

The JOSEPH HOUSE



Little Sisters of Jesus and Mary

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Dear Friends of Joseph House:

“There’s no place like home,” says Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz*. And it’s true. Home is a special place, more than just a shelter from the elements. In their book *Coming Home*, psychologist Betsy Caprio and spiritual director Thomas Hedberg identify three qualities that people tend to desire from a home:

1. **Peacefulness** – repose, sleep, rest, relaxation, comfort, security, not having to be “on”
2. **Love** – unconditional acceptance, being able to be one’s self, caring, listening, relationships, affection
3. **Nourishment and Healing** – food, refreshment, oasis, renewal, being cared for, forgiveness, reconciliation

These are needs that everyone has. They must be met in order for a person to develop and have a sense of well-being. Having a place to call “home” can be vital for this to happen. Home is where it begins.

Reflecting on this can help us see the true cost of the housing crisis. Around the world, countless people suffer the tragedy of homelessness. It is inhumane. Even in the United States, a land of great pride and wealth, the number of people who cannot secure a place to live continues to rise. On average, 72 out of every 100 extremely low-income families (those making 30% or less of an area’s median household income) cannot afford their rental homes. This number has increased from the year 2000, when 63 out of 100 such families did not have affordable housing.

Today, **not a single county in the United States** has enough affordable housing for the poor. This distressing news comes from the Urban Institute using data from the Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Housing costs are skyrocketing and wages are not keeping pace. Families that cannot find affordable housing can choose from a bleak list of options: contend with overcrowding and substandard living conditions, fall into debt through payday loans, live in a vehicle, spend time in a shelter, do without utilities, adequate food and other necessities.

Housing is considered affordable when it does not cost more than 30% of the household income. At the **Joseph House**, we meet many people who pay 50, 60, even 80% of their income for a place to live. They know hardship and deprivation all the time.

Housing problems for **Perry**, 60, went hand-in-hand with his declining health. He lives with chronic pain and leg ulcers because of fibromyalgia, psoriatic arthritis, and venous stasis disease. Perry worked for years as a laborer, walking back and forth on concrete surfaces. Those days are behind him. He has enough trouble standing up.

Moving into a housing development for seniors, where the rent will “only” take 45% of his income, is Perry’s best hope for not becoming homeless. The Joseph House paid the \$350 security deposit so this man, poor in both finances and health, could at least have a stable place to live.



The mystery of the poor is this: that they are Jesus, and what you do for them you do for Him. It is the only way we have of knowing and believing in our love.

Dorothy Day



Prayer Requests: print, clip and mail to P.O. Box 1755,
Salisbury, MD 21802 or E-mail to LSJM@comcast.net

O Lord, hear my prayer:

Tammy and Will were ready to give up on the housing battle. After both lost their jobs, they lost their place to live. The couple decided to send their two children to live with grandparents in another state. In the meantime, Tammy and Will moved into their car and began the process of starting over. Once employment was gained and enough money earned for a new apartment, they planned to reunite their family.

After a few weeks their plan came to a halt. During a traffic stop, a police officer saw that Will had a suspended license. A tow truck was called and Will and Tammy's car/home was impounded, along with all of their possessions. They walked to the Joseph House the next day, bereft of everything, feeling defeated.

We decided to pay the fee (\$350) to get their car released. Will and Tammy have a long road ahead of them and getting back their vehicle is the first step. Our Hospitality Room is also available to them for food, showers, and laundry services. We can fill in for their home until they find their own.

Geoff, 31, is an Army veteran who was diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He abused drugs to cope with the pain, but now he is getting the treatment he needs. Geoff has made sufficient progress that he has regained custody of his four-year-old daughter.

The next challenge is to hold onto a place to live. His current rent of \$570 is 140% of his monthly benefit. Geoff, eager to work, is vigorously looking for a job. His sympathetic landlord agreed to accept \$150 from us to keep Geoff and his little girl in their apartment for the time being.

Alton, 27, had **very** little time to save his family from being evicted. His work hours at a lawn care business have been temporarily cut in half. His drop in pay, used to support his disabled wife and two young children, led to immediate consequences. Alton fell behind in the rent and an eviction notice was duly posted on the door of his apartment. He had no choice but to seek help from the Joseph House.

Alton only had \$180 to pay toward the \$439 that was due. We agreed to pay the remaining \$259. When one of our volunteers called the landlord, however, we found out that the sheriff and a moving truck were already at Alton's building. We literally had five minutes to deliver the check! Another volunteer dropped everything and made it just in time.

Thanks be to God for our volunteers and your generosity, that we could respond to this family in need without delay.

The home is a **building block**. It makes the neighborhood, then the city, state, and nation. The affordable housing crisis concerns all of us. What can America give to the world if we offer so little to the poor and vulnerable among us?

Thank you for reading this Newsletter and for supporting the Joseph House both spiritually and materially. We hope these summer days find you well. May the fullness of life we see around us fill your heart with the Creator's joy.

United with you in prayer,

Your Little Sisters of Jesus and Mary

Pray On

There's so many dying
across this land,
so many,
I just don't understand.

They're dying of pain
from heartbreaking grief,
loneliness and sorrow,
from disbelief.

I heard of a small child
thrown to the side of the road;
Tell me, how could
someone be so cold?

Where has all the love gone today?
Is the story of Jesus fading away?

I've seen the homeless
living in the street.
No place to keep warm,
no food to eat.

And all they do
all day is roam.
No one to love,
no place called home.

As children of God
we must be like Christ.
Love thy neighbor,
give sacrifice.

We must give
all that we can,
Or surely this will be
a dying land.

**Written by a homeless visitor
to the Joseph House.**