

L.S.F.

31-07-2017

To our dearly beloved friends at Heart to Hand in Ireland, Kieran L.M.C., founder and architect of the institution, his honorable wife, his worthy assistant and hard worker Pat, Dennis and all! May this letter find you well! It is my great joy to thank you once again for your generous contributions for the poorest of the poor which arrived here in Albania in the lorry driven by the able driver John Sullivan (who is an excellent donkey mimic, has a great sense of humor and is a hard worker). He not only drove the vehicle, he worked for hours with us to unload it!

What a great joy it was for me to be accompanied to the port of Durres by a man whom I baptized twenty-five or twenty-six years ago. As usual he would not accept any payment from me and even promised to get me a book on Albanian grammar (I am not so good from the grammatical point of view, which is the most important, for the language).

I hopped into the lorry with John Sullivan and Giovanni drove ahead of us to show us the proper way. It was a beautiful sunshine day.

We had organized a long time in advance, a group of very hard working men, themselves needy of aid, and we started to unload the vehicle at about fifteen minutes before two o'clock in the afternoon of Monday the nineteenth of June in this year two thousand and seventeen of our Lord (19-06-2017).

The civil authorities gave us permission to block the small adjacent road and a police officer sat on his police motorcycle the whole time that the truck was unloaded. We had first to cut down a few branches of the tree belonging to the neighbors, which they so graciously gave us permission to do, so that the truck could pass unscathed. A work crew of very dedicated men, themselves poor, if not truly the poorest of the poor, helped us, and I have to say that each one worked very hard. We provided everyone with water, biscuits (from Heart to Hand of course), and even coffee. After the unloading, we saw to it that each of the men received a generous package of food material and a bag of flour. I was overwhelmed by the generosity of the Irish at Heart to Hand. They literally flooded us with precious food material. What a beautiful sight to see on that nineteenth Monday of June! We received from the generous Heart of the Irish tons of milk! You have no idea what a precious gift this is for us! It comes in so handy for us! We use the milk of the Irish to give a sumptuous breakfast to our nearly thirty inmates of our home of hospitality (many call it a hospital), for the poorest of the poor. The breakfast that the severely handicapped, both physically and mentally, receive often has delicious cereal (Heart to Hand origin, of course), marmalade, and of course, a very good amount of "Whole Milk", from Heart to

Hand. When I can, I participate in the feeding of our handicapped, although I have to say that I am not as regular as the other Brothers are, for quite some time now. We also bathe our challenged guests, together with the help of our workers and then clothe them. We often use the clothes, first class material, provided by Kieran L.M.C. and his friends for them. We usually change their underwear (some of the boys prefer no underwear during summer), their pants and a shirt for the day. During the winter each inmate guest (we call them boys), also receives a heavy pullover, or similar item of clothing together with a pair of socks (guess where we get them from) provided by the shamrock lovers of Heart to Hand. Their socks do not last long; they seem to have a special talent for wearing them out quickly! Many of the men (or boys if you prefer), well advanced in age or not use nappies. It is a matter of necessity. Often one pair of nappies is not sufficient and we change them (or our workers) sometimes, even a number of times, according to the requirements of nature, during the day. We help each boy to brush his teeth and we try to dry them, as carefully after their bath as possible, even between their toes, so they do not get fungal infections. After breakfast, we clean the face of the boys with the face tissues so generously provided by heart to hand. Some of the boys are able to wipe their own face, but many are not, not in the least. The gloves, one use surgical examination type, so generously provided by Heart to Hand, we use when we have to clean private parts and we have to avoid transmitting dangerous particles of feces to other parts of the home. The gloves help us to keep this good hygiene; we use them a lot.

I would like to thank the Heart to Hand organization especially for providing many brand new socks and underwear for the prisoners. Thanks to the generous contribution of this highly industrious and well organized group, we were able to have excellent prison visits in both the Burrel and Kruje prisons together with the M.C. Sisters. They were very helpful in our prison ministry. Many of the men only dream of having a change of underwear or socks. In those prison visits, their dream became a reality. We had a beautiful encounter with the prisoners and the authorities allowed us to enter into the cells of all to give a very good package in the hands of each individual. Thanks to Heart to Hand each package contained about ten articles. In each package there was one jacket, one shirt (or a pair of pants), two pairs of socks (brand new), one toothbrush, one tube of toothpaste, two pieces of body soap and two pairs of underwear (brand new), one package of soda crackers (containing eight individual mini packages of crackers of Heart to Hand origin), which the prisoners really liked. We also gave each one a pair of rubber plastic sandals, just right for summer. In Burrel, we also gave each one a large bottle of shampoo. This time, because I had a lot of money left over, we gave each one a package of cigarettes, which the prisoners considered very precious, almost if I may say so, then the other items, which we normally would consider more useful!

You will have to excuse the author of this thank you letter (yours truly) for jumping back and forth, somewhat erratically. His, (my) mind is not the most organized mind but it is a mind full of enthusiastic

thanksgiving! I wanted to thank Heart to Hand for the tons of milk, for the tons of pasta, for tons of flour, for the tinned food in great quantity, especially the fish, soups and vegetables, also for the soups in packages. These concentrated materials help the Brothers much to heat up a quick nutritious supper in the winter with our leftovers. Thank you so much for the delicious cereals, and the sweet biscuits. The food supply is used in our home for the handicapped, for the Brothers, and for the local poorest of the poor. Thanks so much for the cooking oil and the porridge. Thanks for the many first class mattresses; you really outdid yourselves here, which were covered with a protective plastic rubber layer. They are perfect for our poorest of the poor inmates, they were put to use immediately. Thanks for the wheel chairs, crutches, medical supplies and walkers. Thanks for the toilet rolls; we have a lot from you. I had no idea how the people, especially the women, regard them so highly. Thanks in a very special way for the mountain of clothes, school supplies and stationary items, which are just perfect for the young poorest of the poor who go to school on an extremely low; if not nonexistent sometimes, budget. We have a lot and we have a brother who is very skilled in distributing to the very poorest of the poor. He takes his fourth vow very seriously in this regard. Thanks to your efforts, he also gives away a large amount of women's clothes and toys. There are many poor women and children, especially in our area, in Albania. The Children are so very thankful and especially the women. How can I thank the good Lord enough for Heart to Hand, Irish Hearts reaching out to needy hands? Thank you so much for the recent visit of Dennis and all of the initiatives regarding house repairs. The Irish are tremendous, incredible, if I may say so: when will their charity cease? Never, I hope never! You have made many people happy, especially the poorest of the poor!

You also gave many bed sheets and various toiletry articles.

I have one small request. The brothers have fallen in love with the new stove that you sent us for our chapel and want to use it in our refectory. One can understand why. Our old stove in the refectory is finished, the oven door fell off completely, the stove is broken in many places and it is a disgrace (with all due respect) to see such a deplorable stove inhabiting our refectory. If you would be so kind as to address that very generous stove distributor and see if you could get us another stove for the chapel I am sure that the problem would be solved and you would all be eternally rewarded for it! Brother Michael M.C., our very capable and zealous Superior has measured our chapel. The measurements are width-4meters, height-2.6meters, and length-10 meters. The brothers are so enthusiastic about the stove because we really need that modern kind which uses less wood and the wood used remains longer, because it is sealed and built so well!

I feel that there is a lot more for which I can give thanks but, I am, temporarily exhausted, I want to take some time now for prayer and to wash my clothes (if you saw the pile!). We will be in touch. May the Irish Hearts always reach out to the needy Hands and may the instrument be us! Mother Teresa says that there are so

many congregations that spoil the rich, let there be one that spoils the poor, and may we be that one! Thank you so much for the sauces, the many mugs, and the many shoes for children!

We offered our prison visits for your intentions.

We have some very good news: The honorable Albanian authorities have given us permission to visit all of the prisons in Albania. Normally a layperson, a priest or a religious receives permission to visit only one prison. We have permission to visit all of the major prisons in the entire country! What a beautiful challenge and opportunity! The poorest of the poor are everywhere, if only we have eyes to see! Mother Teresa says that Calcutta is everywhere, my personal experience confirms that, especially here in the north of Albania.

I send you much love, prayers and exhaustion, kindly requesting your prayers and continued support, for this your servant and friend, Br. Andre-Marie M.C.!