

The JOSEPH HOUSE



Little Sisters of Jesus and Mary

P. O. Box 1755
Salisbury, MD 21802

411 N. Poplar Hill Ave
Salisbury, MD 21801

ph: 410-742-9590
fax: 410-742-3390

LSJM@comcast.net
www.thejosephhouse.org

Volume 50 Number 2

February 2015

Dear Friends of Joseph House:

It is the middle of winter and the days can be cold and dreary, but for many people the time for renewal is beginning. The season of Lent is upon us, a time to renew ourselves both inside and out. The three elements of Lent are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving: **prayer** for the good of the soul, **fasting** for the good of the body, and **almsgiving** for the good of our neighbor.

Lent is based on the forty days Jesus spent in the desert. One of our favorite books for Lent, titled appropriately, *The Desert: An Anthology for Lent*, explains that the desert is not necessarily a physical place, but an experience through which we travel:

"It is an experience that takes many forms: the disappointments and frustrations of human relationships; the grievous wounds that men and women inflict upon one another; the capacity for self-deception, self-destruction; the loss of confidence, of faith, of vitality; the emptiness — the appalling emptiness — of life; the inescapable facts of pain, of permanent disability, of death." (John Moses)

The desert strips away the pretensions of life. It is a journey of self-emptying and the discovery of truth. As we leave behind all that is not God, we encounter the One who is. This meeting is the beginning of new life, a re-creation, a promise for all.

"The spirituality of the desert can never be confined to the enlightenment or sense of liberation that might be given to an individual. . . . The desert invites us to encounter this world — to enter this world — with understanding, with empathy, with commitment, with passion."

True spirituality will always lead us to our neighbor. A heart touched by God will have ears opened to the cries of the poor. Life can teach everyone compassion, and when we learn the lesson we can be the light of hope for someone walking a lonely road.

Shawn walked such a road — literally — despite having a broken neck from a bicycle accident. We don't know how he did it, but Shawn slowly walked two miles to the Crisis Center wearing his neck brace. Why did he do it? He was hungry and had no food.

By the time Shawn arrived the Center was closed. Thankfully our Director was there and invited Shawn to come in. Shawn received plenty of groceries and then our Director took him out to a restaurant for a meal. Shawn was very grateful, and we are grateful the Joseph House was there for him.



PRAYER REQUESTS: USE RETURN ENVELOPE OR E-MAIL TO LSJM@COMCAST.NET

O Lord, hear my prayer: _____

Melissa called the convent over Christmas. She was desperate: her eviction was set to happen in three days. Melissa has two sons and works as a nursing assistant. Her hours have been cut and that led to her falling behind in the rent.

Via telephone and fax we received the details of the eviction. Her landlord was demanding the full amount, which was beyond our budget. We spoke to him and promised to send \$300 on Melissa's behalf. He relented and agreed to give her an extra two weeks. Melissa said that would give her enough time to get the remainder of the rent money.

Felicia is a widow living on a small fixed income. The furnace broke in her home and she did not have the means to get it fixed. We spoke with the repairman and agreed to pay the bill, which came to \$215.

Justine, 36, has been homeless for the past year. After a long struggle she was accepted into a subsidized apartment complex. There was one thing standing in her way: the utilities needed to be turned on before moving in, but Justine had a \$700 unpaid bill with the gas company. If she did not pay this bill (which had gone to a collection agency), she would not be able to take possession of the apartment.

We called the agency and offered to pay \$300. That was accepted, and Justine will make payments toward the balance. She was recently awarded a monthly disability check of \$185. That is not much to live on, but Justine is grateful to have it. She is also happy because once she gets settled her child will be able to spend weekends with her.

Preston, 72, goes without things that many consider essential, such as a telephone and car. He can't afford them. We didn't want him to add running water to the list, so when he came to the Joseph House with his past-due water bill, we paid it.

Isaiah and **Jenni** have two young children, one just a newborn. Isaiah worked at a chicken farm but was laid off last fall. Jenni lost her job at a sub shop when it went out of business. Even though they both have good work histories, jobs are hard to come by. Isaiah received some good news: his old employers hopes to hire him back in the spring. Now if only he and his family can make it through the winter. An eviction notice threatened them with homelessness. The Joseph House sent \$250 to the landlord to stop the proceedings.

A Few Crisis Center Stats:

During 2014, our **Food Pantry** gave out 21,501 bags of groceries. An average of 832 households per month received food from us. The **Soup Kitchen** served 11,478 hot meals. The **Hospitality Room for the Homeless** responded to an average of 430 requests for services per month.

Many thanks to our volunteers who work the check-in table for the Food Pantry, who unload trucks, sort canned goods, bag groceries, work the distribution window, prepare and serve the meals, clean the kitchen and dining room afterward, launder clothes for the homeless, keep the shower and bathroom clean, and the many other tasks that do not go unnoticed by God. And we never forget you, our friends and supporters, who help us pay our bills. You are all loved and appreciated.

The desert experience is not particular to Lent, but to life. A saying goes, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." We never really know what others have been through or what lies ahead. A little patience and understanding will always go a long way.

We pray that God will keep you in His care. May He bless our world with peace.

Your Little Sisters of Jesus and Mary

