

# FRATERNITE NOTRE DAME *Christmas* 2023



My dear friends,

At Christmas, our gaze turns to the crib; we can see the Child God, Jesus, lowering himself. When we reflect on the fact that the Supreme Being who possesses all grandeur, to whom nothing can be compared, accepts our poor nature and becomes like unto us, then the mind is left astounded. We see Him, lying on a little straw; exposed to all the rigors of poverty and the cold. He is crying; He is suffering, and He is moaning.

Today, the Word is silent, but what actually speaks to us, tells us Saint Bernard, is the stable and the crib, with their destitution and deprivation. Then, between Mary and Joseph, we contemplate the Child God, who has come to save us.

My dear friends, the Child of Bethlehem's poverty must lead us to ask ourselves some questions; are we conscious that around us,

there are some poor people, and that these poor people expect from us: a gesture of love, comprehension and mercy. Do understand that the hand of the poor... is the hand of Christ; that the gaze of the poor... is the gaze of Christ; that the suffering, and at times, bruised face of the poor... is actually the adorable Face of the Christ.

Then my friends, may you not spend this Christmas in selfishness; much to the contrary: in order for it to be joyful for you and your own, do something for the poor. Because if you lower your gaze and your heart over the poor, I am certain that the Child God of Bethlehem will fulfill you with His love, His joy and His peace.

Be assured of my prayer, and I bless you with all my heart +

*Most Reverend Bishop Jean Marie +snc  
Founder of Fraternite Notre Dame*



Dear friends,

As the Christmas holidays approach, let us tell you some real-life stories. The first story is that of the Child Jesus, our Savior, born in a stable, on a freezing but so clear night. The breath of the animals warmed him and the love of his Mother, the Virgin Mary, filled him with joy... Be also the comforters of so much misery on this earth...



- Chicago, IL, the ever-growing line of needy families -



- Manhattan, NY, the homeless appreciate our food -



- Scranton, PA, our Religious Nuns close to the youth -



- San Francisco, CA, poverty has many hidden faces -

Listen to the story of our old gentleman from San Francisco. We have been helping this homeless man for a very long time. For months he looked for an apartment, but in vain. He went from shelter to shelter, and spent the day on the street. The shelters he knew were not clean; he was treated like a number; so he doesn't want to go there anymore. Additionally, now he is on dialysis twice a week. Coming every day to our soup kitchen, he has just announced to us that he is going to his son's house to celebrate Christmas there. Our presence, filling in for his family for several years, allowed him to get through the process.

It's terrible to live on the street! You are told to go to this center to get a bed. You wait in line for hours just to get a spot tonight, and tomorrow you have to do it again. After so much refusal and mistreatment, the poor are unable to reintegrate into society. They have been on the sidelines for too long. For too long they have received humiliation and indifference and now they are hardened by pain. They have become "accustomed to suffering".

But wasn't the Child Jesus cold in the Crib?

In Scranton, Pennsylvania, a woman testifies that after paying her rent and bills with the little money she has, she no longer has anything to put on her table to eat. *"Luckily I have you; otherwise, I would starve to death with my family!"*

We know a disabled elderly lady in Chicago. Leisa lives in an unhealthy basement. After this summer's floods, the walls are soaked with mold, making her very sick. One day, she came to our food distribution and received a good box of food as well as vegetables. She was getting ready to leave alone and wanted to drag her cart with her wheelchair. We told her that we were going to help her and Bishop Jean Marie, informed of it, now has her food parcel delivered to her every week. Leisa is so happy when we arrive!

Kenneth is a rather original poor man, a regular at our mission. Strong personality, everyone knows him, especially when he cuts the line! Recently, he fell ill and is very emaciated. A Sister gives him a small image of Our Lady of Fréchu. The following week, he comes back: *"Mary of Graces, Mary full of graces, she's someone! She answered me; I asked Her for*



- Niger, Africa, the police entrust a new orphan to us -

*something, and She gave it to me*". The following week: *"Everytime I ask Her for something, I get it. I didn't believe it, but now I do!"*

The line of families is huge around our church in Chicago. These 450 families are waiting patiently in the cold, which proves their real need.

In Detroit MI, around fifty homeless people gather near nice neighborhoods. They live outside. When our Religious arrive, it is a joy; they run to them and thank *"what have you brought us today?" "Hot meals; blankets; toiletry kits; and even candy!"* It's cold, but at least one consoling angel has come by.

And that night, wasn't the Child Jesus cold also?

Still in Detroit, we are appalled to know that a man who is still young lives in a house – if you can call it a house; with nothing inside whatsoever. Everything is dilapidated. The Sisters bring him a package almost every day. He tells them: *"it's going well, I live with my friends"*. But his friends are the coypos who live with him!

In New York, a lady received the Pilgrim Virgin. She did not ask for any special graces. But when we returned, Carmen felt great peace, since Our Lady had visited her house.

At our Hermitage in Wisconsin, visitors to our restaurant receive many graces. To name just a few, a mother came to have dessert with her children. The youngest, delighted, said to the Nun: *"We have found the house of Jesus. It's here!"* while showing our Church.

A lady came with her mother. While waiting for the Sisters to prepare their good meal, she went to visit the Church alone and when she returned, she started crying. She testified that it was *"so beautiful"*. The Good God had touched her. She said that in 45 years, she had never seen a place that gave her such emotion. Another little girl says that we feel the presence of Christ in our Church.

In our visits to families in Wisconsin, a lady, afflicted with bone cancer, cried when the Sisters arrived. She explains that it is the end of the month and that she has no more food, but with our help, everything will be better and she thanks Bishop Jean Marie with warm tears.

Another family that lives in a trailer without heating says they are lucky not to find themselves outside. Our food helps them a lot and they feel blessed to receive this.

Our Sisters visit Sandy, another lady from Wisconsin, every month. She says that our assistance has brought her closer to God and that we are *"her"* Sisters!

In Peoria, Illinois, a man warmly thanked us for giving him hot meals when he was on the street. He explained to us that he had a job but following a car accident, was no longer able to travel, in 15 days he found himself outside for two months. Then he was able to find a job with a small apartment, but he is so grateful to us, because he was very hungry.

A grandmother thanks us for the food parcels and appreciates our varied food. She has to work hard to educate her grandchildren. "What you give comes from Heaven!"

Our catechism and Catholic religious education help families rediscover their faith and recite the rosary as a family. A little boy invites his mother to say a decade of the rosary every evening. But today, the little boy forgot to remind his mother. She explains that in fact she couldn't fall asleep and that was surely the reason why.

The poor people to whom we bring hot meals testify that we are the organization that gives the

best meals, very nourishing cuisine with cakes or ice cream depending on the donations received.

The world rejects all these poor people and regards them as despicable beings. A 22-year-old youth, rejected by his family since the age of 14, suffered a large burn on his leg. He thanks us for inquiring about him, it cheers him up. "You, the Sisters, take care of our souls and our bodies!"

The poor are very helpful. A gentleman comes to help us rake the leaves because he sees that we are very busy. He always says "*Jesus loves you and I love you too!*"

Here, dear friends, are some anecdotes which will, we hope, prompt you to help us as much as possible, so that we, in turn, can bring joy and comfort to so much misery. The Child Jesus will feel less alone and will fulfill you with his love. Merry Christmas to everyone!

*Sister Marie Virginie  
of the Epiphany of the Lord +smd*



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