



## Celebrating 150 Years of Service in America

### *Looking Back at Some Incredible Women*

By Sr. Constance Carolyn, I.S.P.

As we pass through a difficult period in the life of our Church, I've been thinking about the potential for committed Catholic women to bind wounds and buoy up the spirits of the faithful. St. John Paul II once commended women for helping to make "political and economic structures ever more worthy of humanity" and at the close of the Second Vatican Council Pope Paul VI called on women "impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel" to aid humanity and "save the peace of the world."

In celebrating the 150th anniversary of our Congregation's arrival in the United States, I've been deeply moved by the extraordinary women who made the expansion of our religious family in America possible. First, of course is our foundress, St. Jeanne Jugan, who went out into the deep with little education and few resources – but with great audaciousness – to establish a new work of mercy in the Church.

Then, there are the courageous Little Sisters who implanted our Congregation in America. Many of them had never ventured beyond their homeland until they boarded a ship bound for the New World. Most of them spoke no English when they arrived, but they were full of fervor and indomitable charity.

As they set down roots in America our Little Sisters were supported by a host of women who devoted themselves to building up the Kingdom and healing society's wounds in the wake of the Civil War. The most prominent among them was Mrs. Sarah Peter, the daughter of the sixth governor and first U.S. senator from Ohio. After being widowed twice, she undertook a life of philanthropy. Raised as a Protestant, Mrs. Peter was impressed by the fervent Catholics she encountered during visits



Mrs. Sarah Peter – the first person to request the Little Sisters to come to America



Margaret Haughery – best known as Margaret, "a mother to the motherless..."

abroad. She embraced Catholicism and turned her attention to bringing religious communities from Europe to Cincinnati.

In 1857, her first request for a foundation of Little Sisters in the Queen City was declined by Mother General, who felt that the Congregation was still too young for such an undertaking. She would have to wait eleven years, but in October 1868, Mrs. Peter was on hand to welcome the Little Sisters to Cincinnati and lend her wholehearted support to their mission.

Another notable woman who showed herself an early benefactor of our Congregation was Emma Drexel, the second wife of prominent banker Francis Anthony Drexel. Mrs. Drexel and her three daughters opened the family home to the poor of Philadelphia twice a week to distribute food, clothing, and rent assistance to the poor. In 1869, her middle child Katherine, the future saint, led her sisters in selling all their Christmas gifts and giving the proceeds to the Little Sisters.

The women mentioned so far were from wealthy, prominent families, but the poor also made their contribution. Margaret Haughery of New Orleans was an illiterate Irish immigrant who lost

both her husband and her only child at the age of 23. Rather than bury herself in sorrow, Margaret devoted herself to the care of orphans at the New Orleans Female Orphan Asylum. She purchased two cows to provide the children with milk, and then acquired a whole herd, which she developed into a prosperous dairy business. Margaret also purchased and ran a hugely successful bakery, from which she supplied numerous orphanages and old age homes in New Orleans, including our own.

Our history is dotted with stories of women who assisted the Little Sisters in extending our mission to the elderly poor across America. Many remain nameless – from the schoolgirls who donated a loaf of bread and a few dishes, to the maids in Boston who gave the shawls off their backs, and the countless women, who offered our Little Sisters hospitality and invaluable assistance upon their arrival in each new city.

Whether known or unknown, all of these women gave the best of themselves for the building up of the Kingdom of God in America. May they bolster your hope and inspire you to do all you can to contribute to the uplifting of the Church.

## Service in Action



Young people sharing their gifts

150 years ago our first Little Sister missionaries arrived in the United States. Little did they know, that 115 years later a new group of Little Sister missionaries would arrive in Gallup, NM, to assist the underserved elderly poor of Navajoland at Villa Guadalupe.

The town of Gallup was founded in 1881. It received its name from David L. Gallup, the paymaster for the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad. At that time settlers were arriving from the east, and began to coexist with the native peoples in the area. Today, Gallup, the “Indian Capital of the World,” is home to people from many local tribes, including Navajo, Hopi, and Zuni, as well as people from many other cultures.

Gallup’s cultural uniqueness and geography draw a variety of people to serve at Villa Guadalupe. Through the years, numerous groups and individuals have come on mission trips from near and far to serve our Residents. Recently an adult mission group from Louisiana came to our Home. One of the couples, Carlene and Gary Gauthier, expressed their impressions: “I especially enjoyed praying with the Sisters and some of

the Residents in the beautiful chapel with its uniquely carved altar and podium, and the lovely stained glass windows reflecting the culture of the area.” They continued, “There was an ambiance of love and care that flowed throughout the Home that is not often found in such facilities. It was a joy to see and feel.”

Carlene continues, “Experiencing the mission trip as a couple was a blessing. My husband and I agreed that we could not have appreciated the experience simply through being told about it had only one of us gone. The trip was truly a shared experience that we will always cherish and remember together.”

Other recent student mission groups have brought entertainment, music, and assistance to our little family. These extra helping hands and hearts have contributed to the happiness and well-being of our Residents. The student missionaries played music during mealtime, helped serve the meals, or simply sat with the Residents and listened to their life stories. The simple presence of new faces and kind hearts uplift the spirits of the elderly.



Gary and Carlene from Louisiana

# Back to School

We all know that back to school can be a stressful time of year. Fear of the unknown can create anxiety in little ones. As the new school year approaches, our Residents have been encouraging and inspiring the young children of our staff for the upcoming school year. Many Residents share their memories of school fun, and the importance of learning.

Several Residents recalled playing kick ball and softball, while others shared their memories about the demands of middle school and beyond. Some Residents at Villa Guadalupe recall elementary school as their only opportunity for education, since the demands of the family were a more pressing priority in their time. These Residents shared valuable lessons, learned outside the four walls of the classroom.

As our children listened carefully to the Residents share what they remember most about their school years, they grew more relaxed, laughing with the elderly. They left the Home feeling more at ease about the challenges that lie ahead.

One Resident wrote a poem to recall her school days:

“School Days, School Days,  
 Good Old Golden Rule Days”  
 Was a song we used to sing this time of the year.  
 Teachers taught honesty and fairness  
 along with science and math.  
 The main thing, was the exciting things  
 we were going to learn;  
 Games at recess,  
 Books to read,  
 New friends to meet  
 And more adventures.  
 I’m so proud our country  
 Has schools that all ages can attend.



Resident Clara Orr teaching the art of crocheting



Fr. Hugh O'Neill praying with the children of our staff



Resident Samantha Daniels teaching the art of rosary making



Resident Ben Chischilly explaining the value of education



Resident Stella Ashley sharing stories of her culture

## Mother's Message



Dear Friends,

We share with you all our sentiments of gratitude and appreciation for the graces and blessings that we have received during the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of our first Little Sisters in the United States of America. We are reminded of the incredible courage of our first pioneering Little Sisters who left their countries to embark on a journey to the unknown, bringing the mission of the Little Sisters to American soil.

It brings to mind the words of the Prophet Isaiah, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (52:7).

We treasured the tremendous faith and intuition of our superiors in expanding the work of St. Jeanne Jugan to the furthest corners of the world. We admired the willingness and selfless commitment of our Little Sisters who crossed the vast and dangerous ocean, not knowing what awaited them, without knowledge of the language or culture.

But to whom do we owe all of this? We owe it all to our mother Jeanne Jugan, who, while adhering perfectly to the love of Christ who gave up his life, followed his example and turned towards the most deprived and defenseless of people, the aged poor.

At the heart of our worldwide family of Little Sisters of the Poor, from its very beginnings up to the present day, are to be found our dedicated friends, benefactors, helpers, volunteers, without whom we could never manage. We are indebted to you for your great generosity in the many ways in which you have touched the lives of those for whom we care. We believed in you, and you believed in God in helping the Little Sisters to care for the aged poor. Thank you, and may God, from whom all blessings come, remain with each and every one of you!

We would also like to mention that on August 31, 2019, our Jeanne Jugan Coordinator and Associates organized a small parade in downtown Gallup to illustrate the work of St. Jeanne Jugan. We were able to give thanks for the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Little Sisters in America and for the foundation at Villa Guadalupe, 35 years ago, here in the heart of Navajoland. Dear friends, if you would like to follow up on this great event, please visit our blog.

With the assurance of our continued prayers for you and all your families!

God bless,

*Mother Sarah Maria, L.S.P.*

## Putting out into the deep

This year we recall the audacity of the first seven Little Sisters who left homeland and all that was familiar to embark on a new adventure. Two of them, from Ireland, knew English; four were from France and one, from Germany. None had been to America before and they had no idea what to expect. After several rough weeks at sea on a ship that would sink two years later, they arrived in New York to serve the elderly poor — thus the beginning of the Little Sisters in America!

Today, the means of travel have changed much, but the availability of the Little Sisters to go wherever they are needed remains the same. Our vow of Obedience — one of four vows that we take, namely, chastity, poverty, obedience and hospitality — supports us in these moments of transition in our lives. Like the twelve Apostles, we are sent out on mission and we are ready to go where the Spirit bids us.

We are very grateful to Sr. Mary William and Sr.

Jessica for their service to the Residents, all done in the spirit of Saint Jeanne Jugan. Sr. Mary William will begin a new mission at our Home in Denver, CO, and Sr. Jessica will be embarking on the next stage of her formation as a Little Sister of the Poor in France. Both Sisters have given themselves generously to the elderly here at Villa Guadalupe.

We welcome two new Sisters to Gallup, Sr. Stephen, from our Home in Chicago, and Sr. Rose Veronica, coming from our Home in Palatine. Both Sisters have already begun their mission here in Gallup and are happy to serve the Residents in any way they can.

We continue to pray that the Lord will inspire in the hearts of young people the desire to give themselves wholeheartedly, with a firm commitment to serve the Lord in the elderly poor as Little Sisters of the Poor. Please join us in praying for this intention, and in sharing our mission with others. If you are interested in learning more about our life, please visit our website: [littlesistersofthepoorgallup.org](http://littlesistersofthepoorgallup.org).



Mary, Nursing Assistant with Sr. Mary William



Left to Right: Sr. Stephen, Sr. Rose, and Sr. Jessica