



Under His Mercy

Newsletter of the Franciscan Sisters, TOR
January 2013



SAMARITAN HOUSE

**SISTERS AND
VOLUNTEERS
RUN A THRIFT STORE
AND FOOD BANK,
DOWNTOWN
STEUBENVILLE, OH**

Christmas Puppet Show at Soup Kitchen Ministry



Children's Gifts are a 'hit' at the Soup Kitchen Christmas Party!



Samaritan House Volunteers



TONY'S STORY:

It was a chilly Tuesday morning and the day was busy as usual at our Samaritan House Thrift Store and emergency food bank. A young man came in dressed in a dingy brown overcoat and dirty blue jeans, unshaven and not showered. He walked up to me and said, "Sister, can we talk? I need prayer." His blood-shot eyes spoke volumes of the hard life he was living. We went to the office and sat down. The man's name was Tony and he began to pour out his heart.

He spent many nights outdoors, and had been homeless for some time. He admitted he was addicted to booze, crack, and "coke" (cocaine). He had tried to get "clean" before. "It's hard when you are in so much pain," he said. I listened for some time and gently suggested that there were NA groups in the area where he could find support. I recommended nothing more; just listened and tried to show compassion. Then myself and another sister prayed with Tony. We asked if God would help our new friend to experience His deep and profound love for him.

As Tony left that day, I wondered if we would ever see him again. A week later a younger looking man came into the store. He was clean-shaven, showered, wearing a clean pair of blue jeans and a tidy looking sweatshirt. His eyes were bright and beaming. It was Tony! With a smile on his face Tony said, "Sister, I've been going to NA everyday. I've been clean for a whole week." Tony began a recovery period from this time on. Yes, God works miracles. All we need to do is ask for them.

By Sr. Mary Ann Kessler, TOR

Stories of Freedom in Christ

APRIL'S STORY:

In order to decrease her time spent in jail, April had the option of doing community service hours, so she started volunteering at Samaritan House Thrift Store and emergency food bank in October of 2012. After her service hours were completed, April has continued to volunteer on a weekly basis. She feels that she has accomplished a lot by being a committed volunteer at Samaritan House, and she said that, "being there makes a big difference in my life, especially when things get difficult."

Excitedly, April explained her main reason for continuing to volunteer: "Samaritan House has done so much to help me, and it's the least I can do to pay back even a little of what I've been given." April loves being at Samaritan House Thrift Store, and has really enjoyed learning how to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet, a spiritual devotion that she never heard about before coming to Samaritan House. April was never affiliated with any Church until recently. Now, through the people she knows at Samaritan House and at her new Church, she finds great support for her faith life.

Her favorite thing about volunteering at Samaritan House is "the people who volunteer, and those who shop at the store, since they are so helpful and generous to everyone." April finds the 20 minute travel time to get to Samaritan House a small effort compared to the joy of being there to help out. She recently walked 2 1/2 miles in order to assist at the store.

THANK YOU April, for your service and joy as you assist the efforts of this wonderful ministry. We are so blessed to know you.

By Sr. Mary Rose Bratlien, TOR

BONNIE'S STORY:

Bonnie had been away from the Catholic Church for many years, and decided to return after she learned the power of forgiveness. While serving her jail term, Bonnie met the Franciscan Sisters on a Sunday during their jail ministry hours. The Sisters spoke of the love of God, and of forgiveness of sins through Jesus' death on the Cross. Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven,... forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us."

When Bonnie came to realize she was forgiven by Christ, and that she also needed to forgive others, she met with a priest, through whom she was reconciled to God and to the Church. This was the beginning of her return to the Catholic Church and of a new found life of faith.

Bonnie told us how much she learned from our Sunday jail ministry sessions, and about the difference that the visits had made in her life. She was able to learn the value of forgiving those who have wronged us, and of the value of belonging to the Catholic Church.

By Sr. Mary Rose Bratlien, TOR



Freedom in Christ

Last October at our annual Day of Recollection we were privileged to have Mass with Bishop Zubik, and Fr. Joe Freedy, both of whom are from the Pittsburgh Diocese and dear friends of our community. There was great enthusiasm, laughter and tears among those who heard Fr. Joe's amazing talk entitled, "Freedom in Christ." Fr. Joe's humor and startling honesty deeply impacted our hearts and minds as he captured the essence of Jesus' mission to come to set His people free (Luke 1:68). He reminded us that we are precious children of a most loving heavenly Father and Jesus, the God-man, descended to earth for the sole purpose of bestowing upon mortal and often worldly-minded creatures, life everlasting. Fr. Joe encouraged us to often bring to mind the Truth that "Jesus came so that we might have life and have it abundantly (Jn. 10:10)." Fr. Joe also invited us to remember that God created us from and for love, both human and divine love, and that each of us is most heartily and fully WANTED and willed by God into existence, and that we, in turn, are created to bring love to others, so that love multiplies throughout the world.

Fr. Joe's commentary on our modern culture is that we often live chronically overly busy lives which inhibits us from quietly pondering in our hearts God's loving purpose for our existence, and that the sad result of being overly busy is that many people feel very lonely and isolated. "We are a culture fascinated with ourselves; 'me, myself and I' is the motto for a culture that fosters putting ourselves at the center of our own personal world." In Fr. Joe's opinion, Facebook and youtube are two examples of how we love to watch ourselves, easily becoming preoccupied with ourselves, rather than really being present to others in a personal way.

Fr. Joe spoke of how paradoxically, "there is no more lonely and isolated place to be then turned in on ourselves." "We have forgotten who we are," Fr. Joe reminded us. We keep ourselves so busy and distracted that we have little time to be quiet and to face what is in our hearts. Yet, the Lord Jesus came precisely to deal with the loneliness, brokenness, anger, and hurts in our lives to set us free. Jesus wants to free us from a meaningless existence, and from the crippling effect of worries, anxiety and sins that block us from God's love. "God greatly desires..." said Fr. Joe, "that we are free to have hearts set on fire with the burning love of God that can transform our hungry, lonely and suffering world into the world that God envisions for us, that is, a world centered on God and serving others."

Fr. Joe gave us a solution to being overly busy and burdened with cares of this world, he said, "to spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament each day, in order to be soaked in love and Truth, will counteract the lies that resound in our hearts about our lack of worth and human dignity, and will enable us to know how loved we are. Then we, in turn, are enabled to bring that knowledge of God's merciful love to those with whom we come in contact with on a daily basis."

It is this particular truth that sets free the human heart: We have worth, we are wanted and needed in the world, we are good, we are made in God's image and likeness, and God has saved us from our sins. This is the good news of the Gospel that our Sisters strive to impart by word and deed to those among whom we minister, especially the underprivileged, who often feel as if they are a burden to others. At all times, and particularly by their ministry at Samaritan House Thrift Store and emergency food bank, our Sisters desire to help others understand more profoundly that each person is God's beloved, saved by Christ's death on the Cross, freed for a life full of love and purpose.



PARTNERS IN *You Can Help* MISSION

Any contribution you make helps to support the prayer and ministry of the Sisters.

Celebrate with us in 2013 our 25th Anniversary!
(see upcoming events on back side)

We rely upon donations for 62% of our annual income. To remember the Sisters in your will, please use legal title: **Franciscan Sisters, Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother**

See our website for newsletter or e-newsletter sign-up, for news, events, and how to make a donation: *Electronic Funds Transfers (EFT) are easy, safe, and convenient!*

www.FranciscanSistersTOR.org

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2013: 25 Years of "Making Known God's Merciful Love"



25th Anniversary
Open House Celebration
May 4th, 2013
at the Motherhouse
Toronto, OH 43964

25th Anniversary
Benefit Dinner
for the Franciscan Sisters, TOR
Fall 2013