

# The JOSEPH HOUSE



## Little Sisters of Jesus and Mary

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### Dear Friends of Joseph House:

Our foundress Sr. Mary Elizabeth Gintling once shared this story of visiting a young man in prison:

He turned his face from me in the penitentiary visiting room. He was very young, tall and filled with hate, especially toward whites. His face was hard and defensive in every aspect. I looked at him and loved him because he needed love so badly. I said, "You need not talk to me if you choose not to. I just want to tell you I have seen the Warden and have gotten your friend out of solitary. I hope all goes well. If anything else bothers you or goes wrong, just let me know. Goodbye."

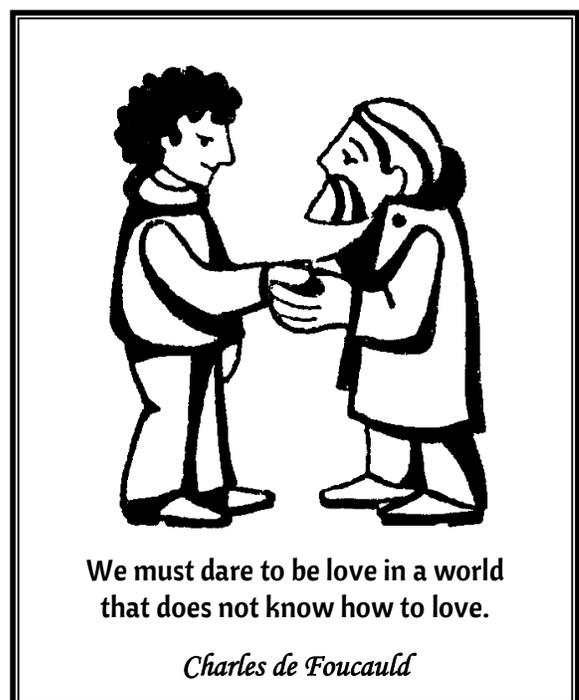
As I rose to go and he realized I wanted nothing from him — not even recognition — that I had helped to bring about something he wanted very much, he reached across and shook my hand. Our eyes met. "Lady, this is the first time in my life I ever touched white skin without getting the creeps." I smiled — gave him the black brotherhood handshake — and departed.

As I turned in leaving he stood with the first smile I had ever seen on his face. At that moment I shared with him the great degradation he had suffered from whites, and I flew to the car in tears.

"I looked at him and loved him... and he realized I wanted nothing from him." In the previous two issues of our Newsletter we've looked at the vows of poverty and obedience professed by consecrated persons, and now we turn to the vow of **chastity**, exemplified in the brief but powerful encounter described above. Chastity seems to be a taboo word in today's society. Some may see it as outdated, puritanical, or prudish. But that is not so. The chastity we profess is our response to an invitation from Jesus to renounce marriage for the sake of the kingdom (Mt 19:12).

As Sr. Mary Elizabeth explained, "This is no sterile, restricting, and dehumanizing call. On the contrary, it is a calling forth of the most awesome powers within us."

These awesome powers refer to our ability to **love**: to love with an undivided heart, to love without





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**In your charity, please remember my special prayer intentions:**

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being possessive, and to reject no one as beyond our love. The vow of chastity gives us freedom and availability. It is not "holier" than marriage; it is precisely because marriage is good and beautiful that choosing to remain chaste has any meaning. But like marriage, chastity exists to be of service to others: we are still called to be a fruitful branch of the Vine (Jn 15:5).

Sr. Mary Elizabeth believed the lived expression of chastity should look to the Holy Family and their little home in Nazareth for inspiration, a place of "warm universal love, mutual respect, and a deep sensitivity." We hope the Joseph House, our own little Nazareth, has these same qualities. With your support, we continue to reach out with love to the poor and suffering. We need your help: the Crisis Center is always busy with emergency social services.

**Phil** just retired after 35 years of employment. He and his wife have a combined income of \$733 per month. They rent a little house on the edge of an industrial park; it costs them \$625 per month. There is nothing more to scale back in their meager lifestyle. Phil came to the Joseph House with a cut-off notice from the gas company. We sent them \$300 and signed up Phil with our Food Pantry.

**Ingrid**, 58, has arthritis. She is deeply impaired by this disease. She lives in subsidized housing, which is fortunate because her out-of-pocket medical expenses can be high. Ingrid was upset when she fell behind in paying her electric bill; if the utilities get cut off she can lose her rent subsidy. We paid \$150 toward the balance due and located a church that agreed to pay the remainder.

**Holly** is a young woman who had to stop working because of an unexplained seizure disorder. She has two children, a boy and a girl. Holly babysits for other people and that supplies her only income. She is waiting to see if she qualifies for disability. The amount of money she makes now is not enough to support her family, and the electricity was turned off in her home because of an unpaid bill. We sent \$200 to the electric company to get the power back on.

### **No Safe Investment**

There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness.

But in that casket — safe, dark, motionless, airless — it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.

The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.

**C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves***

**Rosalie**, 42, also had the lights turned off in her home. She has multiple sclerosis and her symptoms have been getting worse. She was denied disability once before, but she feels she must reapply because of her declining health. Rosalie is buying a small house in a rural area. She had a tenant who was helping to pay the mortgage, but that person suddenly moved out. Rosalie was left in a lurch with the bills and that resulted in the electric cut-off. We sent \$225 toward the amount she owed.

**Lasandra** and her son were going to be evicted from their apartment. Lasandra has a steady job at a motel doing housekeeping work. She recently injured her back, however, and the pain limits how much she can work. She showed us her last pay stub: it was only for 12 and a half hours. We sent \$150 to her landlord. The Department of Social Services also agreed to help. May God heal Lasandra's back so she can be free of pain and continue to work.

**Marty**, 72, and his wife are country folk. They have lived in their home not far from the salt marshes for decades. Both Marty and his wife have health problems. The last two years have been rough. Every day can be a struggle but they have each other for support. Marty made the trip into town to see us because his last electric bill came with a cut-off notice. He was so far behind he didn't know what else to do. We sent \$150 to the electric company and found other sources of help for Marty and his wife.

**Jermaine**, 47, and his wife are refugees from Haiti. They have three children, including a newborn son. Jermaine works in a chicken factory. He is anxious to move his family to a safer neighborhood, away from the street corner drug deals. Jermaine also believes his current apartment has lead paint. Moving to a new place requires a deposit plus the first month's rent paid in advance. Jermaine's day-to-day bills make it difficult to come up with these extra funds. We paid \$170 to help Jermaine and his family move to a new location that is better for family life.

**Thomas**, 54, lives next to a farm and is deprived of several basic necessities. He has been sleeping on the floor. We spent \$200 to help him get a mattress and bed frame.

**F**or the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' This verse from the fifth chapter of Galatians is the answer to so many problems in the world. Thank you for your prayerful and financial support of the Joseph House, which allows us to share love with people who are often forgotten by others.

We pray for special blessings for fathers and graduates and everyone being celebrated at this time of year. May these late spring/early summer days keep us mindful of how beautiful life is.

**Your Little Sisters of Jesus and Mary**