

FRATERNITE NOTRE DAME

Happy
Thanksgiving Day!

2024

My dear friends,
A day of joy, a day of gladness, this day of Thanksgiving, when we thank God in a special way.

Let us be, wherever we are, examples of peace, joy and thanksgiving.

The world needs Christians who live and show their happiness in doing God's will, whatever the cost.

Doing God's will must keep us in joy and maintain us in thanksgiving, following the example of the Virgin Mary singing her Magnificat and like the Saints who preceded us, such as Saint Francis of Assisi who gave thanks to God in all circumstances for our sister nature, the trees, the flowers, the birds, the fish, the water and the fire; such

as Saint Joseph Benedict Cottolengo who at every moment said with joy "*Deo gratias!*" Let us give thanks to God!

Holiness is accepting the holy will of God and in accepting it, being in thanksgiving.

My dear friends, let us bless the Lord; let us give thanks to the Lord for He is good, for He is meek, for His love endures forever!

And may the Blessing of Almighty God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, descend upon all of you, and abide with you forevermore! +

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

Give thanks to the Lord for He is Good!

In the middle of winter, on a street in New York City, one of our Nuns sees a poor man with white hair, in a wheelchair, trying to shelter from the cold in the corner of a carriage entrance. She approaches to offer him a sandwich and asks him with a kind smile: *"How are you today?"* A big smile then brightens up his face and a spark lights up in his eyes: *"I am blessed!"* What a lesson do we receive from the poor! This man deprived of everything and even the necessities considers himself blessed by God and can only say a word of thanksgiving.

These poor people whom we meet every day and for whom, upon the advice and example of Bishop Jean Marie, the Handmaids and Servants of Our Lady, as well as our volunteers deploy all their efforts and treasures of ingenuity, these poor people are not part of an anonymous group of unknown, uninteresting, poorly dressed people, who disturb our life and our conscience: each one has a face, a heart and a story. Our Priests and Nuns who serve them can testify to this. These are bonds of friendship that are created, mixed with respect and gratitude. In our food distribution services or visits to poor families to bring them help, in Illinois, New York, California, Michigan, Pennsylvania or Wisconsin; we come across with them every day.

Thus, one day, a lady came in tears to ask if we had a birthday cake for her 6-year-old daughter; her very small job barely allowed her to pay her bills, she had no money to buy her one.

There are hundreds of families in each of our homes who receive this food aid each week, and the number is growing. Several recently said, *"What would we do without this help! You give us everything, God bless you for it!"* Many have said that the food we provide each week allows them to save on what they have to live on each month. They consider it a great blessing. They need this help so much that they sometimes arrive very early at the distribution point to make sure not to miss their turn. Very often, we find a line of people early in the morning; some have been there since 3:30 a.m., sometimes lying next to their carts.

In San Francisco, CA, a lady who was very sick lived in a very small room in a building next to the Nuns' house. She used to come regularly to our soup kitchen for her meals, and sometimes she stopped outside of the hours, but the Nuns always managed to find her something. After a long absence, we saw her again in the street, all happy: thanking us for having helped her for several years because she now lives in a small apartment; she has not taken drugs or drunk for 2 years.

One of these unfortunate people expressed his gratitude to us: *"Thank you very much, because you gave me food and you gave me hope; now I have not taken drugs or drunk for several years."*



- Chicago, IL : food pantry boxes -



- Detroit, MI: visiting the airport with children from our neighborhood -



- Scranton, PA: serving the youth -



- In Niger, Africa: much dedication towards the children -



- Shrine of the Ecce Homo
in front of which Our Lady of Frechou,
Mother of Mercy and Mother of the Church, watches -
A big thank you to Sister Mary Remy,
our landscape gardener!

In 2022, a lady from New York, aged about sixty, came on a pilgrimage to our church in Scranton; she had the joy of making her first Holy Communion at the same time as her two grandchildren. Later, she had breast cancer for which she was operated on. After a while, she no longer had any trace of cancer.

In March of 2024, upon advice of her doctor, she received the hepatitis B vaccine. A week later, her legs became so weak that she could no longer walk and had to be hospitalized again: she was diagnosed with the “William Barrey” disease given by the vaccine, which destroys and paralyzes muscles and nerves. Falling into a coma, ten days later at night, her family called to inform Bishop Jean Marie that she was about to die. He immediately sent a priest and a nun from our church so that she could receive the sacrament of the sick. In the afternoon that followed, her red blood cell count began to increase and everything seemed to return to normal. She opened her eyes without remembering anything. Today, she speaks, eats and begins to walk normally again. Her great desire is to return to Scranton to thank the Most Holy Virgin Mary and acknowledge the prayers of Bishop Jean Marie. Her entire family is so grateful to Fraternite Notre Dame and Bishop Jean Marie for this great miracle.

In Detroit, MI a young woman, mother of two children, was the victim of a very serious accident on the highway, hit by a vehicle going the wrong way. She had a crushed rib cage, damaged lungs, multiple fractures in both legs and arms and she spent 6 months in a coma. Bishop Jean Marie sent one of our priests to administer the sacrament of the sick to her. From that moment on, she began to move little by little and finally left the hospital. Each time the Nuns pay her

a visit, she regains hope and a taste for life; she does everything she can to get through it so that she may take care of her daughters again. Pray for her.

Each week, the Nuns take care of the after-school program for the children of the neighborhood. In one of these families, they noticed extreme poverty. The front door was only held by one hinge, they lacked everything. Immediately, Bishop Jean Marie sent priests to repair the door and bring furniture, the Nuns brought food, shoes and clothing for the children. Seeing this, a neighbor exclaimed: *“It’s good to have people like you in the neighborhood, who take care of families in need!”*

Also in Detroit, MI a little 6-year-old girl would no longer speak. Having received the blessing of Bishop Jean Marie, she began to say shortly after: *“Daddy! Mommy!”* Imagine the joy of her parents!

Another 4-year-old little girl, in the village of Fréchou, in France, so dear to our hearts, the cradle of our Congregation, came to spend Holy Week with her parents. This little Marie has already received from her mother a good Christian education; she is well instructed in the Mystery of the Redemption and her little child’s heart has united itself well to the sufferings of Jesus and Mary during this Holy Week. On the evening of the Easter Vigil, at the sight of the triumphant statue of the Risen Jesus, Marie cried out, her face radiant and her eyes shining with joy: *“Look, Mom! Jesus! He has won!”*

A few months later, Sister Elise Marie of the Sorrowful Virgin ascended to Heaven almost at the age of 100 after a life filled with prayer and good works. Sister Marie Sabine surrounded her for several years

in an admirable way with dedication, patience and affection at all times.

In each of our Shrines, the summer months see a redoubled activity: maintenance or renovation of churches and various buildings; lawns and gardens are not neglected because they contribute to the beauty of the place. The visitor or faithful pilgrim is touched by a special grace: *"We always feel peace when we come to your Monastery."*

Catechism classes and Bible studies for adults are well attended in each of our churches and bring much good to families who live tormented by various material or spiritual problems. A mother confided to us that she is very grateful for the support she finds with the Fraternite Notre Dame; she feels a great benefit even in her home, she sees that her children change and that they have better behavior.

In Scranton, PA, on their way back from their church for Sunday Mass, a family saw our Corpus Christi procession. Seeing with what dignity the Blessed Sacrament was honored and the different altars of repose, they joined the procession and became faithful to Sunday Mass, catechism and Bible study for adults. Another parishioner never stops telling us that after having been educated in the Catholic religion since his early childhood, he admits that he knew nothing. He says he received the lights of the Holy Spirit from us, it is with Bishop Jean Marie that he learned everything about religion. Moreover, a retreat preached by the latter gave rise to many spectacular conversions. Several people testified that they were truly enlightened to change their lives and were able to make good confessions. This retreat strengthened them in their faith and all pray a great deal for Bishop Jean Marie, whom they truly consider as their Father, their Pastor.

The furtive flight of a blue jay, a ballet of butterflies above a field of alfalfa in bloom, a baby rabbit or a deer

crossing the path, a brood of chicks chirping under a roof ledge, a family of cranes advancing majestically with their two young; alpacas conscientiously grazing their territory, lambs freed for the summer from their warm woolen coats and rushing back home in the evening, a brood of ducklings waddling behind their mother, kittens frolicking or learning how to hunt: all this cannot cause us to forget the inevitable rows of beans, zucchini, cucumbers and tomatoes that must be harvested every day in order to supply our markets and stores. As for the immense expanses of Saint Francis Hermitage, they are entrusted to the good care of the Religious: onions, turnips, lettuce, carrots, beets with the precious apple orchards and the impressive farmyard (chickens, ducks, geese, quails, turkeys, guinea fowls) without forgetting the rabbits and pigs or our good bees!

All this is added to the St Roger Abbey pastry shop and the Saint Francis Hermitage restaurant, where our baker and cook Nuns devote themselves; the Religious take care of the animals, maintain the farm and the orchards, process the delicious organic apple juice and cider vinegar so popular with our customers. All this so that the Fraternite Notre Dame may live. Indeed, donations are far from sufficient to meet the needs of our Congregation. Following the monastic tradition, Bishop Jean Marie organized these quality productions to support our charitable works as well as the Missions requested by Heaven.

So, be blessed and thanked, all of you faithful friends who help our works; we do need your support and your prayer. All these unfortunate people that we help on your behalf will, one day, open the gates of Heaven to you, and as this beautiful Thanksgiving approaches, let us listen to Our Lady who tells us: *"My little children, each day, you must give thanks to God for all what He is doing for you. You request much, and this is fine! But do not be ungrateful towards your Sole Benefactor. Be in thanksgiving and proclaim His benefits."*

*Sister Marie Christine
of the Trinity +snd*

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