

SAINT THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

4827 N KENMORE AVE | (773)878-5507 | WWW.STCUPTOWN.COM



Food Pantry

Mondays and Thursdays

9:00am-11:30am

1:30pm-3:00pm

Soup Kitchen To-Go

Tuesdays and Fridays

between

5:30pm-6:30pm

OUTREACH MINISTRY NEWSLETTER

SPREADING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Jim Eder, temporary director/semi-retired, of the soup kitchen, which is part of the St. Thomas of Canterbury Outreach Ministries, reminds us that the soup kitchen was founded on the Gospel:

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me....”
(Mt 25: 35-36).

“I have been associated with the soup kitchen for about 40 years.... Over that period of time there are many incidences that one would like to share with people interested in the soup kitchen.

I will share a story that will help explain why I’ve been around so long. . . .

One night, when there were not very many volunteers, I was cleaning up and wiping tables at the very end thinking, “God forbid that the director, temporary, should have to do some physical work.” As I was diligently and busily doing the menial task, I noticed one of the few stragglers, who was eating very slowly. He had the look of a man who was very weary and had been run over by life. He spoke out loud, but not directly to me. It was strange. It was like he wanted me to hear it, but he didn’t want to address me directly. He held up spoonful of soup and kinda looked at it and said, “You know I tell people they never had soup until they had it at Canterbury’s.” I didn’t want to brag about the fact that I had cooked the soup, so in my great humility I said, “yes we usually do a pretty good job and make a nice soup.” He, staring off, slowly shook his head and said, “no man that ain’t it.” Then he said, “ this is made with love.”

Well, I thought, “We are doing something right around here.” That kept me going for 15 years. Along with the fact that you get to work with the nicest people in the world.

Our guests are very appreciative and it’s an interesting challenge every time we get to fulfill the Lord’s command, “to feed the hungry.”—Pax et bonum, Jim Eder



The Catholic Church’s social teaching expands upon the Gospel in emphasizing the dignity of the human individual. Each human person is more than just another mouth to feed or body to clothe. Rather, each individual is made in the image of God. As we learn from the Church’s Social Teaching:

“The Church, the sign of God’s love for mankind and of the vocation of the whole human race to unity as children of the one Father, intends . . . an integral and solidarity humanism capable of creating a new social, economic and political order, founded on the dignity and freedom of every human person, to be brought about in peace, justice and solidarity.” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 19).

In this understanding, justice requires and charity demands us to come to the aide of those in need. For, as Christ said,

“whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did it for me” (Mt 25: 40).

OPERATIONS

First, we would like to thank you for your ongoing support and generosity to Saint Thomas of Canterbury Outreach Ministries. We cannot do this alone. It takes the dedication of our volunteers, the commitment of our staff, and your generosity as donors. Through these acts of charity, you share in becoming the hands of God to help those in need.

As you probably know, the new COVID-19 protocols have dramatically altered our operations. What had been done inside is now done outside. In the past, we would invite our 100+ guests into the cafeteria for food and fellowship. Now, we have to distribute soup for takeaway from the church steps. (Pictures of volunteers performing food prep and distribution)

Through the Christmas Season and into the Season of Lent, those involved with Saint Thomas of Canterbury Outreach Ministries have been working hard to help those in need in Uptown. The volunteers and employees continue to follow COVID-19 protocols by washing hands, wearing masks and gloves, and maintaining the required six feet of social distance between each other when receiving donations/ organizing care packages, during food preparation and distribution, and during cleanup. While these requirements continue to make the work more challenging, it has not stifled the volunteers' spirit and commitment to helping the poor.

The St. Thomas of Canterbury Soup Kitchen continues to operate every Tuesday and Friday from 5:30-6:30 pm as a "to-go" service by handing out hot soup, hot coffee, and bags of cold food (salad, sandwiches, and dessert) to the guests who come to the door.

The soup kitchen has also purchased new wheeled carts and mops/mop buckets to facilitate more efficient transportation of food to the front door and clean-up after the food has been distributed.

A recent change is that St. Thomas of Canterbury Food Pantry has new days and hours of operation:

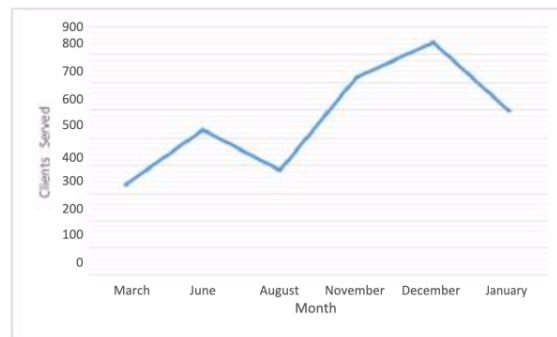
Mondays and Thursdays from 9:30-11:30am and 1:30-3:00pm. Donations may be brought to the food pantry during those hours.

Food Pantry Donations Needed: personal hygiene items, winter coats/gloves/hats, heavy socks, blankets, reusable face masks, and non-perishable food.

During the cold winter months, there has been an increase in the number of requests for hand warmers, gloves, hats, coats, and blankets, especially when guests arrive for food at the soup kitchen. Although these items are not typically provided by soup kitchens and food pantries, because of generous donations, the volunteers have been able to provide these much needed items, along with face masks and sanitizer to our guests.

The Outreach Ministries remain a strong Catholic presence in a neighborhood that depends on them – now more than ever. The friars, the leadership, and the volunteers work tirelessly to meet the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 protocols and have been able to respond to increased demand.

The Soup Kitchen numbers have remained steady: about 1000 meals are served per month.



As you can see from the chart, the Food Pantry has shown a marked upsurge in need, due to pandemic related unemployment. One reason for the increased demand is a spike in families with children seeking our help, including our school families- almost all of whom are immigrants or refugees living below the poverty line. After serving 845 clients in December, we are thankful to see that record demand decreasing.

BEING THE HANDS OF GOD

One of the greatest rewards for our volunteers and employees of St. Thomas of Canterbury Outreach Ministries is meeting the people they serve. This allows them to see the difference they are making in the lives of others—to see what it means to bring the Gospel message to our guests. They are not only providing goods to meet material needs but also a smile, a listening ear, and a kind word to let those in need know that they are cared for and valued.

Jakub Kvasewicz, 19, has been a regular volunteer at the soup kitchen on Fridays assisting with food preparation, distribution, and clean-up.



“I started volunteering in the Fall of 2019, working with Loyola’s CSA department to help out at the soup kitchen. Right away, I fell in love with being here and wanted to keep coming back. The relationships I’ve developed with those who I work with and with those I help have transformed my life, and being in a more personal environment of helping those in need allows me to ensure that my work makes an impact. Being here reminds me to be grateful for what I have, and that everyone in need deserves as much help as they need. I am ever thankful for being able to be here and for being able to help those that I can.”

It is through donations and the sharing of time and talent, like Jakub Kvasewicz and Jim Eder, that the Outreach Ministries at St. Thomas are made possible and are able to continue.

During the season of Lent, the Church presents the faithful with the three pillars of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. However, these practices are meant to be a central part of the life of a Christian, regardless of the season. Why? It is because they are a means to practice detachment from material goods in order to deepen our faith and be more merciful to others, especially those in need. Fasting can be practiced by abstaining from food and/or not buying something and giving that money to someone in need. Prayer can be used to deepen our relationship with God and pray for others in need. Almsgiving can be the gift of time, talent, or treasure to someone in need or to an organization that serves those in need.

Lent may be over, but we ask you to consider donating to the Saint Thomas of Canterbury Outreach Ministries through one of these pillars. We welcome the gift of your time, your talent, your treasure and especially your prayers. We look forward to the day when we can open our doors to feed the poor and to the volunteers who wish to serve them.

