

The inspiring life
of a Saint

Sœur Jeanne-Antida Thouret

The many challenges faced
by St. Joan Antida Thouret
on her journey

more at suoredellacarita.org
and scsja.org



photo: her birthplace

Early years

She was the fifth child of a family of eight. When she was just 15 years old, her mother died leaving her with the responsibility of maintaining the household.

Horrors of the French Revolution

- At 22 she left her home and joined the Daughters of Charity, but when the French Revolution was at its height, all religious congregations were banned and she was forced to leave them.
- It is said that during the Revolution she walked the streets of Paris carrying the vestments needed for the secret celebration of Mass, hidden in a backpack.
- During these dangerous times she also taught children, helped priests who were forced to hide, and gathered Christians in prayer.



Exile

- She fled France and escaped to Switzerland to join a different religious itinerant community where she cared for the sick. With them she traveled across Switzerland and Germany, in frightful conditions (two years of wandering).
- She was often opposed or prevented from caring for the sick, and many were dying for lack of basic care. So she decided to leave this community because she could not “accept the stupidity of those persons who do not want to understand that the service of God and his love are inseparable from those of the neighbor....”
- When she decided to return to France she did so on foot, alone, without a passport, and through unknown places at the risk of her own life.



Founding a congregation: new challenges

- After her return to France she opened a school, a dispensary, and a soup kitchen for the poor in Besançon. She had founded a new congregation.
- But When she sought approval of her Statutes by the Minister of Religious Affairs, she was accused of stealing the name of the Daughters of Charity in Paris. She had to defend herself, writing “Providence made use of me to form a society of good young women according to the Rule of St Vincent de Paul. We never claimed that we were taking for ourselves the name of Daughters of Charity.”



*photo: L'ospedale degli Incurabili di Napoli -
Wikimedia Commons/IlSistemone*

Battling the system

- In 1810 Joan Antida was called to Naples, where she and a group of sisters were faced with working in a very hierarchical social system where the wealthy never encountered the poor. She was in charge of the Hospital of the Incurables, the largest hospital in the city. The sisters often visited the poor and sick in their homes.



Struggling with Church hierarchy; heartache

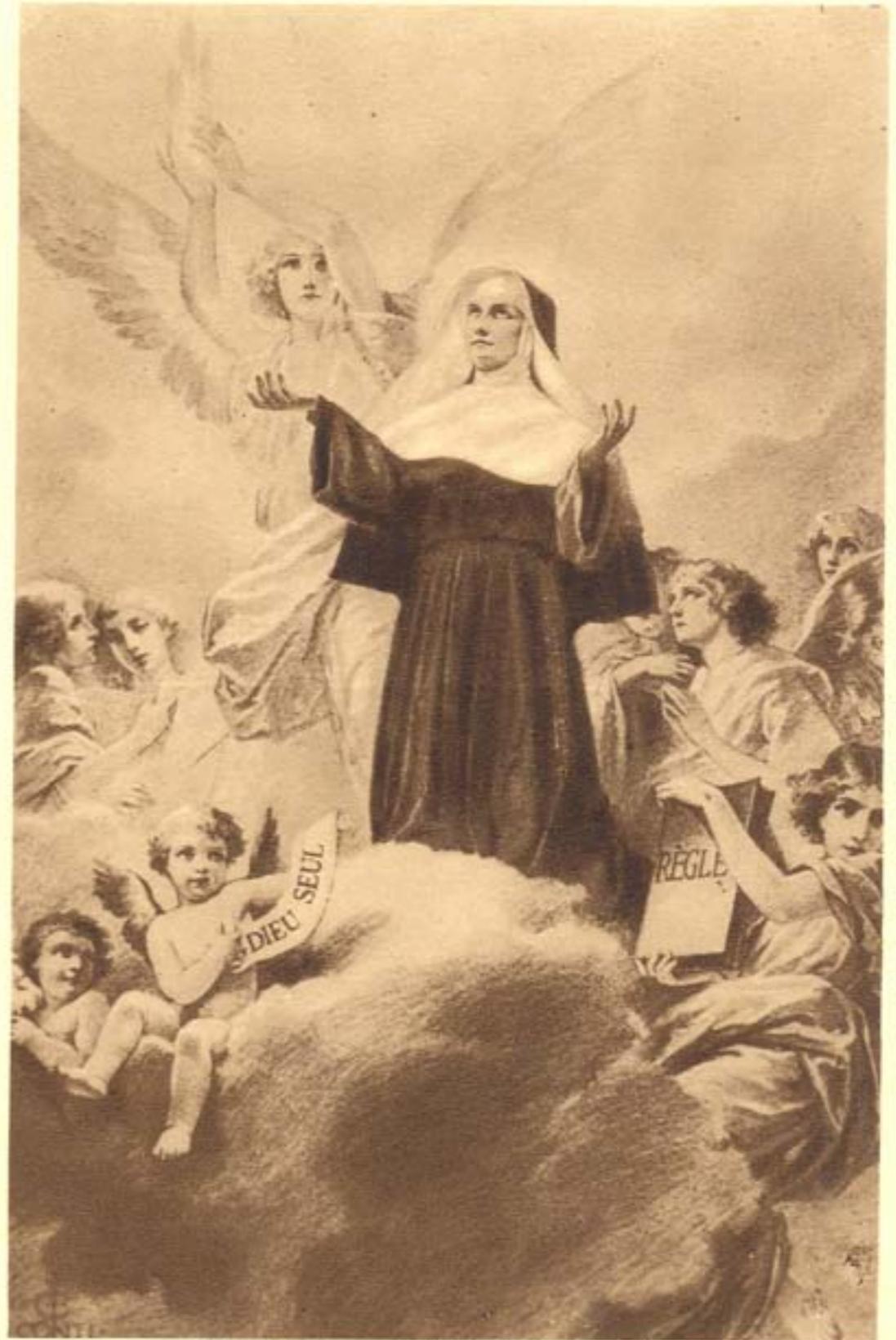
- When Pope Pius VII officially approved her order in 1819, there were more problems. The Archbishop of Besançon refused to accept a Vatican decision placing houses of the order under their local bishop, rather than under his authority. He refused to let Sr. Joan into the motherhouse in Besançon or to allow the French sisters to communicate with members of the order in other countries. This caused her personal suffering.



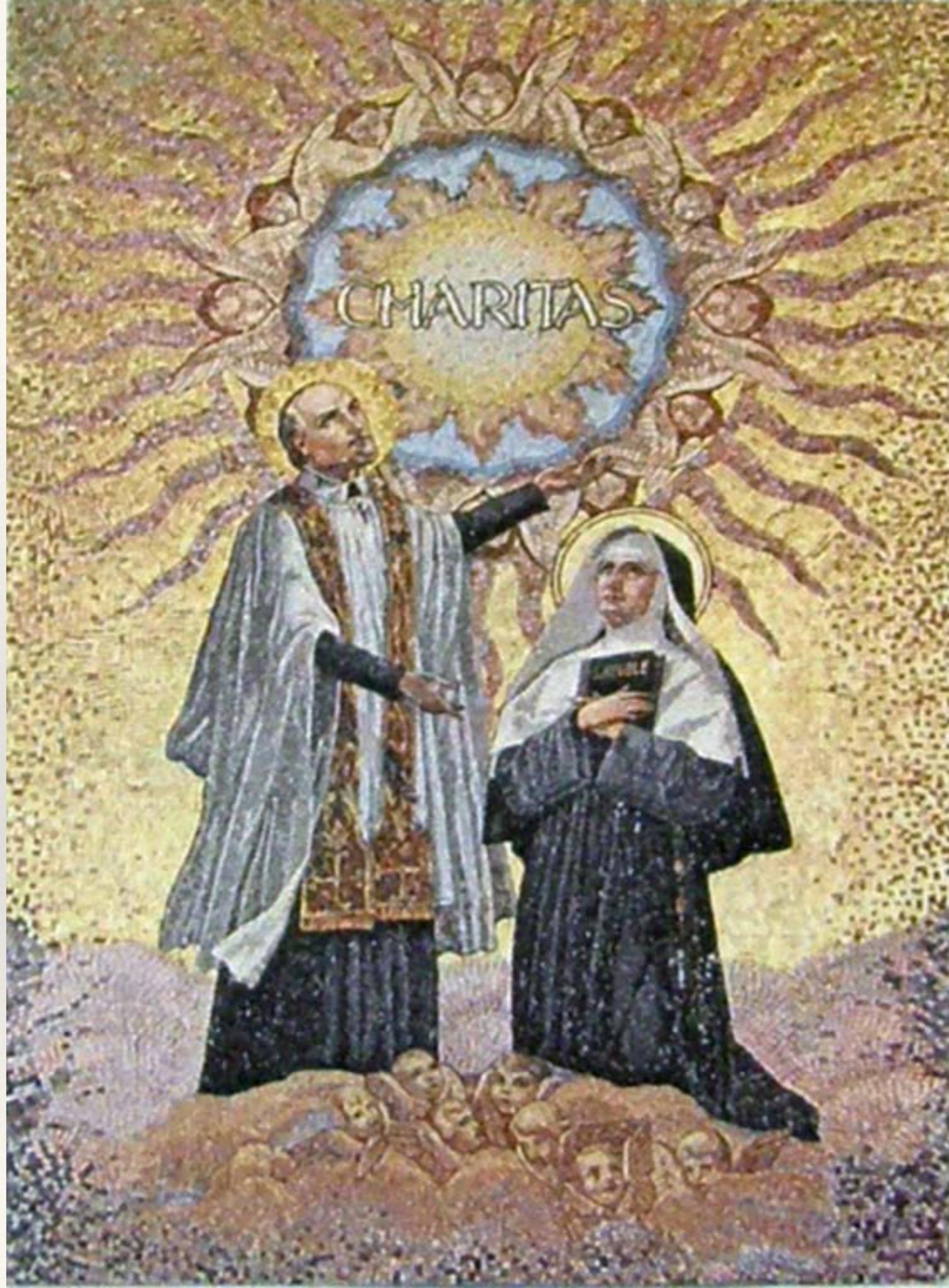
St. Joan Antida Thouret

Today

- Today a statue of this daughter of St. Vincent stands in St. Peter's Basilica, along with other founders. Her sisters are spread throughout the world in twenty-seven different countries.
- In 1932, the sisters came to the United States to help Italian immigrants in Milwaukee, where they still operate St. Joan Antida High School.
- May 23, the day St. Joan was beatified, is celebrated as her feast day; but it is commemorated by some on August 24, the day she died in 1826.



Sainte Jeanne-Antide dans la gloire







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