hear, "Get up, get up, it's time for Mass ... Get up, get up, and go wash your faces." Then we were all marched along in

Monika's grandparents hold a photo of Monika



front of her going to the cathedral for Mass at 5:45 a.m.

Everyone had to be home for evening prayers at 6:00 p.m. Each one of us had a turn to lead the rosary and the litanies of Our Lady, St. Joseph and the Sacred Heart. Grandma informed us that our neighbors were not Catholic and so we needed to sing

and praise God with full voices for them to hear!

Once I became very sick and beside my bed I heard my dear Grandma with a fervent

and her children.



and suppliant voice praying the Memorare. It became my favorite prayer and I still pray it daily. Grandma was a woman of great faith and love and this rubbed off on us. She had another favorite saying, which has come down through the generations in my family. “The Lord will provide.” She was always right. Among

those of us who lived with Grandma, my brother and a cousin became priests and I became a Little Sister of the Poor. Now as a Little Sister I live with faith those cherished memories taught me by my Grandma: the Angelus, the Memorare and trust in Divine Providence.

– Sister Rafaele Amelie,  
Sydney, Australia

Grandma was widowed when Grandpa was killed in an accident at work. She had five small children with one on the way. Because there were no pensions or workmen’s compensation benefits at the time, she was urged to keep her oldest and youngest child and have the other four children put in an orphanage. She obstinately refused to have the family separated. The Sisters of Mercy offered her a job cleaning the parish school. They were poor, very poor, but they were together. She was a woman of strong faith and prayed to St. Joseph to help her provide for the family.

Fast forward twenty-three years — that’s when I came into the picture. Grandma was living with our family when I was born at home. She held me in her arms many times and I bear her name. My mom said that in some mysterious way she imparted to me her devotion to St. Joseph, for which I am very grateful. Grandparents want to give their grandchildren special little treats, so when I need a special favor, I ask her to help me. I pray for her and to her daily, and although I don’t remember her, I love her and will be so happy when we meet in heaven.

– Sister Mary Joseph  
Oregon, OH

Our family continually thanks God for having been recipients of such a rich legacy from our dear grandparents. We learned our prayers on our grandmother’s knees and in turn used our knees to kneel beside her often in Church, learning to praise and adore the God that she loved so dearly. Mon-

day evening novenas to the Miraculous Medal were recited by heart as we strived to imitate Grandma in church. God and family were her dearest treasures and her 99 years on earth were a testament that she loved and lived life to the fullest. Her name was Ruth.

Our family did not actually know our grandfather, though we always felt we had made his acquaintance, since our grandmother always spoke so highly of him. The one thing that is certain is that Grandpa loved God and his family, and his way of expressing this love came by enlisting several times in the armed forces, serving his country as a Buffalo Soldier. Our grandmother’s pride would swell as she recalled Grandpa’s promotion to first sergeant after many years of dedicated service. In reflecting back over the years, our memories recall the beautiful example that our grandparents have left us — love of God, love of family and service to his Church.

– Sister Mary Jeanette,  
Richmond, VA

Sr. Patrice with her mother at the canonization of Jeanne Jugan.



“Patti, I’m sorry I’m making you work.” These were the last words spoken to me by my grandfather as he faded from this world and peacefully entered into the next, eternity. Looking back on this experience, which happened when I was just nineteen years old, I realize in hindsight that my grandfather was teaching me a lesson, even at his final, sacred moment: Live until you die.

My grandfather, Herbert Ormerod, was the epitome of goodness. He was a great man who inspired me by his ceaseless example of love and respect for others, positive words of encouragement, and a sense of

forgiveness and selflessness.

Being a man of few words, my grandfather set the tone by way of his good moral values; he was an excellent humanitarian. Showing and giving respect to others were second nature, something I always admired in him.

I understood, at a very young age, that my grandfather’s character was different from others. I have always known that only goodness lived in him. I recall his gesture of handing me \$5.00 when report cards were handed out, even though I was not a great student academically. His kind words of



encouragement motivated me to study harder with the hope that someday I would show him good grades. Never once did he utter negative, abrasive or harsh words to me or others. He never did anything for himself; he lived for others.

An important quality I would like to share about my grandfather was that even though his faith was different from the rest of his family, he always drove my grandmother and his grandchildren to church and would wait patiently in his car until their return. He was a very patient and righteous man.

On numerous occasions my grandfather shared with me a painful story from his childhood. His sister was punished for talking too much in class and was placed in one of the school closets; then she was mistakenly forgotten when the class ended. When she was eventually found, it was too late. Perhaps my grandfather revealed this incident to encourage me to be quiet in class, or because it needed to be told, I really do not know. Whatever the reason, he never

told this story out of bitterness. I sensed that he forgave the teacher who committed this terrible act. This was a testimony of my grandfather's virtue of forgiveness.

Even though my grandfather passed away many years ago, those last moments shared with him will remain ingrained in my mind forever, reminding me to live out his legacy of giving. His last act of love toward me was to be the instrument God used to draw me to a life caring for the elderly as a Little Sister of the Poor. You see, my grandfather died in my arms as I was helping him back to his bed. A sacred moment, shared between a grandfather and a granddaughter that will always remain in my heart.

This quiet man, whose words and wisdom gave us an example, and whose gentle disposition lives on in those who knew him, reminds me to always forgive, respect, have patience, and be selfless! My grandfather: a man of dignity.

– Sister Patrice,  
Enfield, CT

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# *Serenity*

October 2015, No. 168

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LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR  
601 MAIDEN CHOICE LANE  
BALTIMORE, MD 21228-3698  
[www.littlesistersofthepoor.org](http://www.littlesistersofthepoor.org)

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How beautiful is the encouragement  
an elderly person passes on  
to a young person who is seeking  
the meaning of faith and life!  
It is truly the mission of grandparents,  
the vocation of the elderly.

– Pope Francis

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