

October 25, 2022

Farewell Mass – Little Sisters of the Poor in Denver  
Mother Provincial Julie's Thoughts

Good evening Everyone. My name is Sister Julie and I am the Provincial Superior for the Chicago Province here in the United States, of which Mullen Home here in Denver is a part.

First of all, I need to thank your Eminence Cardinal Stafford, Archbishop Aquila, all of our Priest friends and all of the family of Mullen Home who is here tonight; our employees; Resident's family members; lay associates; benefactors; our religious sisters and brothers in Christ. All of you make up part of the family of Mullen Home here in Denver, and we are very grateful that you're here with us tonight to offer to the Lord these past 105 years and to confide to Him the future – as Archbishop said, "Our Sisters came here in Faith and we leave here in Faith", and we trust that God does have a plan for Mullen Home far into the future.

We chose the Mass of Jeanne Jugan on this evening as a way of recalling the spirit in which Mullen Home was established and has lived for the past 105 years. If we had taken the readings of the day, though, we would have had the Gospel reading of the mustard seed and the leaven in the dough. I would like to draw from the reflection I read this morning on that Gospel passage as I speak with you tonight, because it fits very well with the experience here.

The idea of leaven in dough brings to mind a domestic kitchen setting. The Kingdom of God is everywhere, even in the kitchen! As daughters of Jeanne Jugan we can say, "Yes, the Kingdom of God is everywhere. We see it coming to life in the 32 countries in which we serve, in the simplest moments spent with our elderly Residents, as well as in the time we spend with them as they approach their entry into the kingdom of heaven." J.K. and Catherine Mullen knew this truth, too, as was evidenced by the broad scope of their philanthropic gifts. Tonight, even as we say farewell, we know that each of us carry this promise of the Kingdom in us and are called to bring it to life wherever we go.

The woman with the leaven is performing a routine household task. Does this mean the Kingdom is intertwined with our ordinary work? We Little Sisters and our collaborators can say, "Absolutely. That's why in our homes, no matter what the task, from washing the dishes to giving direct care, to paying the bills, we know that it's important. It all makes a difference in the lives of the elderly we

serve and reminds them of their dignity as sons and daughters of God.” J.K. Mullen started in Denver breaking up ice in ditches, but even when he was at the top executive level of his business, he was happy to roll up his sleeves and help in one of his mills when they were short of mill hands. And he happily wrote back to Catherine: “I have bought a pair of old overalls and am working my old trade again but don’t know what they will pay me yet.”

How is yeast a fitting symbol of the kingdom of God? Yeast is alive, yet yeast grows, spreading through all the dough. Although yeast works invisibly, its effects are dramatic. Yeast also works slowly. It demands patience and care. Our religious family of Little Sisters of the Poor, outside of the scope of our network of friends, is generally “under the radar” of the eyes of the world. And that’s ok. Jeanne Jugan would put herself forward only for the good of the elderly, not to make herself known. We Little Sisters are called to witness to the mercy of the Father and the compassionate love of the Heart of Jesus in simple, everyday life. J.K. Mullen certainly didn’t live his life “under the radar” but he often supported organizations which did, and, well in advance of Pope Francis’ advice to touch the flesh of Christ in person to person contact with the poor, J.K. Mullen did his share of direct giving in his visits to homes in the poor neighborhoods of Denver.

The Kingdom of God is indeed in our midst, and we have seen it day in and day out in the 105 years of our presence here. A special word of remembrance goes out to our Residents, whose presence is so missed in the halls of Mullen Home. We are grateful to Archbishop Aquila and to his team at the Archdiocese of Denver who have worked, and are working with us, during this time of transition. We are grateful to all of our Priest friends, all of the Pastors and faithful of the Archdiocese who have been so generous in their support of us over the years. We are grateful to our lay Associates, to our Resident’s family members, our Volunteers, all those who have been a part of the life of Mullen Home. We can’t express in words our gratitude for all that you have done, and as we promise you our prayers, we ask for yours so that each of us, no matter where we are, may be signs and witnesses of the Kingdom. Thank you.