Merry Christmas!
Dear friends,

All the members of Fraternite Notre Dame join me to wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year under the sweet protection of the Mother of God and of Good Saint Joseph.

A happy year, a good year, is first of all, the one who brings you peace, tranquility, that sets worries aside, and brings about an abundance of goods. In a word, anything that may offer happiness and by this we mean in the ordinary sense.

In fact, this first wish is rarely fully fulfilled as it often occurs sooner or later that Divine Providence intends to mingle in our life some painful events, some unexpected and distressing circumstances.

Indeed, for all of you, we implore a happy year, happy viewed in the light of the interests of this world; happy in the preservation of a health needed for your daily tasks; happy in material prosperity and affluence.

May this year be happy especially through its goods of good harmony, respect and affection that must unite your families and our religious family.

Dear friends, there is so much beauty in homes sanctified by religion and where peace and love reign.

As it is said in some regions of France, I wish you also the Paradise at the end of your days.
This is by far the best of wishes as by desiring Heaven, we desire good par excellence.

May God infinitely merciful grant you a good health, and make your works and businesses prosper.

May God preserve unity and peace in your homes.

May God instill in every single heart, the desire to do better than last year, to love your neighbor ever more, to share with those who are hungry, thirsty and who suffer.

Dear friends, I entrust all of you to the Heart of Our Lady and to Good Saint Joseph, imploring for abundant blessings upon you.

And I invite you to come to the feet of the Child Jesus and lay open your heart, whether innocent or wounded by sin, fears and hopes, sorrows and joys that may fill your soul. Do not forget that it is for us that He came down to the earth.

With your whole heart, get closer to the crib and contemplate the Child God between Mary and Joseph; love Him, adore Him with your whole heart.

Dear friends, may Christmas Joy shine in your heart as the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Most Reverend Bishop Jean Marie + snd
Founder of Fraternite Notre Dame
Dear friends, have you ever asked yourself the question:

“Why does His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie build or renovate so many churches? Why does he always open new missions? Why does he bring relief to so many destitute people all over the world? Why does he work and pray day and night for the souls?” Because, as Saint Paul tells us, charity will never pass away!

His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie has well understood this and he teaches it very well to us: charity is what is most important. Without love, man is nothing. With love, he is everything.

The love of Christ and of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary is so ardent in the heart of His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie, that it makes him move mountains. Who would undertake such tasks, in such conditions and with so little money, so little support, only thinking about one thing: the glory of God, the benefit of Holy Church, the salvation of souls and relief of poverty. Forgetting himself to give himself wholly to the Work wanted by Heaven. Why does he want to relieve poverty at any cost? Out of love for God, out of love for men! Could you leave one of your children in sadness and not try to console him? Could you remain staring at your child suffering and not try to relieve him? Is not your child’s joy your own joy? Is not your child’s sorrow your own sorrow?

We all are the children of God. God loves us infinitely more than any parent loves his or her child. And if God loves us in such a way, with no distinctions, we must also love and help our neighbor and this without judging him. If we do judge him, we cannot say that we love God. Without love, we are nothing.
Follow the example given by His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie and help him, support his works! No sorrow leaves him insensible. Nothing makes him happier than to make someone happy!

It is so simple to love God and one’s neighbor. It is so simple to make people happy and find happiness by doing so.

A nice warm meal when someone is hungry, a blanket when he is cold, a smile when he is sad, a hug when he is alone, a look, a word of compassion when he suffers, a hand stretched out to him when he is lost.

This is so simple! One just has to forget oneself, love God and love others.

But His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie needs your help! Wherever you may be, whatever your means may be, you can help him! God will render it to you a hundredfold!

Do not be afraid, open your heart and support his works!

If you support them already, now, do support them even more!

Life is short! There is no time to waste! The Charity of Christ urges us! Help us carry out all this vital work for so many people! Help us spread Love. For he who helps the apostle will receive an apostle’s reward!

Sister Marie Benedicte of the Agony of Christ +snd
My little children,
Be concerned with helping the poorest of the poor and may the merciful Heart and Face of Our Lord radiate through you and Jesus Merciful will show you His Most Holy Face on the last day of your life to introduce you in His Kingdom.
Prayer, penance and mercy.
Pray a great deal for the conversion of sinners.
I bless you with all my heart+

Our Lady on May 14th, 2018

My little children,
In the midst of this decadent world that refuses or transforms the Gospel of Our Lord, how agreeable and consoling it is to see these fathers and mothers of a family devote themselves to prayer, work and sacrificing themselves for their children and for their family.
How great their reward will be in Heaven!
Pray a great deal for families, for peace in families, for unity in families.
I bless you with all my heart+
See you soon.

Our Lady on June 14th, 2018

My little children,
In this world you live in, the devil finds souls to fill his Hell.
The stench of souls giving in to sin rejoices the devils.
More than ever, my little children, you should pray to obtain the conversion of sinners and of the most obstinate sinners.
I suffer and I cry to see so many souls getting lost and who do not want to hear My voice.

Our Lady on August 14th, 2018

My love is immense for these poor souls and Jesus wants the souls to be saved through my Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart.
Prayer, penance and mercy.
Pray a great deal for the conversion of sinners.
I bless you with all my heart+

Our Lady on July 14th, 2018

My little children,
It is in my Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart that you will find peace.
I am the Mediatrix of all graces. Jesus has given me all power over His Heart.
Consecrate yourselves to our Two Holy United Hearts and live more in prayer, sacrifice and mercy.
I bless you will all my heart+
See you soon.

Our Lady on September 14th, 2018
Day by Day

Soup Kitchen in San Francisco

After releasing balloons in the air

Saint Joseph, hear us!

Detroit: Prayer and work

Our artist sisters at work

Chicago: Prayer to Our Lady
The sky is blue, the heat is heavy, but are we going to complain after so many weeks when torrential rain has prevented any crops from germinating?

This spring was sad, gray and cold, a reflection of what is happening in our world which is sad, gray and cold; our world with neither laws nor values. Bad examples preach loud and clear that they are the new truth, but a rather fleeting and worldly truth; tomorrow, an ever more decadent fashion will emerge. All this makes us speculate about an impending end, but also about an expectation: that of Christ’s return.

It is said that from one end of the earth to the other, the glory of the Word of Light will burst forth and all will be overcome, either touched by an ardent remorse, or liberated to see Him and love Him without a veil.

Our Monastery is so peaceful; the birds know and can tell you about it. This is one of the most beautiful places! But this is only the opinion of a little Handmaid of Our Lady who ardently loves her privileged home in the midst of nature.

Our life here is Prayer and Work; Ora et Labora. This is so simple and yet, quite a challenge: a Monastic life, well ordered, wise and calm, and yet established in these our times, where, as you well know, reign the stress of deadlines, emergencies succeeding one another, the speed of emails, the anguish of our media life.

And yet, His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie, the Founder of the Servants and Handmaids of Our Lady, has taken up the challenge and upholds the richness of Holy Church.
programs; looking after the garden and picking vegetables; mowing the lawn and trimming the hedges; printing prayer books; ordering food for our Soup Kitchens in New York and Chicago; baking cakes at the bakery (by the way, this is the work of several talented nuns, up before day break and until late at night); searching for organic flour as our main supplier has run out of stock; artistically repainting statues for our new church in Detroit; cleaning the vegetable cellar; sorting fruits to give them to destitute families at the food pantry; taking the cows out and watering geraniums; unloading the van that has just arrived with various donations which is a real blessing;

A small lamp is lit at 3 a.m. at the sisters’ house. Outside is deep silence, night is wrapping up the oak trees and deadens the uncertain sounds of nocturnal animals.

A little sister quickly gets up and with her choir habit, enters the chapel. She takes the place of the preceding sister. They both bow down and sing the Gloria Patri as a sign of adoration in front of the Most Blessed Sacrament exposed. This little sister will take on her hour of Adoration. Did you know? Night and day, we thus adore Jesus Host, where Jesus is really present in the Most Blessed Sacrament and we pray for all the intentions that you may have entrusted to us.

When morning comes after the night, this little sister finds herself at the Divine Office which we sing each day after Conventual Mass. Then, the day begins, or at least, the day of work begins, for prayer has already sealed with its graces the foundations of this day. We will try to do well and face the mountain of activities awaiting us, because our hours really resemble a pressure cooker!

You be the judge: sewing work – mending a cope, making of a Church vestment; preparing the meals; editing movies for our television channel, FNDTV; making neverending calls to get a telephone cable fixed; fixing a washing machine or a computer printer ourselves; sending an important report requesting a grant for our programs; looking after the garden and picking vegetables; mowing the lawn and trimming the hedges; printing prayer books; ordering food for our Soup Kitchens in New York and Chicago; baking cakes at the bakery (by the way, this is the work of several talented nuns, up before day break and until late at night); searching for organic flour as our main supplier has run out of stock; artistically repainting statues for our new church in Detroit; cleaning the vegetable cellar; sorting fruits to give them to destitute families at the food pantry; taking the cows out and watering geraniums; unloading the van that has just arrived with various donations which is a real blessing;
visiting a dying sick man so our priest may give him the last rites; with compassion, listening on the phone to a woman as she tells us her sorrows; filling out the necessary paperwork coming to us at all times in this our hyper-bureaucratized world; canning some vegetables so they don’t go bad; creating four-parts arrangements for songs for our Choir; with love, arranging flowers in vases for Lord’s Altar; washing towels and aprons; going to the post office for an urgent mail; dealing with the unexpected for an unforeseen event; taking a sick nun to the doctor; leaving immediately to go help unload a truck at our Soup Kitchen; answering questions from our sisters in Missions who also do not have an easy life and who need the advice of their Superiors.

If you are out of breath reading this, it is still not over for we have to get our lessons ready for our school, Notre Dame Academy; clean the classrooms; supervise recess during our summer classes... and finally, organize the impossible planning of all these activities!!!...

Of course, this is not the work of a single nun, but each has her own heavy load of work, each with her talents which she puts at the service of the Blessed Virgin, Queen of our Orders. The Tertiaries are also very active and their help is really precious. The Friars and Priests have just as much work to do. Most of them are in Detroit right now, fixing and embellishing the Church...

During that time, two Nuns are at our Bakery/Coffee shop where they serve clients with a smile, never stopping a minute and keeping everything clean and tidy. During that time, Mother Marie Faustina and Sister Marie Fabienne are...
making stained glass windows for the Church in Detroit, using techniques from the 12th century… You see! We are not bored!

Obedience guides us in all these things and we entrust every least detail to His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie and to our Mothers. This is how a Religious Order is like an army set in array before its camp, despite its humble means.

As I was telling you, for several months now, our brothers have been in Detroit for the renovations of the Church of the Most Holy Name of Jesus and of Mary, Mother of Mercy and Mother of the Church. The work is huge, as the church had been vandalized before we bought it.

The Friars are redoing the roof which became highly damaged after the copper gutters were stolen. They are covering the church with marble and beautiful mosaics. Everywhere, you can find a friar in charge of every building trade and they work with passion, very much at ease on the scaffolding. But His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie calls them to caution and is doubly vigilant.

He has made plans for everything, from the Main altar down to the side chapels. He uses the arts for the service of God. He already sees the general view as it is already in his heart.

What a privilege to work by his side for this great project, in our times when so many churches are being demolished or diverted from their original function. This church will be beautiful and erected toward Heaven!

Let us go back to our daily activities and speak in particular about our Mission in Peoria. Sister Marie of the Gospel tells of several graces obtained there, at our Monastery of Saint Francis and Saint Clare:

One day, as she was bringing pantry boxes to families, a poor woman told her that each time she receives this food, she sees in it a direct gift from God as it always comes at a time when she really needs it.
Another day, as meat was seriously getting low in the freezers, the sister asked Jesus during Adoration to help her find meat for the food distribution to families and the homeless, or else, she will have to reduce every one’s ration of meat. The following day, a store called to give us a lot of meat, which filled our freezers back to capacity. Then, a week later, Our Lady sent us another huge donation of meat. The little sister understood that we must always count on Divine Providence and never reduce the food we distribute.

During visits to the elderly, a small woman with cancer had a wound that would not heal and this caused her many problems. This woman had little faith, nevertheless, they prayed together for a while. The sister gave her some Easter Holy water and the prayer of the sick to Our Lady of Frechou, encouraging her to recite it every day. The sister didn’t think the woman would do it, but she told Our Lady: “Now, I left Your image to that woman, make her have good use of it!” A month later, this sick woman announced to me: “my wound is healed!”

Each week, women get together with the sisters to watch some videos on our activities. One person, who does not go much to Church any longer, watches a video on the processions that His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie organizes. She entrusted to us later that when she cannot fall asleep, she always has pictures of Processions coming to her mind.

But the greatest thing is this miracle: Sister Marie of the Gospel goes to visit Kathy, a neighbor who is in her eighties, to ask some news about her brother in law who is sick. They speak together about the work of Fraternite Notre Dame, the work of His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie for the poor, and they are seated side by side. Kathy knows our mission and admires what we do, but at the same time, she’s puzzled as she asks herself the question: “Do we really have to help these people?”
All of a sudden, on the wall behind the sister, she sees a reflection of a huge ball of fire spinning, a ball far more brilliant than the sun, more brilliant than the gold of chalices and yet, it is not dazzling. She tells the sister who turns around and sees the same thing. The sister thinks the sun is causing it, they get out of the house to make sure but it is dark and there is no special light outside. They enter back in the house and that ball is still visible on the wall. Kathy hails it a miracle. It was an answer to the questions she was asking herself about us and which encouraged her to help us in every way she could. The Blessed Virgin had showed her Her light.

As you can tell, our Mission in Peoria is very much alive, with its weekly food distribution, its warm meals brought to the homeless in the town's neighborhoods known for their poverty: Taft Housing, Lexington Public Housing among others. The little ones are not forgotten with the afterschool program and the children tell their parents: "Now, the sister will be able to explain to us who Jesus is!"

At the Monastery, life continues... A benefactor offered to resurface the asphalt road on the hill which ice and snow have ruined. Instead of a bumpy driveway, we now have a beautiful road. But to make sure the asphalt was dry enough, only butterflies where allowed to fly over it for a week. We could set neither foot nor wheel on it! And so we walked on the side of the road, on a very narrow path, which caused quite a few funny scenes such as to carry our things in a wheelbarrow! There was a good mood despite the additional efforts needed then!

On Mondays, our religious friars and nuns go to visit the jail... a merciless prison universe. A prisoner once told us that no one can understand what it is to lose one’s freedom.

Another inmate added that it seems unreal to be in such conditions: promiscuity, inaction and hatred. And yet, our merciful religion penetrates through the bars and prisoners eagerly accept to speak about Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin.

Our poor words greatly benefit them as forced detachment has already taken action in their hearts and their souls have turned to God. We call everything into question when we have nothing left, when we are rejected and separated from the world. During our visits, we read the promises from the Ecce Homo revealed to His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie, in which among other things, we read about prisoners and how much Jesus loves them, how close He is to them, as He has been in chains and imprisoned as well.

Dear friends, loving God frees us and makes us happier. Our young Novices are also very happy. Some go to choir practice, as our choir will sing for the inauguration of our church in Detroit. At 5:30pm, rehearsal with musical instruments, then we will sing Vespers, as all our days end by the Divine Office and recollection.

White as the veil of the Novices, the flowers from the fields of our monastery send you our prayers. May Our Lady of Frechou bless you!

Sister Marie Virginie of the Epiphany of the Lord + snd
Our Church in Chicago – Our Lady of Frechou, Mother of Mercy and Mother of the Church – is always buzzing with excitement. This work is wholly consecrated to help the poorest of the poor, in this underprivileged area which, we could say, is being abandoned more and more.

Each day, there is a great crowd at our Soup Kitchen “Mary of Nazareth House”. Well before opening time, the poor are waiting by the door. When it opens, they find all sorts of good things: drinks, bread, cheese and even sometimes flowers which the sisters have received as donations.

Sister Marie Elizabeth, our sister cook, has been close to her stove since morning preparing good, warm and mouthwatering meals. Each day, a meal has to be prepared for hundreds of people, not counting the evening service, when twice a week, we serve hot meals to the homeless in the streets.

Wednesday’s food distribution – offered to so many families – is a huge task; where for several days, is an enormous work of organization and handling. Starting on Monday, tons of food come to our church from different companies or stores as well as from the Chicago Greater Food Depository.

There, we see Sister Marie Valerie pushing and pulling the pallet jack as if it were a mere stroller and with ease, putting the pallets in the walk-in cooler or in storage. Despite all these constant deliveries, everything is clean and tidy and nothing is left lying around!

On Tuesday afternoon, a group of volunteers arrives to prepare bags of dry food, cans and non perishable food that are then packaged in huge cubes.
On Wednesday, right after the poor’s meal, around 1 p.m., another group of volunteers come to prepare the fresh food: dairy products, fruits, vegetables, meat. All these refrigerated products often come in a jumble and first have to be sorted out. Now, everyone is in a hurry to distribute this food evenly and quickly as the food pantry begins at 3 p.m.!

The tables in the Soup Kitchen are let in the shape of a “U” and the long conveyor is installed, allowing us to bring all the heavy boxes mechanically to the distribution door. It’s a genuine production line, each person has his or her own post! Our volunteers spare no effort. This way, dozens and hundreds of boxes are thus made and brought to the door where destitute families are sometimes waiting since morning, so they wouldn’t lose their spot.

The line is very long outside and everyone is patient, glad to be able to receive the needed food, which lasts for several days: milk, eggs, meat, vegetables, fruits, cake, bread, canned goods and cookies.

Last Wednesday, the hour to close had come: there were still 15 people waiting in line. After making each their voluminous box, we noticed that now, there were 50 people waiting! We had to prepare some more boxes and we were forced to close later.

And yet, the day was not over. As usual, we had to clean both inside and outside; where boxes are scattered around, and various other trash. We had to sweep and mop the floor, and tidy up the place: at least a good hour of work! Worth adding is the fact that when not everything has been distributed, the sisters leave and bring what’s left, to another destitute neighborhood where families in need, greatly appreciate this additional tasty bread and other food items.

When everything is over, the sisters are tired but glad to have helped these poor people. After having done God’s Will, they will now go and spend some moments in silence at the chapel for Divine Office. They will speak to the Good God of all these people they have met. During that time, in hundreds of families, joyful faces will have discovered the vital food they were missing, along with some extra treats they would not even have dared hope for.

Each day, through the work of His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie and the Servants and Handmaids of Our Lady, Divine Providence cares for thousands of people who find hope and joy again despite life’s difficulties. A little by little, they regain courage and understand that they are not abandoned by God. Thank you to all our benefactors and volunteers without whom this immense work of Mercy would not be able to be accomplished!

Here are a few anecdotes: Each week, at the food pantry, four mothers come to get their pantry box. After receiving it, they go and sit aside in the shade. When everything is over and everyone is leaving, they come forward and salvage anything that was left on the ground, and in the street.
These women are so much in need that they do not want to waste this food offered to them. They are among the poorest of the poor.

A 75-80 year old woman rings the bell at 6 a.m. What’s happening? She would like a cake for her birthday, but unfortunately, she has no money to buy it. But if fact, the sister actually happens to have a very beautiful cake… and gives it to her. Granny is so glad that she gives countless affectionate kisses to our little nun, as a good grandmother would to her granddaughter!

A young woman and her husband came to the Soup Kitchen. They were worried because they had been looking for milk for their 3 or 4 month old baby. They had already asked in different places but without success. The young mother seemed especially anxious. When the sister told her that she had milk, the faced lighted up with joy. She then completely relaxed. What’s more, the sister gave her some babywipes. The young mother was really thankful.

Of course, at the same time as our charitable activities, our church is a real living shrine with its faithful, who really create a genuine family spirit. They are very fond of their Shepherd, His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie. They were greatly touched as they attended the vesture of our little sister of Mexican origin: Sister Anna Maria of the Child Jesus. Very moved as well, she didn’t dare raise her eyes and her heart was beating strongly as she prostrated herself to offer her life to the Good God. This was a beautiful ceremony. Let us wish that many will follow her on the patch of self-denial at the service of the poor – they who will open for us the gates of Heaven…

Sister Marie Christine of the Trinity + snD
- Vesture of Sister Anna Maria -

- Distribution of food boxes -

- At our Soup Kitchen -
In New York

Fraternite Notre Dame

For God’s greatest glory

Ever serving the poorest of the poor

“Love one another, as I have loved you”

Our Lord Jesus Christ
As with every year, the feasts of Thanksgiving and Christmas are always very intense times. And yet, in the midst of all these activities at the service of our neighbor, we must also meet the Mission’s financial needs; look for the necessary funds to continue our work close to those who are most forgotten. Then, we turn ourselves into bakers, we make cakes, we go to the market, we deliver orders and trust us, our days are very busy!

After Thanksgiving, we will have to prepare the feast of Christmas, which is looming; we will have to prepare presents for around 2000 poor children living in the neighborhood. Our van then turns into Santa Claus’ sleigh. Then, we will have to unload the van, go through each item, then wrap, and sort by age, all the toys we will have received. Thank God we are helped by volunteers from the neighborhood.

And to remind each and every one that Christmas is above all about the Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we erect in front of the Soup Kitchen, a large Nativity Scene that all the passers-by and the poor admire; and some people stop for a moment to pray.

In the evening of December 24th, we will go with our Polish friends to feed the homeless living under the bridges and in the streets. On this Christmas Night, we feel
a very special ambiance filled with emotion: peace reigns in the streets of New York, this town always in motion, never asleep, dominated by traffic and passers-by. Grace touches hearts without fail.

You cannot imagine the joy of these poor people abandoned by all, with no family, without a friend, neglected, without anyone to share the joy of Christmas, but who are so loved and cherished by the little Heart of the Child Jesus who comes and comforts them on this Holy night of Christmas.

These destitute people, despised by all, thank us all the time. They really appreciate the meals we distribute to them, and do not hesitate to say that we are the only ones offering a bountiful and nutritional meal; in fact, oftentimes, other organization only offer them a small snack consisting of pizza or sandwiches.

To serve them, we follow the advice of His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie who repeats it to us tirelessly:

“Feed your poor well, take good care of them.”

YSOP (Youth Service Opportunities Project) is an association who organizes groups of volunteers in schools and churches in various states and sends them to New York to volunteer in Soup Kitchens, distribute food boxes etc… We welcome some of their volunteers, and every time they come, are glad and touched to help us; they do not hesitate to say that in their opinion, we are a big family because at our place, the poor are always welcome, this is their home, our Soup Kitchen is their home and we all are one and the same family.

Each week, we visit the elderly at the retirement home to recite the rosary together. This brings them so much peace and joy in the midst of their loneliness and isolation. Some have no family, others never receive any visits, yet others have no one to entrust themselves to, no one to share their prayer. What a sadness! And so, what a joy they have during these moments of prayer and talk with the Sisters.

For Her part, the Statue of the Pilgrim Virgin of Our Lady of Frechou, Mother of Mercy and Mother of the Church, continues Her pilgrimage in many families, bringing them numerous graces. All testify that Our Lady brings them a
great peace. Here is what we were told by a man who owns a business firm and has many worries: “During the time Our Lady of Frechou was in our home, I slept like a baby!” What a beautiful proof of the special attention of our Good Heavenly Mother of each one of us, She watches over both our spiritual and body health.

The persons, who come to Chicago on a pilgrimage on the 14th of every month, for the Apparition Our Lady to His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie, testify that they receive many graces.

A pilgrim, overwhelmed with worries entrusted to us: “I want to go back to Chicago, when I am over there, I feel so much better. It’s the light in the tunnel. When I speak to His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie, I feel something very special in me.”

A pilgrim did not hesitate to tell us: “When I go to Chicago, I appreciate every single minute, especially during Holy Mass. When we come here on a pilgrimage, it’s like a piece of Heaven; we forget all our worries; and then, we need to return to this world of difficulties and crosses.”

Here was some news from the mission in New York. Before ending, we wish to say a heartfelt “thank you” to our good Founding Father, His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie for his prayer and his fatherly advice. We also thank our benefactors who faithfully help us along with all those who pray for us.

We entrust all of you to Our Lady of Frechou. May this tender Mother protect you, may She watch over your families, over your work and may She fulfill you with Her graces.

With all our religious friendship.

Sister Marie Madeleine of the Infinite Love +snd
Fraternité Notre Dame in San Francisco

Prayer

Work
What’s happening at Mary of Nazareth Soup Kitchen in San Francisco? Well, I would like to tell you about some of our poor people.

We have many elderly men and women who come and eat at our soup kitchen. In particular, there is a couple living on the same street as us and the woman is sick and can scarcely come out of her bedroom any more. Her husband, who is around 70 years old, goes out each day to find some kind of small jobs to meet their daily needs. Each day, he comes to receive two plates at our Soup Kitchen, one for himself and one for his wife… along with good slice of cake to please his wife.

Their love is very touching. Despite their life’s extreme difficulties, they remain very attached to each other and Mr. X’s sole concern is to please his wife and make her a little happy despite her difficult life conditions.

When she is too sick, he comes with tear-filled eyes to ask us to pray for her, “How will he be able to live if she died? And the doctors said they are not sure she will survive, her kidneys do not function properly…”

When she comes back home, bursting with joy, he comes to ask us for some cake for her; she loves cake so much! But only for her, as he never asks anything for himself.

His whole life is dedicated to his wife. When she feels better, he brings her to our soup kitchen in a wheelchair so we can greet her and see with our own eyes that indeed, she is feeling much better! For the occasion, we always find some dessert to offer to her!
The other day, he came all excited to show us a walker he had bought so she would be able to walk a few steps with him.

He is incredible! The only thing that matters in his life is his wife! What an example for so many people who, when the situation becomes a little too difficult, get a divorce, separate, or are tired of living together...

At a time when she was too sick to get out of her room, he had come to ask for something special for her but we had already distributed all that we had. He was desperate but told us with a big smile: “She drives me crazy (as she is quite demanding because of her illness) but I love her so much!”

Another 64-year old poor man helps us at the Soup Kitchen ever since he came out of jail. We have known him for a few years now and his main concern is to find a place to stay. He has a very small pension which he completes with some “small jobs”. Since he came out of jail, he has been on the waiting list to get an accommodation paid for by the city or by the state.

For a long time, he lived in a squalid hotel, renting a room for a week paying $50 a day. When he happened to see a poor man or woman sleeping on the sidewalk, he would always say: “Sister, I would not be too good at sleeping on the ground in the street.” His sole concern has always been to find a place to stay for himself and more recently for his daughter and grandson with whom he has gotten back in touch and who also live in a very difficult situation.

Last week, he came to the Soup Kitchen with a small backpack asking to leave it at our place for the day. The following day, the same thing occurred. Seeing my surprised look, he told me that his bag contained a few pieces of clothing along with his shaving kit. I asked him if he was homeless. He answered that he was not but he now had to rent a hotel room for $85 a night (of course, not a four star hotel, but a squalid hotel filled with cockroaches) where he can leave nothing during the day, as he is not sure he will return there at night. He now has to find this amount of money each day to avoid sleeping outside!
Another 72 year old poor man, a faithful friend of our soup kitchen for over five years, helps us to clean after our service. He always told me that becoming homeless would never happen to him. He rented a room paid for by the City Hall’s social services. A few months ago, he was worried; because out of the 35 poor people living in his building, only 7 remained. The owners where evicting them on various pretexts to rent their rooms at a higher price to other people.

In the end, he came to our Soup Kitchen asking us to pray for him as he had received a notice of eviction and that he was going to try to defend his cause in front of a judge. It was a waste of time! He went to live with his sister for a few weeks and a day before yesterday, at 4 a.m., he arrived chilled to the bone, asking us for a hot coffee and a blanket. He confirmed my concern, saying that he was forced to sleep in the street. It must be known that people have to wait for several months before they can get a bed for three months in a shelter, and several years before they can get a stable place to stay. Sometimes, life is very difficult for some people!

One thing warms our heart in the midst of all this distress: the charity the poor have for one another. Whether it be sharing the little food they have, or telling one another when we arrive to bring the meals in the street to make sure they all will get a meal, or watching over one another night and day. This is how we almost lost D, a 27 year old, who overdosed a few weeks ago. Thank God, a poor man noticed she wasn’t breathing anymore and narcan was administered to her right on time to save her life. She is still in intensive care and we pray a great deal for her.

The poor people’s gratitude for the little we do for them is extraordinary. This is incredible. They unceasingly thank us, day and night. They also thank us for not judging them. The best evidence that their gratitude is real is the respect they have for the religious friars and nuns of Fraternite Notre Dame. In one of the most dangerous parts of the city, we can leave the kitchen door wide open when we are baking our cakes at night. No one enters without permission, no one steals, not even the cakes on the tables.

Some even tell us that it’s late, that we have worked enough, that it is time for us to go rest! If we only knew how to look at the heart rather than at the exterior, we would see the poor as most of them really are:
rich people, rich in love, with a heart full with thoughtful attention.

For example, they thank us for what we do for them and for all the others, one of our poor comes every Friday evening to clean the kitchen floor, knowing that we will work late at night to prepare the cakes for the markets taking place the next day. These markets allow us to pay all the bills of our Soup Kitchen. “This way, you will get to rest a little earlier this night!” Such goodness!

One time, we had to bring the statue of the Pilgrim Virgin of Our Lady of Frechou to a new home. Everything was off to a bad start. It was on a Sunday and all the car repair shops were closed and our car started making a rather worrying, snapping noise. Fearing there could be a problem with the steering and not willing to invite an accident, we decided to turn back. But instead of postponing our scheduled visit to another week, which we usually do in such cases, we decided to leave with the mission’s old reserve car. This is the same car our dear mechanic is worried about, and makes sure that we only drive short distances. We thank him for his ever so precious help in the fixing of our ever broken down old cars. That day, we had an over four hour drive to make!!! So be it! With our rosary beads in hand, off we went!

When we arrived at the destination, we were in a parking lot speaking to the family from whom we had retrieved the statue of the Blessed Virgin, when a charming old woman shyly came and asked if we would accept her invitation to come and pray in her home for her sick husband. Of course, we accepted.

In a poor 2-room prefabricated cabin, her husband was lying in bed, visibly sick of a chronic disease, coming...
to the end of his life, and who was not in his right mind any more.

After a short prayer, we told the lady about the Blessed Oil of Our Lady of Frechou and we proposed to anoint him with it. She accepted.

Talking to her, we came to know that her husband is Catholic and we suggested to her that she welcome the statue of the Pilgrim Virgin in her home. She accepted quite happily, saying that it will greatly please her husband. We then set up Our Lady at the top of the bed of her poor bedridden husband.

This woman welcomed the Most Blessed Virgin with such love, respect and trust although she was not catholic. We were very touched by it. We gave her a small prayer booklet and she told us she will read them regularly to her husband to help him.

It seemed quite evident to us, the sisters, as well as to the faithful pilgrims of Our Lady of Frechou who were there with us, that the Blessed Virgin Herself wanted to help this family and be present at such a difficult and painful moment, but how important is death.

It was Our Lady who made us decide to undertake the journey with our car which was not in condition to drive for so long. She is the One who allowed that woman to see us in the parking lot and asked us to come into her home, etc…

Her trust in God also touched us. She told us that the Blessed Virgin could heal her husband in two seconds. But this was not God’s will. Six days later, this dear man died… on the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy! Our Lady came especially to help him have a good, peaceful death and lead him into Heaven.

Have trust in the Most Blessed Virgin during your life, pray to Her, love Her, serve Her and She will never forsake you! Our Lady of Frechou, Mother of Mercy and Mother of the Church, pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

Sister Marie Benedicte of the Agony of Christ + snl
The Hermitage surely is the most peaceful place of all Fraternite Notre Dame. After leaving the world at the gates, Heaven surrounds you with its peace which is not from the earth.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus welcomes you with his open arms and then, in the beautiful church, the Good Merciful Christ welcomes you again with His gaze filled with goodness and pardon. All the statues of the saints and the beautiful stained-glass windows make this church so full of life that we feel very comfortable going to pray there. Many people visiting said: “Here, it’s simple but very elegant.” How much we like our little bell tower that announces Holy Masses and the Consecration.

We dedicate ourselves to the poorest of the poor and now, when the food pantry is open, we can welcome all our little lot inside, which is very much appreciated!

A man from the food pantry likes to go to the church and is very proud to show newcomers around when they visit. One day when he had not gone to the church, I told him so: “You aren’t going to say hello to Jesus today!” and he answered me quite simply: “Well, you know, with Jesus, we speak all the time!”

We also visit destitute families in the area. One day, a woman was so touched to see us come to her home with a box of food for her and her family that she told us: “So, you really do love me!”

In general, people live quite simply. A mother of three is taking care of the complete education of her children. She teaches them at home and uses the Bible to have them study English.

There is much poverty due to the fact the river often overflows. Some have lost everything in their homes and work hard to pay back their debts and are very happy when we bring them food boxes.

Then, there is the restaurant that His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie opened. This is a very good way to get known to people when they come to eat, to explain our work and to help our missions. His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie is the most talented cook. All his recipes and good advice are what make our work successful.
A patron who comes to the restaurant and sometimes to Holy Mass, was willing to become our gardener and be able to stay in that peace which he feels when he comes to our place and says he feels nowhere else.

His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie had a very good idea to build this church on the roadside; as people sometimes stop there just to say a prayer. One day, a friend of Fraternite Notre Dame, having seen us outside on weekdays, asked if he could come and recite his rosary. Many people come and make a visit to the church before or after eating at the restaurant.

So, when the restaurant is not open, our life comes down to prayer and work, the two most important things: Divine Office and Holy Mass, during which our prayers rise for the intentions of His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie.

Our work consists in maintaining this haven of peace with its flowers adorning the statues of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, in sewing beautiful religious vestments and making the religious habits of our Sisters and Brothers and of course, in taking care of the poor around us.

The Brothers and Friars are very busy with the farm, all the animals, the fields, the apple orchard and not forgetting the garden with its precious vegetables.

Here we live closer to nature; we discover all species of birds, including eagles and sparrowhawks soaring in the sky, along with deer and coyotes, rabbits and squirrels. In a word: a small world worthy of Saint Francis of Assisi.

In fact, His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie really reminds us of him. Spontaneously, the animals get near him and each of them waits for a token of affection that this good father knows to give them!

Thank you Most Reverend Bishop Jean Marie for watching so well over this place, like a good father, who leads us surely on the path to sanctification.

Sister Marie Pierre of the Mother of the Church
HAITI
The life of the Haitian people is very difficult. Each day is a fight for survival to meet the most basic needs of human beings: eat, drink, sleep under a roof sheltered from the rain, get treatment for illnesses, and give basic education to one’s children... For many years now, His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie, sensitive to this immense distress, has sent to Haiti his religious friars and nuns despite the difficulties and instability of this country.

The good news in the midst of so much sadness is that the construction tasks of the mission’s church have reached roof level! People voluntarily come and help us, sometimes walking up to three hours on the mountain, under a scorching sun, climbing cliffs, for they know that nothing is more important than a church, where God is expecting them, truly present and living in the tabernacle; a church where they will be able to receive the sacraments and be filled with graces from Heaven. Graces are far more important than any riches. These people, whose lives are so difficult on this earth, have understood that the most important goal on this earth is the salvation of their soul.

We count on Divine Providence and on Saint Joseph to finish the roof and the interior part of the church. We also count on donated generosity, dear readers. Any help, even the slightest can help us a great deal!

Thanks to Haitian benefactors, a small dispensary is also under construction. This will allow us to welcome and care for the hundreds of sick people in a more dignified manner, who come each week. We care for so many sick people that we are lacking basic medications such as paracetamol, antibiotics and vitamins for adults and children.

The school year ended with the graduation of the kindergarteners. What a joy for the children and their parents! And how proud they were! This summer we organized a camp where children are glad to do some physical activities, sports,
competitions and treasure hunts in the mountains... At home, their only “leisure” is to go fetch water at the source!

For the 2019-2020 school year, more than 230 students are enrolled including 40 in kindergarten. This is a huge task as all these children are very poor and we must provide them with school supplies.

Water is a major issue on the mountain. From the mission, it is a 2-hour walk to fetch water at the source. During construction tasks, we sometimes use 130 gallons of water and if it does not rain, the water tank is quickly emptied and we then have to go down to the river by using a bumpy road to fetch water. People are so happy with the church construction that they strive to help us in any way they can. And so they bring us water carried by donkeys to make our work easier.

But Saint Joseph does hear our prayers! When the water tank is getting low, we pray novenas after novenas for some rain. And eventually, our beseeching prayers are heard and the hand of God sends us a storm. Living and working in such difficult conditions make us understand the value of every single drop of water. It is a treasure that we forget very often in our modern countries where so much water is wasted. This ought to be food for thought.

To understand the life of Haiti’s inhabitants and that of the religious friars and nuns living there, you have to go back 150 years, in a poor country surrounded by mountains. There is neither electricity nor running water, and the only road is a rough path, on which most journeys are made either on foot or on mule back. Doctors, if there are any, are so far away and so expensive that you are unable to see them. The only incomes are generated from farming of the land; but it is a rocky, unproductive land with no irrigation. In the event of bad weather or drought: there is no harvest and therefore neither money nor food. Farmers in the mountains work very hard and despite this, helpless, they sometimes see their children starve to death.

Haiti is a country where food insecurity is the greatest in the Caribbean and because of its instability, sees the number of its children suffering from malnutrition growing higher each day. Who could tolerate watching children lose weight, suffering from malnutrition and dying without tangible ability to do anything? Certainly not His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie! That is why he opened a nutrition center where 600 children are welcomed.

Families come from all the neighboring mountains and
even walk over 12 hours back and forth to find small relief from their distress; a little food. The needs are great and reach far beyond our resources. Not only do we help the 600 children from the nutrition program, but also the 230 students to whom we give a meal each day, (how can they study if they are weak from hunger!), along with many families and isolated elderly people from neighboring mountains.

We do our utmost to find the necessary food for all these people, but it is not enough to bring relief to so much misery and sufferings. The population of the neighboring mountains add up to 15,000 people, the majority of whom need help. Plus the search and distribution of food is made even more difficult by the conditions of the roads and paths!

We also take care of the elderly. Some are blind and handicapped and live amongst rats in slums worthy of the middle ages. We prepare food for them and bring their meal to them each day.

During the rainy season, when rain is pouring, these slums, in which they live, have such a crumbling roof that it rains just as much inside as it does outside! These poor people manage to avoid flooding using buckets that they place the best place they can on all sides to collect the water. When you are almost bedridden, what an anguish to see the rain come!

Moved deep down in our hearts by their situation, we have fixed the roofs with some metal sheets. A few metal sheets makes a difference and what a relief for these people!

We also fit out a poor blind old woman, who lived in a slum, who slept on a bed heaped with dirty and rotten rags, amongst rats and mice. To drink, she had a water bucket which the bottom part was filled with worms!!! When we would bring her a food box, someone stole it from her and there she remained without eating. Seeing such a situation, we now bring her enough to eat and drink each day. Without our help she would have died of hunger and thirst!

We also help a family of 14 people living in a small house made of dirt and metal sheets. The children sleep on the ground on mats or old pieces of rags. But the roof is in such a dilapidated state, that each time it rains, it pours everywhere inside and the children, who are wet, and sleeping on the damp ground end up getting sick. Parents are so poor that they have no money for treatment and no money to buy new metal sheets.

People often come and ask for our help... for the living as well as for the dead. We also assist the dying. Sometimes, we even have to build the caskets and carry the bodies on very steep paths, to bring them to their final resting place. These bodies that have sheltered an eternal soul created in the image of God. And even though they are the poorest of the poor, have the right to a decent burial.

- At school -

- Prayer before starting school -

- Bring relief to the many faces of misery -
People also frequently call us in cases of difficult child births. We take these women to the hospital, thus saving the life of both mother and child. As they cannot afford it, women do not benefit from a medical follow-up during their pregnancy and risky cases are not detected, which leads to the death of so many mothers.

One morning, one of the mission’s neighbor who was pregnant, left early to go to the market. She walked over three miles on a rocky road with her donkey. The time came for her to deliver her baby, but she was alone on that mountain track… She had no choice, but continued walking whilst in labor, crossed the river and arrived at the market at 8 a.m. where, without any problem, she gave birth to a beautiful little girl whom she called Anna Maria in thanksgiving to the Blessed Virgin who had protected her.

Recently, a mother came to see us with her 3-year old son who seemed really anemic, so we rushed him off to hospital. The child had only two grams of iron left in his blood, and died that same night. He died of leukemia. His mother who lived in extreme poverty had delayed taking him for treatment, but what can you do when you have no money? The next day, our car, used as an ambulance the previous day, was now used as a hearse, taking back up in the mountains the body of the child and of another woman who had died from a stroke on that same night.

Can you believe it? The pig is one of the most important animals for the mountains poor inhabitants. To feed that pig, they deprive themselves of food even to the point of eating only one meal a day and drink tea made up of tree leaves and salt to stave off hunger. They call it “the poor’s bank”!

Well yes, the farmer’s life depends on the quality of his harvest. Now, the pig provides the manure used as fertilizer for a good harvest. If, because of rain, the harvest is ruined and they have nothing to sell at the market (as it was the case this year), as a last resort, they can still sell their pig and thus pay for the hospital costs to save the life of their wife or children in case of vital emergencies.

In the midst of all this misery God often is the only resort for these poor people. And God sends his Most Holy Mother to protect them and come to their help. Did she not appear in Banneux under the name of Our Lady of the Poor? This is why His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie, the confidant and faithful servant of Our Lady, has founded this mission where hundreds of sick people get treatment, hundreds of children are fed and educated and where countless miseries are relieved.

The poor have understood it well, as they come each day at the mission to recite the rosary in front of a little shrine consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, to thank His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie for the help he brings them and to pray for the end of the construction tasks of the church, their church. They know that their strength and support in the midst of their poverty is prayer and the sacraments.

We know that Our Lady of Frechou, Mother of Mercy and Mother of the Church protects us and we ask for your prayers to continue the work in the mission Our Lady requested to His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie.

Sister Marie of the Cross + snd
Sister Marie Odila of Peace + snd
Outside, people exchanged wishes, goodbyes, then quickly, everyone dispersed, as the north wind was biting, and each group left, escorting the trembling flame of a lantern, without a noise, on the thick snow, making haste toward the house where the Christmas meal was ready.

In the Jaminet’s farm, that year, the Christmas meal promised to be wonderful; the kitchen was ornate with branches of fir and holly, with the table set for 15 people as we had invited relatives, friends; and a huge log was burning in the high fireplace where, later, before going to bed, the four Jaminet children: Baptiste, Colas, Julien and Perrette, would lay down their clogs.

But for now, as the many guests were joyfully taking seats around the meal in a great din of moving stools, the mother sent her four children outside saying:

- “My little ones, run and wish a merry Christmas to Old Mathurine and make haste to come back”.

The four figures disappeared in the shadow singing a Christmas song; the little clogs filled with straw were sinking in the soft snow and voices were thin in the dark night. Baptiste carried a large pot of cream, Colas, a golden galette, Julien some hot chestnuts and Perrette, a branch of holly where golden walnuts and oranges were hanging.

Mathurine’s cottage was very close. From the day she become paralyzed, the old woman would read her Mass there by the fireside and every year, some joyful children would come for a time and brighten up her solitude and bring her a portion of happiness that filled the neighboring farm.

Now on their way back, on the path padded with white, bordered in black by the bushes, they met the Child Jesus.

The Divine Child was walking alone, his curly-haired forehead was crowned with a halo; the north wind made his linen robe flutter: this robe was so white that it resembled glowing light. A lamb skin was covering his shoulders; maybe Saint John the Baptist lent it to him to come down on the ice-cold paths of earth.

The four Jaminet children has stopped and stood astounded, motionless in front of the sweet apparition; the Child Jesus then raised His small radiant hand toward them and said:

- “Be blessed, little happiness carriers who walk, out of charity, in the cold night. Be sure not to forget to set your clogs by the fireside later on. Baptiste, what do you want to find in them?”

Little Jesus’ voice was soft and pure, more harmonious than heavenly music. Baptiste, wholly moved, had to cough to clear his throat; and yet he was only able to whisper:

- “A nice knife, please, good Jesus, so I may carve wood.”
For he was very clever with his hands and could carve thousands of comical and beautiful things out of a mere log of wood.

- “Very well, what about you, Colas?”

But Colas, was very shy, and with his head lowered, he could not answer as he was overcome, astonished, nothing in the world could have loosened his lips; and yet, how much he wished to get some light gardening tool that his weak little arms could carry along with some seeds to plant, for he already had a great love for farming.

The Child Jesus showed a kindly smile.

- “Do not be troubled, Colas, your clogs will be filled according to your wishes.”

But then, before he was even asked, all proud and a bit arrogant, little Julien thus spoke:

- “As for me, he said, I surely hope my clogs will be full as well, but will I be given fewer gifts than my brothers as my shoes are smaller? Fill them up, Jesus, fill them and when they will be full, overfill them with soldiers, chariots, balls and marbles.”

The Child Jesus looked at him with surprise and sadness; He sighed and turned to the younger sister: “What about you, Perrette, what are you asking for?”

- “I ask, little Jesus,” - the little girl simply answered - “that you take my clogs; your poor little feet are chilled to the bone and you most certainly still have a long way to go.”

She bent down, took off her clogs and held them out to the Child Jesus. The latter bent down to her and gave her a kiss that filled her with a wonderful joy; then, taking the clogs, He disappeared in the night.

The following day, in front of the great fireplace, four pairs of well-filled clogs could be found; Baptiste got a beautiful sharp knife that seemed to find its way in the wood by itself to create wonders out of it. Colas, filled with joy received a spade, a pick, a rake, along with seeds, which, the following spring, made his garden the most beautiful and productive.

Julien found his two clogs so full that they had burst and to crown it all, after an hour he grew weary of the toys he had asked for.

Perrette only found back her little clogs, but when she put them on, she felt so light, and her heart was full of joy!

Listen! Do listen! Perrette’s small clogs never wore out; Perrette’s small clogs were small clogs but then grew into big clogs, as she was growing bigger! She never had any other shoes and with these shoes, she walked through life, happy and sowing happiness wherever she went.

She got married, became a mother, a grandmother and a great grandmother; and when she grew very old, on a Christmas Eve, very slowly, as when one falls asleep, she died; and we never found her clogs again. They say that they led her straight into Paradise.
UN creates a day to commemorate victims of religious persecution

Faced with a disturbing increase in the number of acts of violence against members of religious minorities and places of worship, the United Nations’ General Assembly has proclaimed August 22nd as being the “International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief”.

“Religious freedom is a universal right of every human being”

Bloody bombings in Sri Lanka during Easter Mass, increasing attacks against churches in Burkina Faso, shootings in two mosques in Christchurch (New Zealand last March)... The United Nations’ General Assembly emphasized: “these tragic events reminded us how much religious freedom is a fundamental human right and how hatred toward religious groups have lead to mass killings”

In its annual report on religious freedom, Aid to the Church in Needs, have noted important violations of religious freedom in 38 countries out of the 196 analyzed by the association. This represents close to 20% of countries. A number made even stronger as the countries involved are some of the most populated and as a consequence, far more than 20% of the world population is affected.