

**St. Jeanne (Jane) Antide Thouret
(France/Italy) 1765-1826**

*Cared for the sick, wounded and poor
during the chaos of the French Revolution.*

*Founded congregation of the
Sisters of Charity of St. Jeanne Antide (SCSJA).*

*In 1810 placed in charge of the Hospital of the Incurables,
the largest hospital in Naples.*

The sisters often visited poor and sick in their homes.



St. Jeanne Antide Thouret.

<https://daughters-of-charity.com/feast-of-st-jeanne-antide-thouret/>

St. Jeanne (Jane/Joan) Antide Thouret was born on November 27, 1765, in the little village of Sancey-le-Long, Doubs, in eastern France near the Swiss border to a poor farming family. She was the fourth child and the first daughter born to her parents. Her mother died when she was 16 years old. She helped raise her seven siblings and assumed the management of the household.

When she was 22 years old, she joined the Daughters of Charity in Paris in 1787 and worked caring for the sick in various hospitals. However 6 years later, in 1793, when the French Revolution was at its height, all religious congregations were banned. She refused the government's order to return to secular life, and when she tried to escape the authorities, she was badly beaten.¹ She was forced to leave and returned home and cared for the sick, wounded and the poor --- all of which grew numerous during the chaos of the French Revolution. She taught children and opened a small school for girls, helped hide priests and gathered Christians in prayer.

In 1795 she joined the Solitaires, an itinerant religious community established by Father Antoine-Sylvestre Receveur.

They traveled across Switzerland and parts of the Kingdom of Bavaria (Germany) caring for the sick. In 1797 she left this community, now in Wiesent, and alone, without money, papers or knowing German, traveled to Switzerland.

In 1799 she returned to Besancon and opened a school, dispensary and soup kitchen for the poor in the Diocese of Besancon. There she founded a new congregation, the Sisters of Charity of St. Jeanne Antide (SCSJA). The challenges in establishing and maintaining the community are described below from the Rome, Italy, website of the Sisters of Saint Jeanne Antide Thouret. In addition to the three vows that all religious take, poverty, chastity and obedience, SCSJA also take a fourth vow of Service to the Poor.

In 1810 she was called to Naples where she was in charge of the Hospital of the Incurable, the largest hospital in the city. The sisters often visited poor and sick in their homes. She died from a cerebral hemorrhage on the evening of August 24, 1826, in Naples, Italy. She is buried at the Chiesa di Santa Maria Regina Coeli in Naples, Italy.

St. Jeanne Antide Thouret was declared venerable with the decree of heroic virtue promulgated on July 9, 1922, beatified on May 23, 1926, which is celebrated as her feast day,

and canonized on January 14, 1934, all by Pope Pius XI.² Today approximately 2,500 Sisters of Charity of St. Jeanne Antide serve in 27 different countries. (Memorial - May 23)³

"I'm a daughter of the Church, you be also with me"
(April 11, 1820 circular).

*"Remember to consider only Christ in the person of the poor.
Serve them always as you would serve Christ himself."*⁴

*When God calls, and is listened to, He gives all that is
necessary.*

From the Sisters of Charity of Saint Jeanne Antide Thouret
(Suore Della Carita di Santa Giovanna Antide Thouret), Via
santa Maria in Cosmedin, 5-ROMA, (0039) 06 57 17 081⁶
Email: communication@suoredellacarita.org:

1765 - The first Daughter - The Thourets had already three sons when Jeanne Antide is born the 27th November 1765 at Sancey, a village in Franche-Comte. She is baptized the same day and receives the name of her God-mother.

1781 Mother of Her Family When She is Sixteen - Her mother dies when she is sixteen years old and she becomes mother of her numerous family, dealing with an auntie who does not agree with the father's decision of entrusting this responsibility to his daughter. In the relative calm at the end of the Ancient Regime, when the surging ideas of the revolution were creeping already in the countryside. Jeanne Antide knows the hard work of the village people with the charge of a family. She succeeds in everything she does. But against the wishes of her family, who wanted a suitable man for her, she chooses to leave everything, with a departure she thinks it will be forever, to follow a mysterious call to serve Christ and the poor.



St. Jeanne-Antide-Stained glass of the church of Malbuisson (France).
<https://www.suoredellacarita.org/en/jeanne-antide-thouret-life/>



The hospital Laennec-service place of Jeanne-Antide in Paris. Source:

1787 Small Sister in Formation at Langres in the Region of Paris — 1787 marks the first beginning. She is 22 and a new life begins for her. She is not anymore the respected mistress of the house, but a humble little sister receiving everything from the community and those who are in charge. At Langres as in Paris, with the Daughters of Charity she learns to serve the sick poor as a spouse of Christ. The itinerary for the formation of the young religious seems to unfold without unexpected events. This is true if we do not consider the illness, the grief for her father's death, the revolution and its confusion, the disorder inside the convents, the religious persecution. Nonetheless, nothing makes Jeanne Antide stray from her project, not even, in 1793, the forced return to her village.

1793 Educator and Nurse in the Parish of Sancey — Since her return to Sancey, Jeanne Antide is urged to help the children for whom there was no school, the sick who lacked doctors, the Christians without priests and the priests who were hidden. After all, she makes a gift of her talents and competence. Loved by everybody, she has everything to succeed. However she still dreams of solitude, poverty, prayer! The project of living a religious life still dwells in her and makes her join the ideal of life presented by Father Receveur. Therefore she leaves for

Switzerland following the Solitaries who will be soon persecuted, hunted, transformed from migrants into fugitives traveling towards Germany.

1795 European Citizen — In this aimless flight with the Solitaries, among the many dangers of the journey, threatened by the Imperial army as well as the Austrian army, among poverties, epidemics, and daily problems inside the community Jeanne Antide loses neither her head nor her love for God and for the poor sick entrusted to her and for whom she gives herself completely; at Neustschadt, in Bavaria [Kingdom of Bavaria which after 1871 united with Kingdom of Saxony, and Prussia to form Germany], she sees her younger sister and many others die. She does everything with competence and wisdom yet, she cannot bear anymore not being able to express her love for the sick as she wishes: God is calling her once again somewhere else, but where?

1797 Along on the Way of Exile — A new interruption! In 1797, she leaves Wiesent near Ratisbona [Kingdom of Bavaria] where the Solitaries are established, alone, with no money, without papers, not knowing German, without a steering compass beside her abandonment and her trust in God. She reaches Einsiedeln, in Switzerland, and then closer to France, which she had promised to God not to see anymore. It is here that she receives from the Church the beautiful and difficult mission of going back to Besancon [France] to contribute in re-establishing the Diocese at human and Christian level, after the disasters of the Revolution.

1798 Prisoner Waiting for the Hour of God — At Landeron (Switzerland), busy educating children and taking care of a sick priest, Jeanne Antide had found again a calmer life. But she has to pack again and go where she did not choose. How to prepare herself for the uncertain and dangerous future that she could foresee? She does not have to search long. The Terror wakes up again. Having been in exile, Jeanne Antide must hide for almost a year at La Grange, a silent and prayerful prisoner in a tiny room offered by a friend at the risk of life.

1799 Foundress under Obedience — Finally she is in Besancon with no other certainty than the mission entrusted to her and her abandonment to Providence! When she opens the first school the 11th April 1799, the calm has not yet been re-established, Foundress under obedience of a Congregation that claims to belong to Saint Vincent de Paul from whom she draws the first elements of her Rule of Life. In ten years time, Jeanne Antide works, struggles, forms young sisters, takes care of the sick, establishes services, cooperates with the local authorities in taking charge of the poor and supports the Church. Recognized at a civil level by the Prefects, then by Napoleon himself, her foundation acquires a fame that expands to the neighbor countries, in Savoy, in Switzerland, and in Naples, the great city rich of its properties, of its history, still wounded by the passage of the French army.



The rue des Martelots, place of the first community. Source: Ibid



1810 A Woman with a Universal Love — Jeanne Antide accepts the Neapolitan adventure suggested by Madam Letizia, mother of Napoleon, with trust; she and her sisters prepare themselves as best as possible. A European citizen, in Naples, Jeanne Antide sows goodness, care, education, wonder for this new way of living among the world. But she is always at the mercy of adversities, poverty, jealousy. And her restlessness about the communities left in France, where a wind of division is blowing, grows. The beautiful trunk of the tree rooted in Besancon does not recognize her anymore. She is tried by the division, at the same time, in 1819, the Church recognizes and approves her Rule of Life, one of the first presenting an apostolic feminine religious life.

1823 Daughter of the Church — Will a trip to Paris to meet the authorities who refuse her, obtain a reconciliation among the two parties? It's a failure. Jeanne Antide keeps standing in the heart of the storm, with the constant pain of not having been able to rebuild the bonds with the communities in Franche-Comte opening them to the universal Church.

1825 A Christian at the Foot of the Cross — Passing through Savoy, at Saint-Paul en Chablais, Jeanne Antide re-takes the way to Naples. At each moment her prayer, nourished by a suffering lived with the Lord on the cross, overcomes the horizon of space and time and allows her to keep loving till death the rebel communities and to maintain the hope in spite of the definitive separation.

1826 Saint for the Church and the Poor — Entrusting everything to the One who called her, filled with his love which supported her many trials, Jeanne Antide, sick, dies in Naples, the 24th August 1826, for the grief of the whole Neapolitan people. Woman of transition, to whom everything seemed to succeed, Jeanne Antide won great struggles through her sufferings and the grace received, through her love for God and for the poor, love for the Church and her Congregation. The Church proclaimed her holiness the 14th January 1934.

Jeanne-Antide Thouret: Spiritual Profile by Father Luigi Mezzadri:⁵

God Alone - The Church - The Poor

Jeanne-Antide was a woman with a strong character. Since her youth she was accustomed to take up responsibility first at home and then in the choices of her life. As a novice and young sister, she never wavered from the fundamental orientation of her life and was never accommodating in her religious life. In the dramatic choices of the Revolution she had a strong sense of the Church; she faced openly the representatives of the Revolution in her hometown. While being in exile with the Solitaires of Fr. Receveur, she knew how to detach herself and to face a tough journey in a foreign country supported only by her faith and her determination.

Since the origin of her community she had to make difficult choices, from which she never intended to run away. Throughout her life she showed intelligence, broad vision, a strong sensitivity, but also a mature maternal sense. In other words, she was an upright and resolute woman. On this human foundation a sense of humility, surely not innate, was grafted. Her humility was the result of a constant asceticism and a fine sense of contemplation and solitude, which found the appropriate expression only in the service of the poor.

The Poles of Her Spirituality

The First pole is "God Alone," which implies a deep interior detachment from things, and a continued reference to God and His glory. Because of this basic foundation she commits her life in total consecration to the Lord: "*when God calls and is listened to, He gives all that is necessary*" (letter of February 23, 1813). In one of her letters of 1826 she concludes by saying that she "*would have crossed the seas, would go at the end of the world, if she believed that God wanted it for his glory.*"

In second place there is "the Church." Mother Thouret repeated: "*I'm a daughter of the Church, you be also with me,*" as she wrote in the circular of April 11, 1820; for her attachment to the Church she deserved to be called *Filia Petri*. The authority of the Pope was strongly opposed by the limited and myopic horizons of gallicanism and by the short-sighted Diocesan particularity. The third pole of her spirituality is constituted by "the poor;" she was a true daughter of St. Vincent, whom she considered as initiator, founder, father, patron Saint, model and protector of the Institute. Besides the many concepts which reflect St. Vincent's thoughts, she also acquired

the same tenderness for the poor, recommending respect, compassion, generosity, patience, charity.

There were many difficulties within the Institute especially in relation with Abbe Bacoffe, who claimed the role of superior. In the mentality of the time it was unacceptable for a female community to be led by a woman. Among other things, Abbe Bacoffe forbade her from having contacts with Archbishop Claude Lecoz (1802-1815), who despite the fact of being a constitutional Bishop, was the rightful pastor of the Church of Besancon and therefore the direct superior of the Sisters of Mother Thouret.

In 1810 the sisters were called to the Kingdom of Naples, by Madame Letizia, the mother of the emperor. During her stay in Italy sister Thouret asked for the Pontifical approval of the Constitutions, which she herself had composed and had been approved by the Archbishop of Besancon. The minor changes demanded by the Pontifical approval provoked in the new Archbishop Gabriel Courtois de Pressigny (1817-1823), a rather wayward bishop with feelings of gallicanism, a complete refusal. Indeed, he forbade the sisters of his diocese to receive the foundress who had visited France to prevent division of the Institute. The split was, however, inevitable. Mother Thouret returned to Naples where she lived painfully the last three years of her life. She died on August 24, 1826. She was beatified on May 23, 1926 and canonized on January 14, 1934. The two branches of the Institute were united in 1954.

Putting her own steps on the footsteps of St. Vincent led the saint to Christ. From here a series that has come down to use was born.”⁵

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Note: This biography is for all desiring to grow in holiness and follow His Holiness Pope Pius XI address to 2000 nurses assembled at Castel Gondolfo on August 27, 1935 for the II World Congress of Catholic Nurses (www.ciciams.org / www.nacn-usa.org): *to first and foremost bring the Christian supernatural, Christ to our patients, bring salvation to souls.* May it also help nursing students with your Nursing History course. Source: Diana L. Ruzicka (2022). *The Book of Nurse Saints*. Available at www.lulu.com/spotlight/Ruzicka