



St. Thomas of Canterbury Outreach Newsletter



Greetings from Uptown.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the St. Thomas of Canterbury Outreach Ministries are coping the best that they can. This crisis has caused a surge in demand for both the Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry while, at the same time, limited our number of volunteers. However, our current volunteers have doubled down in their efforts and enthusiasm, and we've been able to respond to the increased demand for services.

As you can imagine, we've had to adopt safe practices for both our guests and volunteers. The Soup Kitchen is now take-away, serving soup, salad, sandwiches, coffee and other items "to-go" from the church steps. To protect our volunteers from contracting the virus, we've created three isolated teams (all wearing gloves, head coverings, and masks) that play a different part in creation of the takeout bags—from sandwiches made remotely off-site, to a morning crew for salad, fruit & dessert, to an afternoon soup & distribution crew.

While we continue to feed our guests, we know they miss the fellowship of dining together in the church basement—the Soup Kitchen is as much about *community* as it is about food. We look forward to the day when our guests can sit together again to enjoy a meal!

Our Food Pantry has also seen a growing need for emergency assistance from both inside and outside of our 60640 zone. Over the past three months, more than 60 immigrant families of students from our affiliated St. Thomas of Canterbury & St. Mary of the Lake Schools have become regular clients. Our clients now line up outside, along the rectory at 6-foot intervals, and are served one-at-a-time. We are planning to move the Food Pantry into the church basement to adopt a choice-based model and room for indoor social distancing in anticipation of the winter cold, but this will require some fundraising.

Although our need for volunteers is currently limited to reduce health risks, we need your support now more than ever. Please also consider donating funds or supplies to further improve the essential operations of St. Thomas of Canterbury's Outreach Ministries!

We are happy to announce that **Tia Rashke**, our Amate House Intern, will be staying on as our **new Outreach Coordinator!** With Br. Ayub's transfer to the friar's Basilica in Milwaukee (see article inside), Tia is a perfect fit for this vital ministry. A native Wisconsinite and 2019 graduate of Boston College, she is currently pursuing a Masters of Pastoral Studies in Healthcare Chaplaincy at Loyola University. She is looking forward to "growing in [her] pastoral skills and strengthening the Food Pantry & Soup Kitchen's current relationships with clients, volunteers, and donors alike."



FOOD PANTRY AMID COVID-19

By the Numbers





The past three months of "to-go" Soup Kitchen operations would not have been possible without the commitment of our Morning Crew (**Cecilia, Victoria, Carolyn, Dorsey, Mel**) and Afternoon Crew (**Tom, Joseph, Dennis, Aaron, Pam, Leo, Jesse, Ellen, Joyce, Seema**).



**Soup Kitchen Morning Crew answers the question:
"What has it meant to volunteer during this crisis?"**

"I really appreciate the opportunity to help, to work with really nice people, and to be able to get out of the house. I look forward to volunteering twice per week and hope I'm helping to make a difference for those who need extra help these days."
-Victoria

"It feels good to be helping people of the community who really need it. It also makes days more meaningful when I have a schedule and reason to leave the house!"
-Carolyn

"For me, it's like going to church/Mass."
-Cecilia

"The Soup Kitchen has been such a part of my life with my kids and now that they've grown up, it still continues. For me, it's just trying in a small way to live out the Gospel. During the crisis, those who are marginalized have less support, and so it is good to offer a small help. I love our Church!!"
-Dorsey





In spite of COVID-19, the STC Soup Kitchen continues to function in its signature manner, that, as a well-oiled machine... The downside is that the hospitality and community that was happening in the church dining hall on Soup Kitchen afternoons are absent. However, what's constant is the guests' appreciation and gratitude for St. Thomas's Soup Kitchen being on the front lines in Uptown for those in need. I am inspired and humbled by the guests' resilience and resolve in living their lives as best they can in these hard times with such uncertainty.

-Joseph

FAITH IN ACTION

"Whatsoever you do for the least of these, you do for Me..."
(Matthew 25)

Over 40 years ago, members of the Catholic Worker—inspired by its founder, Servant of God Dorothy Day—began a Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry at St. Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Church.

When the Archdiocese of Chicago asked the Franciscan Friars to pastor the parish in 2016, they were a natural fit. Founded by St. Francis of Assisi, the Franciscans have an 800 year-old tradition of outreach to the poor. Our pastor, Fr Bob, works at the Soup Kitchen & Food Pantry; Br. Don is our chief Soup Kitchen cook; and the Franciscan postulants (first-year members of the order) have been a helpful presence as well.

We've also been blessed with the recent addition of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters, a missionary community from Nigeria, who volunteer regularly at the Soup Kitchen, in addition to seminarians for the Archdiocese of Chicago.



"Today we cannot be satisfied simply with being aware of the problems faced by many of our brothers and sisters. We need to stop seeing poverty as a statistic rather than a reality. Why? Because poverty has a face! It has the face of a child; it has the face of a family; it has the face of people, young and old. It has the face of widespread unemployment and lack of opportunity." -Pope Francis

We also want to thank **former Director of Outreach, Br. Ayub Mwenda**, for his service to Ss. Ita & Thomas of Canterbury Parish over the past 1.5 years and wish him well as he expands the outreach program at St. Josaphat Basilica in Milwaukee, WI. He wants you to know that he welcomes visitors and continues to train for the Chicago Marathon and fundraise for St. Thomas of Canterbury's partnership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository!



Stay Involved

If you are looking for more ways to support St. Thomas of Canterbury Outreach Ministries, consider donating items to our Food Pantry (needs include reusable masks, toilet paper, toiletries, cleaning supplies, instant oatmeal packets, instant coffee, sugar, cooking oil, canned foods) or Soup Kitchen (reusable masks, cases of bottled water, single-serve chip bags, scotch tape, plastic sandwich bags). Our Clothing Room is closed at this time, so we are not accepting any clothing/household donations. *Please contact Tia Rashke, Outreach Coordinator, at 773-878-5507 or stcsoupchicago@gmail.com to coordinate the delivery of food/toiletry donations.*

Your financial support also makes the work we do possible.

Donate online at <https://tinyurl.com/stcoutreach> or give using included envelope.

Thank you for your generosity!

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