

THE "TOTES TO US" PROGRAM

"They need not go away;
You give them something to eat."
Matthew 14:16

I'm the coordinator for North and South Dakota, part of Region 9. This territory is 148,000 square miles, but the population of these large states is below 900,000 each. While there are a few sizeable communities like Fargo (125,000), Bismarck (74,000), Sioux Falls (190,000), and Rapid City (80,000), most people live in very small towns, reservations, or on ranches. The Dakotas are primarily wild frontier.

It's a challenge finding ways to provide support to people living in vastly different areas, and often at distances of 20 to 30 miles or more between communities. Most dwell in towns and small cities, shopping locally for their daily needs. Ranchers and farmers live in geographic isolation and are comparatively independent and self-sufficient. One might think that, by the very nature of their lifestyle, they are inherently better prepared for shortages or disruptions in material supplies. However, one of our North Dakota CORAC members pointed out that, although ranchers might do better than others around the country in an economic collapse situation, this would only be for a short time: They are dependent upon regular diesel and gasoline deliveries to run farm equipment and trucks to haul livestock. They depend on cell phones and internet for business and communications like anyone else. They routinely go to a local store or make the long drive to population centers to buy groceries and supplies. In some ways, having vast distances between neighbors and commerce centers may put them in a more difficult situation than those living in centralized communities. Certainly, the communications challenges for this region are foremost on my mind, but right now I'm inclined to invest my time and resources toward converting currency into food with the goal of helping all Dakotans in some small way.

A LITTLE SHOPPING

Leading up to 2017, I *frantically* bought as much dry food as possible and learned how to package this food into Mylar bags for long-term storage. (see "LONG-TERM FOOD STORAGE") This year, by contrast, I've been *calmly* buying large quantities of food mostly from Sam's Club – well over 10,000 pounds since February (I prefer to say "5 tons" as this sounds more impressive). This may seem like a lot to you, but even a ton of food is but a drop in the bucket when looking at feeding any appreciable number of people. It's impossible to say how long this much food would last since only God knows how many people will need to be fed.



There are
about 1,000
pounds on
each cart.

WHY, THEN, WOULD WE BOTHER BUYING FOOD IF IT MAY ONLY HELP FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME?

Because even this small amount of food will give God something to work with.

Originally, I wanted to keep the dried food at the homes of one or two friends who had ideal, defensible locations for refuges. For one reason or another, however, this plan never came about. In fact, it was ultimately beneficial that it failed, as you'll read shortly.

Since February, I've been systematically buying and bagging up PINTO BEANS, WHITE RICE, and OLD-FASHIONED OATS into separate 1-gallon Mylar bags. Mind you, 1-gallon Mylars are grossly inefficient for bulk storage because such small, individual packages have spaces between them, taking up far more room than using 5-gallon buckets or larger tubs.

WHY DID I OPT FOR THE SMALLER 1-GALLON PACKS?

So that they can be more quickly and easily distributed to people. At 4 to 7 pounds each, these smaller denominations are relatively portable. They can be carried in a backpack by anyone on foot, each pack containing about 50 meals.



These Mylar pouches began quickly piling up in my living room. I asked Our Lord to bless all the people who would consume this food at some point in the future. Looking apprehensively at the steadily growing mountain of mylars, I asked Our Blessed Mother what I should do next. I was so focused on finding a single place to put this sizable stash, but my plan of getting them to someone's refuge was simply not happening. Still, I felt the urge to get this food out of my house promptly. What do I do next?

THE MUSTARD SEED

After 5 months of gathering food, this question was answered once I changed my thinking entirely: Rather than stockpile or horde the food in a basement somewhere, I would *decentralize* it, getting it into the hands of as many families as possible. Distribute it! Get it into as many basements and pantries as possible.

With providential timing, Marcia Williamson, who owns the Mustard Seed bookstore in downtown Rapid City, unwittingly kicked everything off. Without my asking, she generously offered the ample space in her bookstore to keep the totes. She said I was welcome to use her store as a central "depot" where people could come to pick up a tote full of food. All I could say was, "That's a brilliant idea!!"

I called up several other CORAC members right away. I let them know that since they had signed up for CORAC, I was giving them a free tote of dried food with over 600 servings. Just come on down to the *Mustard Seed*.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE RESULT OF THIS TOTE GIVE-AWAY?

Simply put, this move was a game-changer. The response was swift and immediate, and far more than I was prepared for. People started coming to Marcia's store. The word spread like wildfire. People called me out of the blue, "Hi Patrick. I would like to join CORAC and get a tote of food." Many members who picked up their free tote would pull out wallets and checkbooks without any request for donations. To my surprise, I received several thousand dollars in donations in two weeks. Grateful, I said all contributions will go right back into buying more food. And back to Sam's club I went.

For the past few weeks, I have travelled throughout South Dakota: to Rapid City, Mitchell, Sioux Falls, and small towns in the heart of the state where our members live. I brought along many totes, not only to give to CORAC members but also the new folks who were motivated to join. We have gained well over a dozen new members including an unknown number of family members since we began giving people totes of food.

Mind you, the totes are not to bribe folks into joining – they are genuinely free gifts – but it was through this act of giving that blessings have returned several-fold. Likewise, CORAC members who accepted these totes have become more enthusiastic about our mission. Some who previously were not actively participating or who were uncertain how they could help have suddenly felt inspired to jump in, contributing their own ideas or finding other ways to get involved and spread the message about our organization.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GIVING PEOPLE TOTES OF FOOD IN THIS WAY?

First, they are getting something tangible and inherently valuable from CORAC, a gift that will definitely benefit them in the future, one way or another.

Second, a toteful of long-term emergency food alerts people to the seriousness of our situation during these disturbing times. It says that CORAC sees such preparations as prudent and necessary, confirming what some people already suspect in their hearts.

Finally, this shows that the volunteers of CORAC are willing to take real action to help others and their loved-ones. Simply giving someone a tote of food speaks volumes about our selfless investment of time, money, and energy for the benefit of others, literally putting our money – our *faith* – where our hearts are.





WHAT IS INSIDE EACH TOTE?

Each standard 18-gallon plastic tote contains:

- 4 packs of RICE
- 4 packs of PINTO BEANS
- 4 packs of OLD-FASHIONED OATS
- May substitute with packs of FLOUR and yeast
- 1 pack of BLESSED SALT
- Documents
 - Description of the *Corps of Renewal and Charity*
 - How to prepare the enclosed food
 - *The Prayer of Miraculous Trust* and other prayers and scripture.
 - Image of the Divine Mercy
 - Information about blessed salt and its uses

There are over 600 servings of dried food with a shelf-life of 10-20 years and 8 pounds of salt. I have had several priests bless all of the food in addition to exorcising the salt. It's very important to have all the food blessed. For some reason, I felt BLESSED SALT strongly on my heart about 4 weeks ago. In a crisis situation, this precious substance is invaluable.

On a side note, I've made arrangement with a local HONEY producer to buy raw, unfiltered clover honey. He is filling up the 2-gallon food-grade buckets that I picked up from a local donut shop. Honey as a prep food has been a particularly popular item with people.

HERE ARE SOME HIGH POINTS FROM THE PAST TWO WEEKS:

The Dakotas region has gained about two dozen new members. I cannot be certain as to the exact number because I don't know the size of all the families. Some have not taken the time to officially sign up with CORAC yet, but they assure me they're on board and will fully support the work we do. Also, more existing members have stepped forward to volunteer.

- Part of this project requires the purchase of totes to keep the food in because rodents can chew threw Mylar bags. Yet, I was frustrated at having to buy them because it took money away from buying food. So, I asked people if they had any totes THEY could donate to the cause. BINGO! This gave them an opportunity to contribute and now we

are helping each other! Totes keep coming in to me: One woman gave me 5 empty totes and amusingly one lid was still labeled "Photo Albums."

- I met a young physician at Immaculate Conception Church in Rapid City after the Latin mass. He was exceedingly enthusiastic about my tote program. Because of the troubles brewing throughout the world, he said that this same idea is on his heart to turn currency into food and supplies while he is still able. He grabbed a tote, made a donation, and then asked how he could financially support my ongoing efforts. We are going shopping this weekend to buy a score of empty totes and still more food.
- Following day, I drove to Sioux Falls to visit Peter, a young man who attended the conference with his family. I brought him 2 totes and some honey. I met his prayer group, *Mission SOS*, on 41st street. Next thing I know, I'm praying the Rosary in front of Planned Parenthood with 14 men! We were standing on the either side of the sidewalk facing each other like monks in a monastery. Afterward, they took me upstairs to their rented apartment which they had transformed into a chapel called *Jericho's Wall*. The women had remained upstairs praying the Rosary while the men prayed on the street. Upon entering, I was greeted with a large framed image of Our Lady of Tepeyac. The chapel was complete with an altar, rows of pews and chairs, and statues of Our Lady, Saint Joseph, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Behind the alter was the balcony window, and not 50 feet away was visible the that same Planned Parenthood. First, I told them how edified I was to witness such devotion and courage among these Catholic faithful. Then I told them about CORAC. We gained several new members and more full totes were given away.



- Meeting some of the men afterward for a beer, one fellow said something that affirmed I was on the right track. He said: "What is awesome about what you're doing is you are taking action, real work – the prayer of doing. You are ... *all in.*" That last statement would make any member squirrel of CORAC and *A Sign of Hope* smile!
- I returned two weeks later to follow-up on this first amazing visit. I asked other Sioux Falls members of CORAC to meet me at *Jericho's Wall*. As a result, more friendships were started and fellowships formed.

THE TOTE SHOW

After a surprisingly successful first couple of weeks, it is undeniable that I must continue this particular work. Our Lady wants me to take *The Tote Show* on the road. I'm planning trips throughout ND and SD to meet those members in-person who are already on board, asking them to invite their family and friends or folks from their prayer groups to meet with me and hear a brief spiel about CORAC.

My particular approach may or may not have the same success in your situation, but perhaps my witness will give you some ideas. The formula is working extremely well here. Yes, I do have the time as I'm not employed and don't have all that much money, but right now the tote program seems to be mostly self-sustaining. Previously, I had been putzing along slowly, gaining a new member here or there at random, but not much was happening to actively expand membership. But once I began giving people these packs of foods, it was like Our Lady suddenly hit the accelerator pedal. I feel like I'm in a little boat that's been caught up gracefully in a whitewater rapid, steering it to where it needs to go while also enjoying the ride. I pray you may find similar success.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO START YOUR OWN TOTE PROGRAM?

MONEY and TIME: The total cost of the totes is about \$45 each which includes the food, the mylars, O₂ absorbers, and the tote itself. This does not include your fuel to deliver them or your labor. I give one tote to members for free. If they want more than one or if someone is not a member but a person of faith, I ask for a nominal \$50. If someone cannot afford it, I will give more than one at my discretion.

- **TOTES:** free from friends or \$6-8 at Walmart.
- **MYLAR BAGS and OXYGEN ABSORBERS.** I chose 1-gallon, 5-mil Mylars and 500cc absorbers. Call [Ola](tel:9519024644) at **Pack Fresh USA: (951) 902-4644**. She confirmed that she is able to handle large orders. She can guide you on exactly what you will need.
- **FOOD.** Beans, rice, oats, wheat, or spaghetti, for example. Buy in bulk from Sam's, Costco's, or a local grower.
- **SALT.** I feel this is a *very* important commodity to buy. Get some iodized, some not. Salt does not need O₂ absorbers. A one-gallon Mylar holds 8 pounds.
- **HAIR STRAIGHTENER or IRON** to seal the mylar bags
- **PERMANENT MARKER or LABELS** to identify the contents
- **PRINTOUTS.** I've included a summary of CORAC, a sheet about how to prepare beans, rice, and oats, a page on prayers, a page about blessed salt, an image of the Divine Mercy, and the Prayer of Miraculous Trust. (**See attached documents**). I bought premium white paper from Walmart and used a color laser printer at a local library.

- HELPING HANDS. The tote program is labor intensive. The mylar bagging process works best with at least 2 people. This does involve some heavy lifting with bulk food, which is also the drawback: totes weigh ~75 pounds and realistically needs two people to carry – which does foster cooperation.
- ONE PRIEST OR DEACON. Have them bless everything, including you!

Then call your CORAC members and get a free tote into their hands as soon as possible. You will pick up all the fragments later!

Feel free to contact me with any questions or ideas.

Ave Maria, Stella Maris!

Patrick of the Dakotas
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