



# **Canonization of Jeanne Jugan**

(in religion: Sister Mary of the Cross)

Foundress of the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor

(1792 - 1879)

(date) 2009 in Rome

## **Contents of Media Kit**

- Document 1 Important Dates in the Life of Jeanne Jugan
- Document 2 Biography of Jeanne Jugan
- Document 3 Miracle attributed to Jeanne Jugan
- Document 4 Jeanne Jugan: No Writings – Luminous Words
- Document 5 The Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor: Spirituality and Charism
- Document 6 The Little Sisters of the Poor Throughout the World
- Document 7 Association Jeanne Jugan (Lay Associates)
- Document 8 Bibliography on Jeanne Jugan



## DOCUMENT 1

# Important Dates in the Life of Jeanne Jugan

*Jeanne Jugan (1792 - 1879) – Sister Mary of the Cross*  
 Foundress of the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| October 25, 1792 | Birth of Jeanne in Cancale (Ille-et-Vilaine, France). Sixth child of Joseph Joucan and Marie Horel.  |
| April 1796       | Her father is lost at sea.   |
| 1810             | Jeanne works as a kitchen aide for the Viscountess de la Chouë in St. Coulomb, near Cancale.   |
| 1816             | A mission was preached in Cancale. Jeanne followed all the spiritual exercises. Jeanne definitively turns down a marriage proposal from a sailor of Cancale. She tells her mother, “God wants me for himself. He is keeping me for a work which is not known...”   |
| 1817             | Jeanne leaves Cancale for Saint Servan to work in Le Rosais Hospital as a nurse’s aide. Jeanne turns twenty-five. Around this time, she enters the Third Order of the Admirable Mother, founded in the 17 <sup>th</sup> century by Saint John Eudes.   |
| 1823             | Exhaustion forces her to leave Le Rosais Hospital. She is welcomed into the home of Miss Lecoq in Saint Servan, more as a friend than as a maid. Together the two women visit the many poor people in the town.  |
| June 27, 1835    | Death of Miss Lecoq. Jeanne works part time for some well-to-do families in the area.  |
| 1837-1838        | With one of her friends, Françoise Aubert, Jeanne rents an apartment on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor of a house of No. 2 rue du Centre, in Saint Servan.  |
| Winter 1839      | In agreement with her two companions, Françoise Aubert and Virginie Trédaniel, Jeanne takes in a blind and infirm elderly woman named Anne Chauvin. She gives up her own bed and goes up to the attic to sleep. A second person is taken in shortly afterwards. Virginie Trédaniel and a friend, Marie Jamet, assist Jeanne in her hospitaller work. This is the humble beginning of a great work. Jeanne is 47 years old. |
| December 1840    | Madeleine Bourges, a sick young working girl, comes to be cared for by Jeanne. Having recovered, she joins Virginie and Marie.   |
| October 1, 1841  | Jeanne and her companions, with their guests, leave the apartment on the Rue du Centre for more spacious accommodations in a ground-floor flat in the Rue de La Fontaine.  |
| 1841-1842        | With the support and advice of the Brothers of St. John of God, Jeanne starts Collecting   |
| February 2, 1842 | Requests for admission from the elderly constantly increase. Acquisition of the former convent of the Daughters of the Cross in Saint Servan.  |



- May 29, 1842 Jeanne is elected Superior of the small association, in the presence of Father Le Pailleur, assistant priest of the parish of Saint Servan. A hospitaller Rule is drawn up. The name “Servants of the Poor” is adopted.
- October 1842 Marie Jamet leaves home to join the small association, bringing up to four the number of the “Servants of the Poor.”
- November 21, 1842 Jeanne and Marie make a private vow of obedience for one year.
- December 8, 1842 Virginie and Madeleine make it in their turn.
- December 8, 1843 Jeanne is re-elected as Superior.
- December 23, 1843 Father Le Pailleur, on his own authority, annuls the election and names Marie Jamet to replace her.
- February 4, 1844 The “Servants of the Poor” change their name to “Sisters of the Poor.”
- December 11, 1845 Jeanne is awarded the Montyon Prize by the French Academy for her work.
- 1846 Jeanne collects in Rennes, where a house is founded.  
Jeanne goes to Dinan, where she opens a third house. Visit from Charles Dickens.  
Jeanne Jugan is commended several times by the press in Rennes and Dinan.
- 1847 Upon the request of Mr. Dupont, “the holy man of Tours,” the Sisters arrive in Tours.  
First General Chapter of the “Sisters of the Poor” in Saint Servan. Jeanne is not invited.
- September 13, 1848 An article by Louis Veuillot on Jeanne’s work appears on the front page of *L’Univers*.
- 1848 The Motherhouse and novitiate are established in Tours.
- February 10, 1849 Jeanne arrives in Tours. Around that time, the popular name “Little Sisters of the Poor” is definitively adopted.
- April 3, 1850 Jeanne founds a house in Angers. The Little Sisters number over one hundred, including novices and postulants.
- May 29, 1852 Diocesan approbation of the Institute by Bishop Brossais Saint-Marc, Bishop of Rennes.
- 1852 The Motherhouse and novitiate return to Rennes. Jeanne is also recalled to Rennes. She is to cease all activity and break all sustained contact with benefactors. It is the beginning of her long retirement...
- 1856 On January 30, the estate of La Tour in the village of Saint Pern (Ille-et-Vilaine) is acquired. The Motherhouse and novitiate move there in early April. Jeanne goes as well. Relegated to living among the novices and postulants, she shares their life until her death.
- March 1, 1879 Pope Leo XIII approves the Constitutions of the Congregation, now numbering 2,400 Little Sisters, for a period of seven years.
- August 29, 1879 Death of Jeanne Jugan, aged 86, at La Tour Saint Joseph.



## DOCUMENT 2

# Biography of Jeanne Jugan

**Born in Cancale**, in Ille-et-Vilaine (France), in the village of Petites Croix, on **October 25, 1792**, Jeanne Jugan was **baptized on the same day** in the Church of Saint-Méen at during the upheaval of the French Revolution. Her father, a sailor like most men from that area, was away in Newfoundland for the fishing season. Four years later, he was lost at sea. Her mother remained alone to raise her four children (four others died as infants). At the age of sixteen, Jeanne began helping her family by working as a kitchen maid in a manor near Cancale.

She stayed there **until the age of twenty-five, and then left home for Saint Servan** where she worked as a nurse's aide at Le Rosais Hospital. When a young sailor asked her to marry him, she replied, "God wants me for himself. He is keeping me for a work which is not yet founded."

Jeanne Jugan desired only to serve God and the poor – especially the weakest and the most destitute – faithful to the ideal of configuration to Jesus through Mary, that **Saint John Eudes** taught to the members of the **Third Order of the Admirable Mother**, an association that she joined around the age of twenty-five.

**One winter's evening in 1839**, she opened her door and her heart to a blind, semi-paralyzed elderly woman who had suddenly found herself alone. **Jeanne gave up her own bed...** This act committed her forever. A second elderly woman followed, then a third... In 1843, they numbered forty around Jeanne and her three young companions. These latter had chosen her as superior of their small association which would gradually develop into a true religious life.

However, Jeanne Jugan would soon be ousted from this responsibility and reduced to the simple activity of the collecting, a hard task which she herself had begun. She had been encouraged in this act of charity and sharing by the **Brothers of Saint John of God**. Jeanne replied to injustice with **silence, gentleness and abandonment**. Her **faith and love** helped her to discern God's will for her and for her religious family.

As the years passed by, Jeanne Jugan was more and more shrouded in obscurity. The beginnings of her work were falsified. She was **kept in the background for twenty-seven years** (1852 to 1879), four at the Home in Rennes, and the last twenty-three years of her long life at La Tour Saint Joseph, the Motherhouse of the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor since 1856.

**At the time of her death, on August 29, 1879**, she was 86. Few Little Sisters knew that she was the foundress, but her influence on the young postulants and novices, whose life she shared during those twenty-seven years, proved to be decisive. During this prolonged contact, the initial charism was passed on, the spirit of the beginnings was transmitted.

Little by little, light was shed on the situation... In 1902, the truth began to emerge: Jeanne Jugan, Sister Mary of the Cross, who died in oblivion a quarter of a century earlier, was not the third Little Sister, as everyone had been led to believe, but the first, the Foundress!



## DOCUMENT 3

# Miracle of Jeanne Jugan

### **CURE OF DOCTOR EDWARD ERWIN GATZ OF AN ADENOCARCINOMA OF THE ESOPHAGUS**

Doctor Edward GATZ is a retired anesthesiologist who lives in Omaha, Nebraska, in the United States of America. He was born on April 19, 1937 in O'Neil, Nebraska.

At the age of 51, he began to feel dyspeptic (digestive) problems with a loss of weight and the appearance of growths on his hands. The diagnosis was interpreted as a paraneoplastic syndrome due to an occult cancer.

An endoscopy on January 9, 1989 revealed the presence of a cancerous lesion in the lower part of the esophagus. The patient was hospitalized at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and had surgery on January 18, 1989 for a partial esophago-gastrectomy. The biopsy showed a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree adenocarcinoma, and the examination specified that there was an aneuploid tumor. Doctor Gatz was advised to have chemotherapy, but he refused. He also refused to have radiotherapy.

On the day that Doctor Gatz' cancer was diagnosed (January 9, 1989), his wife spoke with a priest, Father Richard D. McGloin, S.J., to tell him about her husband's illness and to seek some consolation. This priest encouraged Mrs. Gatz to pray, and gave her the novena prayer to Blessed Jeanne Jugan, whom he knew through the Little Sisters of the Poor, since he had formerly been their chaplain at their Home in Milwaukee, and whom he held in veneration. Along with him, Mrs. Gatz began to pray to Jeanne Jugan every day, even after the control on March 8.

In fact, the first endoscopic control took place on March 8, 1989. The biopsy showed the presence of chronic gastritis, but no signs of recurrence of the tumor.

All the doctors therefore agreed that Doctor Gatz would not live more than "six to thirteen months." Yet he is still alive and well today at the age of 71.

The promulgation of the decree of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, authorized by Pope Benedict XVI, acknowledging the miracle through the intercession of Blessed Jeanne Jugan (Sister Mary of the Cross) was signed on December 6, 2008.



## DOCUMENT 4

### Jeanne Jugan: No Writings – Luminous Words!

Love God very much! He is so good! All for him.  
Do everything through love.

Refuse God nothing. Accustom yourselves to doing everything for him.

In our troubles, we must always say, “Blessed be God, thank you my God, or glory to God!”

When you grow old, you will no longer see anything.... As for me, I know longer see anything but God!



My Jesus, I have only you.

We have been grafted onto the cross.

Jesus is waiting for you in the chapel. Go and find him when your strength and patience are giving out, when you feel lonely and helpless. Say to him: “You know well what is happening, my dear Jesus. I have only you. Come to my aid...” And then go your way. And don’t worry about knowing how you are going to manage. It is enough to have told our good Lord. He has an excellent memory!

My children,  
you love Our Lady.  
She will be your Mother!

Let us say a Hail Mary together!

The Hail Mary  
will take us to heaven!

All good comes to us  
from the Church.

The Holy Father before all !



Little, be very little before God... hidden by humility in all God wants from you, as being only the instruments of his work

Be a beautiful rose of charity!  
Never forget that the Poor are Our Lord.  
When you will be with the poor, give yourselves wholeheartedly.  
When you will be in the Homes, be kind to the elderly, especially to the infirm... Love them very much!  
Look upon the poor with compassion, and Jesus will look upon you with kindness.  
You must always be cheerful. Our elderly do not like long faces.  
Knock, knock at the gate of heaven for souls.

It is so beautiful to be poor, to have nothing, to depend on God for everything!  
Give, give us the house. If God fills it, he will not abandon it.  
If God is with us, it will be accomplished...  
God has blessed me because I have always greatly thanked his Providence.  
Be very grateful for your vocation.  
God has given you a great grace in calling you to serve the poor.  
Refuse God nothing. Nothing is small in the religious life... You must do everything through love.

Last words: "Eternal Father, open your gates today to the most miserable of your children, but one who greatly longs to see you. O Mary, my dear Mother, come to me. You know that I love you and that I long to see you."



## DOCUMENT 5

# The Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor: Spirituality, Charism

### ✓ Spirituality

“I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the learned and the clever, and have revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father, for such was your good pleasure.”

To the eagerness for progress and liberty of her contemporaries, Jeanne Jugan brought the transparent witness of the revelation of God's mysteries to “little ones.”

Jeanne Jugan always lived her faith with the simplicity of the “little ones.” She advanced resolutely, looking on events and persons with a living faith which arouses hope and works through charity.

Twenty years of belonging to the Third Order of the Admirable Mother had already simplified her soul through the contemplation of the mystery of Jesus and Mary. The spirituality of Saint John Eudes had thus prepared her to penetrate the supernatural richness of hospitality for the accomplishment of her own hospitaller mission with simplicity, humility and union with God in prayer and charity.

Divine Providence gave a very powerful support to the work of Jeanne Jugan in the tradition of charity of the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God. This latter communicated its living spirit of hospitaller charity to her work, without hindering the development of this work according to its own charism and specific character. To the Order of Saint John of God, Jeanne Jugan also owes the “vow of hospitality,” by which the service of the Aged poor is raised to the dignity of an act of the virtue of religion.

These two great spiritual currents, meeting and merging — by God's design — in the soul of Jeanne Jugan, created within it a capacity for universal openness. The very rapid expansion of her work showed her that God was destining her to a vocation of charity which could only be attained by an indefectible attachment to the Church. Her earthly mission ended when she saw her small bark firmly attached to that of the Church.

### ✓ Charism

The spirit of the Congregation is the evangelical spirit expressed by Jesus in the Beatitudes. Jeanne Jugan, faithful to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, radiated particularly in her life gentleness and humility of heart, which enabled her to surrender herself, in simplicity, to the joy of hospitality.

That is what our name *Little Sister of the Poor* denotes.

For Jeanne Jugan, *the Poor* defined her vocation. God had waited for her in *the Poor*; she had met and found him in *the Poor*.

To be a *Little Sister of the Poor*, reminds the Little Sisters of those to whom they have vowed their lives, and of their desire to go always to the poorest, to create a flow of apostolic collaboration and fraternal charity, in order to assist Christ in the Poor. For each one personally, it is an invitation to share in the beatitude of spiritual poverty, leading us towards that radical dispossession which surrenders a soul to God.



The grace of hospitality towards the Aged poor, Jeanne Jugan's charism as Foundress, was welcomed by her with simplicity of soul. Pursuing her particular charism, she found in this vow a privileged means of expressing the gift of ourselves to our apostolate of charity. Consecrated hospitality is, in the midst of the world, a witness to the mercy of the Father and the compassionate love of the Heart of Jesus.

*(Excerpts from the Constitutions of the Little Sisters of the Poor)*

**Today**, the Little Sisters of the Poor continue the initial gesture of Jeanne Jugan:

- They welcome, comfort, care for and accompany, until the end of their lives, the elderly whom God has placed on their path. They accomplish this with great respect for life, their family, their convictions, in collaboration with paid personnel, the members of the Association Jeanne Jugan and volunteers.
- They do this in response to the call of Christ who consecrates them in his love through the vows of chastity, poverty, obedience and hospitality for the joyful service of the elderly, within international fraternal communities.
- The commitment of the Little Sisters is founded on and nourished by the spirit of the beatitudes. They strive to live it in humility, simplicity, unconditional confidence in the goodness of God, which is expressed – like in the beginnings – by fidelity to the collecting, since God has confided each one to the love of all.
- The Congregation, which is missionary, sees in the expansion of its apostolate to the ends of the earth a grace of renewal and a source of vitality.



## DOCUMENT 6

### The Little Sisters of the Poor Throughout the World

- ✓ Today, the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor numbers:
  - 2,710 Little Sisters, including 60 novices
  - 202 Homes welcoming 13,232 Résidents
  - 2,065 Members of the Association Jeanne Jugan (Lay associates).
  
- ✓ Presence on the five continents:
  - Africa: Algeria - Benin - Republic of the Congo - Kenya - Nigeria
  - North America: USA – Canada  
South America: Argentina - Chile - Colombia - Peru
  - Asia            Hong Kong - India - Malaysia - Philippines -  
                     South Korea - Sri Lanka - Taiwan - Turkey
  - Europe        Belgium - England - France - Ireland - Italy - Malta - Portugal-  
                     Scotland - Spain
  - Oceania       Australia - New Caledonia - New Zealand -  
                     Western Samoa
  
- ✓ Foundations during the last twenty years:
 

Tibu (Colombia) 1989	Kwangju (South Korea) 2000
Suwon (South Korea) 1990	Cartago (Colombia) 2003
Chonju (South Korea) 1997	Jabalpur (India) 2004
Seoul (South Korea) 1997	Manila (Philippines) 2004
Cotonou (Benin) 1999	Tacna (Peru) 2006
Osorno (Chile) 1999	Bolinao (Philippines) 2007



## DOCUMENT 7

# Association Jeanne Jugan

(LAY ASSOCIATES)

The sharing of the charism of religious Institutes with the laity opens today “*a new chapter, rich in hope, in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity,*” wrote Pope John Paul II in 1996.

Approved by the Church on September 5, 1998, the Association Jeanne Jugan follows this path of newness and hope.

If collaboration between the Little Sisters and the laity has existed from the origins of the Congregation, its realization in this form marks a new step in their relations.

The Association offers to lay men and women the opportunity of sharing in the spiritual riches of the Little Sisters of the Poor, of participating in their apostolic mission of hospitality to the aged poor, and of helping to spread the charism of Jeanne Jugan in the milieus where they live and work.

Jeanne Jugan envisioned hospitality as a humble fraternal service uniting in one family the Little Sisters, the elderly and lay collaborators who wish to serve Jesus Christ in the person of their elderly brothers and sisters.

*The Association is a contemporary response to this prophetic vision of Jeanne Jugan.*

### ➤ **Spirit**

The members of the Association share in the spirit and charism of Jeanne Jugan, which is that of the Beatitudes: a spirit of gentleness and humility, lived in joyful and selfless service to the elderly, in whom they recognize the person of Jesus Christ.

Animated by this same spirit, they wish to contribute to the Little Sisters’ apostolate of welcoming the elderly and making them happy, as in a large family, of accompanying them spiritually while respecting their individual beliefs, and of caring for them until the end of their lives.

Each member of the Association is called to develop personally the spiritual attitudes which Jeanne Jugan lived:

- ◆ lively faith and confidence in Divine Providence;
- ◆ a personal love for Christ, recognized in the aged poor;
- ◆ self-forgetfulness, joy and a spirit of praise.



➤ **Mission**

Association Jeanne Jugan members participate in the apostolic mission confided by the Church to the Little Sisters of the Poor, that of hospitality to the aged poor. Each member offers the type of commitment and collaboration to which he/she feels called, according to his/her abilities, interests and family and professional obligations.

➤ **Membership**

The Association Jeanne Jugan is open to Catholic men and women of at least eighteen years of age who wish to give greater vitality to their Christian faith and to participate in the apostolic mission of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Following an introductory period and a time of initial formation, membership in the Association is sealed by an annual promise.



## DOCUMENT 8

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