**Sister Evelyn Bergamini**

Sister Evelyn Bergamini, SP
1910-1997

Please remember Sister Evelyn, sister of Sister Rita Bergamini, Archivist Assistant, in your prayers. She was a great friend and benefactor of the Archives, and we will miss her.
DID YOU KNOW THAT...

...besides being skilled in carpentry, administration, and finance, Mother Joseph also made fine wax figurines?

Among the most beautiful examples of her work are the wax sculptures of the Infant Jesus. These delicate, life-like figures were an integral part of the sisters’ Christmas celebrations, forming the centerpiece of the Nativity creche. The Archives has several of Mother Joseph’s “wax babies” as well as some made by other Sisters of Providence.

Also in the Archives is Mother Joseph’s notebook with her “recipe” for the figures: “1 pound wax, 1½ pounds white of whale, ½ spoon of almond oil per pound, a little Flake White to whiten the wax a little, a little vermilion enclosed in a piece of muslin. (Add until you find the color good.)... [After molding] let it stand for about ten minutes; then take out your Child Jesus and wipe it with find muslin. Scrape it with a knife and wash it with warm soapy water. When it is dry, powder it with Flake White mixed with a little carmine. Use more carmine for the cheeks; equal amounts of Flake White and carmine for the mouth. Flake White, carmine and vermilion for the eyebrows; and the same color for the hair. Before painting the hair, place a little beef bile on the wax. Take a little ivory-black and more yellow ochre. Put a little lead sugar in the paint to make it dry.”

The recipe mentions painted hair, but most of the figurines have real hair, snipped from the curly blond locks of children at Providence Academy, Vancouver, Washington.

Mother Joseph began by making candles at the Mother House. In March 1848, she was assigned to assist with the molding of wax infants, which were sold to support the sisters’ ministries in Montreal. Mother Joseph continued to make wax infants throughout her life. Her creations became very popular and were requested by churches and families throughout the Pacific Northwest. Her molds, wax samples, and tools—as well as one of the infants—can be seen in the historical exhibits at the System Office. Other infants are still used by the sisters and in the institutions at Christmas.

In 1894, a year before her death at age 28, Sister Claire of Jesus wrote to her mother from Vancouver: “Our good Mother Joseph is making the most beautiful wax Infant Jesus. When she has them finished, she brings them to my bedside for me to see. They are really lovely. I wish the children could see one. And at her age, seventy-four, she embroiders the little dresses for them. The finest kind of work. It is really wonderful.”

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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