Legacy of Love
Tending the flame of Charity

Winter is a solemn time especially for those of us living in the Northern Hemisphere. Days are too short and nights seem endless. As we prepare for Christmas and all of the festivities around the holidays we can enjoy them in our cozy homes, cuddled up with our loved ones, and have the delight of looking out of our windows to see the dazzling lights and beautiful snowfall. It is hard to imagine those who could be lonely without adequate heat in their homes, warm clothes, reliable transportation and access to good food. Winter can be quite brutal especially if you are poor and elderly.

Last year, it was reported that in “merry old England” 40,000 seniors died due to poverty and the cold. And according to a recent UCSF study, people 60-years old and older who reported feeling lonely saw a 45% increase in their risk for death. This year meteorologists are bracing for more arctic weather.

Fortunately the 76 older adults who call St. Mary’s Home are safe, warm and happy due to the mercy of one 46-year-old woman from a small village across the ocean 177 years ago. Jeanne Jugan was living in the port city of Saint-Servan in northwestern France on the English Channel when on a winter night she could not resist the sight of a blind, paralyzed old woman out in the cold with no one to care for her. Jeanne carried the old woman home and placed her in her own bed. From that night on, Jeanne gave her life to God and to the elderly of the whole world.

Trustling in God’s Providence and St. Joseph’s intercession, she willingly begged for the many homes that she opened, relying on the generosity of benefactors to sustain her mission. Soon the Congregation spread all over her country and then it took root in England in 1851. After that came Belgium, Spain, Ireland, North Africa, and in 1868, the United States.

In 1874, Bishop Foley of Chicago wrote to Mother General in France inviting the Little Sisters to open a home to care for those displaced by the Great Fire in 1872. Her response came with the Little Sisters opening their first home in 1876.

For 140 years the Little Sisters of the Poor in Chicago have continued the tradition of Jeanne Jugan, devoting themselves in the closest manner, by the vow of hospitality, to service of the aged and ailing poor. To this they apply their intelligence and their strength, their affection and their self-sacrifice. Their life upon this earth has in future but one aim: the relief, spiritual and temporal, of their old people (History of the Little Sisters of the Poor).

As we remember our dear Mother Foundress Saint Jeanne Jugan, we thank God for you, our dear benefactors, who remember our beloved Residents.
Riding in the backseat of her dad’s “Christmas green” Volkswagen along with three of her five siblings, Sr. John Elise always seemed to look out the window right as they passed the large archway to St. Theresa’s Home on Upper Thomson Road in Singapore. The second grader was en route to Sembawang Primary School, 16 miles away from her home in Rangoon, on the other side of the island nation, where her father Seng Taw Tan was employed as a math and PE teacher. Each December throughout the 70s the kids would pile in, “we were very small back then,” said Sr. John, to go help their dad clean and prepare for the students return in January.

Named after St. Theresa of Lisieux, patroness of missions, the Little Sisters of the Poor built St. Theresa’s at 49 Upper Thomson Road in 1939 four years after they arrived and grew out of their original home on Derbyshire Road. The family would see the archway up on the hill at the halfway point never knowing what was behind it.

To little Sr. John her dad’s school seemed far away – the Catholic Church even further.

Her parents emigrated from Malaysia to study in Singapore where they met, married and raised their family. Both were Chinese descent and practicing Buddhists as were their children.

At 10, Sr. John dreamt of becoming a music composer. She studied music theory in pursuit of her goal until her interest changed to math and business, which to her were more practical. Like her friends, she envisioned that she too would marry and raise a family, with four children to be exact. Her mother, Lily, wanted her to get “married and move to the United States.” Sr. John went to college graduating with bachelor’s degree in business administration.

After finishing school she did accounting for a restaurant association, then freelance writing for a fashion magazine, where she translated articles from English to Chinese. Attending designer shows and appreciating the glamorous lifestyle until she felt something was missing. She went to work for Ang Mo Kio Family Service, a nonprofit agency, but became conflicted taking a salary for helping people.

Growing up Sr. John was exposed to kids with different religions and cultures. Her Protestant friends invited her to their churches but declined when they asked her to join. Her older sister brought her to a Catholic novena service, located near their home, which they both liked. She went on to attend an RCIA program but elected to not get baptized. She wasn’t sure. A few years later her hair dresser encouraged her to become a Christian and this time Sr. John was ready. She enrolled in her second round of RCIA and was baptized on Aug. 15, 1991.

“It seemed like a veil was lifted, Christianity made sense and I believed it,” said Sr. John. So convinced that she wanted to become a nun even though the decision would seriously disappoint her mother and she would have to delay entering until she lived for three years as a lay Christian.

After attending a retreat at St. Theresa’s, the place she now recognized from the window in the backseat of her dad’s little car, Sr. John began volunteering there during her free time from work. The peace she felt compelled her to return and eventually walk through the archway where she entered the Little Sisters of the Poor. She continued her formation in Taiwan, then France making her final vows in 2001. Assigned to the United States, she has remained serving in our homes in San Francisco, San Pedro, Louisville, St. Paul, and Denver.

“I really like Chicago, the people are nice and very welcoming and the churches are beautiful,” said Sr. John. She didn’t hesitate when asked what she liked the least – to no one’s surprise, the traffic. “The honking is the worst,” she added.

“I would tell a young woman who felt that she might be hearing a call to religious life to come out of her comfort zone and experience it, otherwise you will never really know if you are being called,” said Sr. John Elise. It’s something you wouldn’t want to miss.
Resident Profile
Inspiring story of Jim Glomski

The summer of 1933 was abuzz with activity in Chicago. The second World’s Fair “A Century of Progress International Exposition” had just opened. That August was especially humid. The muggy air was difficult for the 36-year-old Gabrielle Glomski, who was experiencing complications as she was getting ready to deliver her third baby. On August 25, she gave birth to a sweet smiley boy named James. After the delivery, doctors recommended that Gabrielle not take her newborn home with her because he had congenital problems and “was only expected to live six months.” Fortunately his grandmother stepped in and said that they would be taking him home. He had to undergo many painful surgeries starting at 6 months and continuing until he was 14 years of age. He is blind in one eye and has a bone-anchored hearing aid. As Jim explains it, his only handicap is from “the neck up.”

Growing up in the middle of four boys, Jim had a happy childhood, thanks to the love and support of his family. In spite of being born with a disability, Jim wouldn’t be held back, “If I had a life motto, it would be ‘They said it couldn’t be done, but I proved it could.’” Industrious at a young age, Jim started working at 11 delivering groceries and newspapers. He attended Spaulding High School, where he also learned a trade and made many lifelong friendships. Soon after graduating, Jim mowed lawns working his way up to care for the Calvary Cemetery in Evanston. By 1960 he and his brother had saved up enough money to start their own business, “Lakeshore Cycle” bicycle shop. It did very well and when they sold it, he continued to work as a bicycle repairman until 2004. His last job was at the Wilmette Sports shop.

Jim moved into St. Mary’s Home a year and a half ago. He was apprehensive about the major change in his life but has grown to love and appreciate the new family he’s gained here.

These days, you can find Jim wherever the people are. Whether it’s in the lobby visiting with another Resident, out for a coffee at the corner Starbucks and even volunteering at The Women’s Center. Jim tries to keep his mind and body active. After all, you’re only as old as you feel and Jim feels like he’s still 15!

Jim and our receptionist Wanda admiring the Cubs tree.

Nothing too Small for our Residents

Rigoberto Conde, maintenance manager, is a 22-year veteran of St. Mary’s Home.

For the past 19 years, he has been responsible for assisting with our day-to-day plant management. In September 2015, he was promoted from assistant to manager.

Rigo, as he’s known, has experience and expertise in many areas. From IT trouble-shooter to handling most of our electrical, heating and air conditioning needs, there really isn’t anything that he doesn’t know how to handle. He even does small jobs like replacing light bulbs, fixing TVs and unsticking drawers in our offices to filling in at the front desk for the receptionist breaks when we are short staffed. Often called to unclog toilets in the rooms, he says he doesn’t mind at all because, “It’s for the Residents.”

Papa Rigo showing the kids his “office.”

His mother Maria was working as a dining aide when she told her son about an opening in the housekeeping department. Rigo, was already cleaning offices with her downtown, started to moonlight here working the night shift from 12 to 8 a.m. (which was discontinued) and weekends. Being a native of Guatemala, he had a hard time mastering English. At the same time he met his future wife Shenel who was working through high school as a dining aid. She quit so she could attend college fulltime to pursue her degree in early education. When he heard the news

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Nothing too Small for our Residents

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As I joyfully prepare my heart and soul to celebrate the birth of Jesus once again, the immensity of His love amazes me, even to the point of overwhelming me! How could He love me that much to come down from His Father and take on our human flesh? But He does! What gift could I possibly give that is worthy of the Lord of lords and King of kings? Like Mary I know I must ponder all this in my heart.

Glancing back over 2016, I don't see much that could be considered a gift. Uhm ~ Jesus, dare I ever offer you not only all my efforts of 2016, but also my disappointments along with the desires of my heart to praise you? Like the 'Little Drummer Boy' it’s really all I have to give. With this I give You my love and trust, which I know overshadows any mistakes of 2016 and only leaves room in your heart for my love of you and my trust in you. Jesus, may this bring some warmth and joy to your heart even in that cold and unclean stable you chose to be born in!

From our family at St. Mary’s Home, we wish you the knowledge of God's personal love for you and the blessings his presence alone brings you and your loved ones throughout 2017 and all of your life!

Merry Christmas and together may we welcome Jesus into His world!

Dear Sisters,

Please accept my contribution of $__________ to help support your mission to provide a loving home for the Residents of St. Mary's Home.

☐ Please send me information on remembering the Little Sisters in my will or estate.

☐ Please send me information on volunteering for the Little Sisters.

☐ Please send me information on discerning a vocation as a Little sister.

☐ Please send me your quarterly Serenity magazine.

Name: ________________________________________________________
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By: Mother Marcel Joseph