

## FRATERNITE NOTRE DAME ACTIVITY REPORT FOR 2020 – UNITED STATES

Fraternite Notre Dame is a religious and charitable organization founded by His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie. Fraternite Notre Dame operates in various places across the United States and around the world.

Fraternite Notre Dame’s Mission is to help anyone in need, with no distinction of race, class, gender or religious beliefs ; to be attentive to the cries of the poor, and attentive to those who suffer in their heart or in their body. Its religious people do not receive any salary.

In 2020, we had to adapt our services for safety reasons due to Covid 19, but this does not mean we stopped our services, quite to the contrary, we continued our work “on the front line”, aware that it saved lives, literally. In fact, we have been serving thousands of people since the beginning of the pandemic. It is critical that we continue serving in these so difficult days, where people depend on us to get food, but also hope and support.

Our Founder His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie says: *“You must always encourage people, not discourage them, and show them that you love them. And you must do so without discrimination, when it comes to their class, gender, race or religion, because when you love God, then you love your neighbor without discrimination”*.



*“Nowadays, many people are lost, they often struggle in darkness. They need some light to see the way”*; and what he wants to tell them is summarized in one word: “Service”. He encourages others to walk in his footsteps in volunteering and dedication.

### FRATERNITE NOTRE DAME IN NEW YORK CITY / EAST HARLEM

In the United States, Fraternite Notre Dame started in 1990 and is established in East Harlem, New York City, where its well-known services are recognized



and very much appreciated. We are known as the main Community Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry in East Harlem.

We have grown beyond a mere feeding center, as social services, including after-school programs and referrals are also provided. Thousands of homeless people, destitute families, children and senior citizens have been served over the years, along with home-bound AIDS patients.

In 2020, Fraternite Notre Dame continued to offer services for the poor on a daily basis, namely through its Food Pantry and its Mobile Soup Kitchen.

**Food Pantry:** hundreds of food boxes were distributed and very much appreciated by families, individuals and elderly people.

**Mobile Soup Kitchen:** prepackaged hot meals were given away at night to long lines of homeless people, along with tooth paste, soap, scarves, sleeping bags depending on our possibilities.

**Meal-delivery Program to home-bound AIDS patients in East Harlem:** about 5 patients per week were visited and given dietary meals.



The Religious Members of Fraternite Notre Dame work unceasingly to provide so many services. The sisters who cook have a great task: Feeding hundreds of hungry people! They always try to please them with tasty meals.

Another sister delivers meals to home-bound AIDS patients. Late at night, they go in the streets of Manhattan with a van filled with sandwiches and hot meals, to distribute to the homeless.

Since the Religious Members of Fraternite Notre Dame generously devote themselves to serving the poor, many of them are touched by this Program which gives them hope and where everyone is welcomed with no distinction of race, class, gender or religious beliefs.

Thanks to our presence, the neighborhood found hope again in these trying times we are going through. Our support and encouragement to the Community have paved the way for a positive change in people's lives and have made a difference.

## FRATERNITE NOTRE DAME IN CHICAGO

Fraternite Notre Dame's Headquarters are based in Chicago, where the organization takes care of poor people through many social services and Feeding Programs, namely the largest Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry in the Austin area, an After-School Program, Pastoral Care Services, etc.



The Mission was opened by His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie in 1998, thanks to his care and love for the poor. The Mission is settled in the Austin area, on the West side of Chicago, in a very destitute place and is now a very important center with its Church and charitable activities.

**Activities performed in 2020:**

**Mobile Soup Kitchen:** In Austin and various other areas of Chicago and the suburbs, we gave hundreds of hot pre-packaged meals every week to homeless people su living under tents or in vans. On the Northside, they call it « Tent City ». There are also other locations on the West side.

**Mobile Food Program:** going in Chicago’s Latino neighborhoods giving large amounts of commodities several days a week, to hundreds of families

in real need of food. Many have lost their jobs during the pandemic and our assistance is crucial.

**Mobile Food Program:** serving needy elderly each week in the Austin area with food and meals at a Senior Citizens Building (hosting about 165 low-income seniors)

**Food Pantry in Austin:** It has always been open in these trying times. People have received large amounts of food every week.

We take great precautions, serving outside. These programs enable numerous families and individuals to have meals and food provision until our next distribution.

**SPECIAL EVENTS**

For Thanksgiving and Christmas, Fraternalite Notre Dame was able this year to offer delicious dinners in the streets at night for the homeless, with blanket giveaway.

In addition, for Thanksgiving, we did our best to offer one turkey per family at the Food Pantry with the ingredients for the entire meal. Each year, many people donate turkeys to us because they know the work we accomplish.

This past year as usual, His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie organized our famous Annual Christmas Party in the Austin neighborhood of Chicago. Each year, we receive toys from all over and give beautiful presents to destitute children. For most of them, it is their only gift for Christmas.



This year, even though it was done in harder conditions, we offered our Christmas Party and it was really touching. It was outside, under a tent. Each child had a gift, hot chocolate, snacks and Santa Claus was there! We also offered presents and food to elderly people. A delicious Christmas Dinner was provided to the homeless in the streets, with present giveaway (sleeping bags, gloves, hats, etc...).

### **FRATERNITE NOTRE DAME IN SAN FRANCISCO**

Fraternite Notre Dame has settled in Tenderloin, San Francisco and operates a Soup Kitchen, Mobile Soup Kitchen, and Meals-on-Wheels for AIDS patients. On a regular course of our programs, hundreds of persons are served 3 times a week at the Soup Kitchen. The Mobile Soup Kitchen operates twice a week serving hundreds of homeless and low-income people. We have been offering our services for over 15 years and strive to provide the best, with consistency, commitment and compassion. We take care of so many people who entrust their problems to us.

During 2020, we adapted our programs as follow:

The Soup Kitchen was open 3 times a week. Although people could not come inside for obvious safety reasons, they received “to-go plates” at the door and could also have cold-lunches for the evening. Approximately 300 to 400 meals were given per day.



The Mobile Soup Kitchen continued to operate: At UN Plaza, “to-go plates” were displayed on tables, the Sisters were serving behind plexiglass set-ups. Hundreds of homeless persons received prepackaged hot meals, drinks, deserts, snacks and donuts.

In the Bayview area, after the request of the poor people themselves, the Religious Members of Fraternite Notre Dame came and served where these homeless people live, meaning under tents or in their cars. It was very sad to see their situation.

Large pantry-boxes were distributed including sandwiches, cereals, bread, fruits, deserts, drinks, nutritious bars. These homeless people were really grateful!

A Christmas-Dinner was offered to all, at the Soup Kitchen and Mobile Soup Kitchen, with pies, ice-creams, a special Holiday meal, candies along with blankets, scarves and hats.

**FRATERNITE NOTRE DAME  
IN DETROIT/ MICHIGAN:  
CHURCH OF THE HOLY NAME  
OF JESUS AND MARY,  
MOTHER OF MERCY AND  
MOTHER OF THE CHURCH**

In 2018, under the inspiration of Heaven, always concerned with the salvation of souls, His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie has looked into the purchase of a new church in the United States, and his search directed him to the city of Detroit, Michigan.



After many steps and after having prayed a great deal for this intention, Fraternite Notre Dame, thanks to the support of several benefactors, was able to acquire a new property, in the northern part of the City. The Church's name is "Church of the Holy Name of Jesus". The property includes a large Catholic church built in 1952, the rectory, a convent and a large school dating back to 1929, with three stories. Friars, nuns and priests were active, renovating the place.

His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie started a Food Pantry service for the poor in the neighborhood, because the area is in shocking state of disrepair, partly due to the fact that many plants have closed their doors.

Our Food Pantry is now operating and had also been so in 2020. We take great precautions, serving outside, one family at a time and practicing social distancing. We hand out complete and ready food pantry boxes, which include assorted, nutritious food products and produce, that will enable numerous families to live on for several days.

We also give away furniture, kitchenware, home care supplies for the elderly, pillows, sheets, infant milk, children clothing & strollers. People say that the food and the other items provided by our Food Pantry are a real help for them.

Many Programs have closed their doors but we remain open, aware that our work for the poor is essential.

Our Mobile Soup Kitchen operates once or twice a week, serving hundreds of homeless individuals or families. We go down in the streets or at the



doors of shelters, distributing prepackaged hot and hearty meals.

In addition, warm coats and blankets are distributed on a regular basis, along with masks, gloves, scarfs, soap, bags, hand & toe warmers. Our Mobile Food Pantry Program also gives food boxes and supplies for those who are home-bound. In that case, we go to their homes and leave the supplies at their door.

This past year affected with Covid-19, we have been having an extraordinary impact in the community and made a great difference in the lives of poor families, children, the elderly and the homeless. This year, we organized our Annual Christmas Party (brand-new toys distribution). We were able to serve over 400 children.

Fraternite Notre Dame also ensures religious services and plans to revive the school, which would blow a fresh wind filled with hope into the entire area.

Poverty in the area is so great that nearly everyone can be identified as being in need of emergency services. Many houses seem abandoned and yet, families live in them. Window glasses are



replaced by plastic bags, everything is broken down. It is very sad to know that children live there.



### **FRATERNITE NOTRE DAME IN SCRANTON / PENNSYLVANIA: SAINT MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION SHRINE**

In 2020, a new Church was rehabilitated by Fraternite Notre Dame in Scranton, Pennsylvania. His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie and his Religious Members worked very hard to restore the place.

Immediately, His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie made it a point to serve poor people in the area and a Food Pantry was opened every Wednesday. So many families came every week!

We also offered a Mobile Food Pantry, bringing food boxes at the door of poor people's houses. Some had Covid-19 and this program helped them a lot. Of course, we still continue these helpful programs.

For Christmas, Fraternite Notre Dame had its First Christmas Party. There was a long line of destitute children with their parents, coming from the neigh-

borhood and from other places. Each of them received nice new presents. Catechism classes are also provided to children twice a week.

### **OTHER LOCATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES**

#### **NOTRE DAME MONASTERY IN MARENGO / ILLINOIS**

A Shrine dedicated to the Ecce Homo (suffering Christ) was built by our Religious people a few years ago, featuring a majestic baroque style altar. The 15 stained-glass windows were handcrafted by our artist Religious Nuns using techniques dating back to the 12th century. The building is a wonder that was entirely built by our Religious Nuns, Friars and Priests, with beautiful details in the stone, brick and marble works.

There, the members of Fraternite Notre Dame lead a life of prayer and work, with the Monastery's farm. In Marengo also takes place the Spiritual formation of our Nuns, Friars and Priests, and we also operate a school.



In 2020, on a weekly basis, a Food Pantry service took place to assist families in need, especially during this time of Covid.

### **ST FRANCIS HERMITAGE WISCONSIN**

A Shrine dedicated to the Merciful Christ was entirely built by our Religious in 2017. It includes 11 stained-glass windows handcrafted by our Artist Religious Nuns, using techniques that date back to the 12th century.

There, members of Fraternite Notre Dame welcome visiting pilgrims, while the Hermits lead a life of prayer and solitude, in a remote section of the property, living from the labor of their hands at the Hermitage's farm.

During the year 2020, a Food Pantry service was run each week to help



families in need and destitute individuals, offering larges quantities of food outside, one family at a time. A Mobile Food Pantry has also been operating, bringing food directly to the doors of the homes of very poor people. People could not believe we were coming to bring so many good things and this meant a lot to them.



### **ST FRANCIS AND ST CLARE MONASTERY IN PEORIA, ILLINOIS**

The Monastery had been abandoned for several years. Fraternite Notre Dame discovered this small Monastery located on 10 acres of land, on the fringe of Peoria's city limits.

Our Religious performed a restoration of the Shrine, improved some parts of the premises and fixed the heating system.

Each week, in 2020, the Religious of Fraternite Notre Dame provided food to the poor through the Food Pantry Program serving many families.

They also went to bring food boxes to a nearby Senior Living Complex. This

complex has 98 apartments and the Sisters gave food to whomever wanted. The seniors came with their walkers, some were handicapped or blind.

Food surplus was also brought at the doors of shelters all year long.

For Christmas, on behalf of our dear Bishop Jean Marie, the Sisters operated a Mobile Soup Kitchen, giving lunch bags, hot chocolate, food-kits, scarves and hats to homeless people living under bridges and overpasses, or along the river.

### **IN CONCLUSION**

One of the main goals of Fraternite Notre Dame is to serve those most in need, those who are abandoned. They can count on us because we serve all-year-round. We help mend their families and sometimes, bond them back together.

They find work and an apartment anew; they can work again. We have many testimonies of homeless persons, who have now resumed a normal life, thanks to our support.

We put all our heart into serving them and we love our poor people, because we realize the value of these people and that they want to do something good in their life.

In the past year 2020, our programs were highly appreciated since people were desperate and in real need.



**We hear remarks from our poor people such as:**

*« Everything you'll give me, I take. I have nothing at home. »*

*“It is God who sends you. My little girl was asking me for a birthday cake but I did not have money to get it and you give me one!”*

*“Because of the virus, I've lost my job. I was a tile layer, but people don't want workers coming into their homes anymore.*

*I am 26 years old and I end up in the street!”*

*“May God give you even more food so you can help even more families!”*

*“Give me whatever you have, I live with my wife and daughter in a van. I have nothing”*

*“These are sisters with a big heart!”.*



**Fraternite Notre Dame**

502 N Central Ave, Chicago, IL 60644-1501 – USA

2290 First Ave, New York, NY 10035-1713 – USA

Tel. (1) 815-923-4350 - Fax. (1) 815-923-4519

info@FraterniteNotreDame.org - www.FraterniteNotreDame.org