



Vincentian Charities

Newsletter and Chronicle of Activities
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL
Louisiana, Capital Region
Thanksgiving Edition 2020 Vol. XXIX, No. III



*Serving God's Poor in our
Community Since 1865*



Christmas Spirit On Its Way

Every year, St. Vincent de Paul touches the lives of thousands of needy children. During the holiday season, it's a challenge to collect all the toys we need for the children in our homeless facilities, as well as needy kids throughout this area. This year will be especially challenging because of the COVID 19 pandemic and the struggling economy.

We can all remember how much a Christmas gift means to a child, and the Christmas spirit is needed more than ever this year. We anticipate a much larger demand, and we need donations to purchase toys for children 12 years old and younger. Last year, Bishop Duca, along with Sylvia Weatherspoon, distributed Christmas gifts to more than 600 needy children at the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room. In addition, we also distribute gifts to children throughout the community, working closely with law enforcement to get gifts to children who are truly in need. Last year, we provided gifts to over 3,000 children in our area.



We want to express our heartfelt gratitude once again to Sylvia Weatherspoon and WBRZ-Channel 2, as well as local Chick-fil-A restaurants, who are once again leading this community effort to collect toys for needy children. **Continued on page 2; see "Sylvia's Toys"**



Remember Us on Giving Tuesday!

Don't forget to give to St. Vincent de Paul on Giving Tuesday – December 1st! There are several different ways you can give on this National Day of Giving, and really help our vital work.

Two great ways to give. One is 225Gives which is a fantastic new community effort presented by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Capital Area United Way and many supporting outstanding foundations and businesses. Please visit 225Gives.org to see how you can help St. Vincent de Paul during these difficult times. 225Gives is a "powerful online fundraising initiative that will unite the Capital Region in support of the nonprofit community. Raising money for nonprofits is more vital than ever." This effort also will offer a wide array of cash prizes to participating **Continued on page 2; see "Giving Tuesday"**



A Thanksgiving Recipe for Success

Thanksgiving will look different this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but good food will still be an important part of any family celebration. As many of us plan our holiday menus, there are others who are wondering where their next meal is coming from. Many of them are living in homes where people have to skip meals or eat less to make ends meet. Some of them have no family or home.



On Thanksgiving Day, we want to make sure they have a place to turn for a holiday meal. This year, our volunteers will be serving up a Thanksgiving meal at our Dining Room and will continue the Holiday Helpers' tradition as well. Sometimes, we are overwhelmed by the number of people who turn to St. Vincent de Paul for the nourishment they need. But these people are not numbers – they are real people in desperate situations. Many of them were struggling before the pandemic, and the impact of COVID-19 has been a devastating financial blow.



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Bishop Ott Shelter Collection Drive

We are pleased to announce that WGMB Fox 44, WVLA Channel 33, and their family of stations have come together for the 29th year to support our Bishop Ott Shelter Program. They will again run an extensive collection drive for our shelters, collecting items for homeless men, women, and children. All these items are critical to the people who come to us with little more than the clothes they are wearing. Things like toothbrushes, disposable razors, shaving cream, soap, and shampoo are so important to someone's dignity and self-esteem, and without them, it's impossible to make a good impression when you are trying to find a job.

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A list of items appears below and on our website at svdpbr.org. You can collect these items and donate them by dropping them off at the St. Vincent de Paul main charitable campus at 220 St. Vincent de Paul Place. We'll gladly get them to the homeless people who desperately need these items. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to give us a call at 383-7837, ext. 0.

Bishop Ott Shelter urgently needed items: toiletry items such as deodorant, soap, shampoo, body wash, lotion, and body powder; twin & crib size sheets; paper products (napkins, paper towels, toilet paper); disposable cups, plates, bowls, knives, forks, and spoons; and rain gear. We also need blankets; disposable diapers; men, women and children's underwear; socks; knit caps; gloves; scarves; reading glasses (all strengths); slippers; towels and washcloths.

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nonprofits, so you can help St. Vincent de Paul earn additional financial support by making your gift through this website. For more information, visit 225Gives.org.

Another terrific way to give on Giving Tuesday is **iGiveCatholic**. St. Vincent de Paul has participated in this effort for many years. **iGiveCatholic** is a national Catholic Giving Day that kicks off the charitable season and brings the community together to give thanks and give back. This day of giving inspires faithful stewards to give to Catholic organizations on Giving Tuesday, a global day of giving.

St. Vincent de Paul's work is built on Christ's message of love for all of God's children, and **iGiveCatholic.org** is built on that foundation. It's a great way to help with our work.

You can give on Giving Tuesday the old fashioned way, by writing a check and sending it to: St. Vincent de Paul, P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821 or go online and give at svdpbr.org.

Whether you give to us via **225Gives**, **iGiveCatholic** or you do it the old fashioned way, you are making the critical charitable work of St. Vincent de Paul a reality. Your support will feed the hungry, fill a prescription, or provide a place to call home for families in need.

Sylvia's Toys Continued from page 1

Check out our upcoming Christmas newsletter to see an entire list of those who are supporting this year's campaign. Please consider donating a gift to a needy child. You can buy a toy in the \$10 to \$20 range and drop it off at any St. Vincent de Paul or Chick-fil-A location after Thanksgiving. If you'd rather make a financial contribution for the purchase of Christmas toys, you can do so by sending a check to St. Vincent de Paul Toy Drive at P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821. Or go to svdpbr.org to make an online donation. Your financial support will help us continue the tradition of bringing the Christmas spirit to needy children throughout the area. We thank everyone who has helped us with this campaign in the past and hope you are able to do so again.



Just before Thanksgiving last year, members from Congregation B'nai Israel posed for a quick picture with St. Vincent de Paul staff. We love the Congregation B'nai Israel! Every year, they come through for us, donating the turkeys (nearly a thousand pounds) for our Thanksgiving meal. They make sure that every Thanksgiving is a great one. They collect the turkeys and deliver them in plenty of time for us to get them ready for our Thanksgiving meal.

A Thanksgiving Recipe for Success Continued from page 1

At St. Vincent de Paul, we're ready to put our tried and true recipes together, but we're also adding special COVID-19 protections to our recipe for success. All meals will be provided on a to-go basis or delivered by volunteers.

This Thanksgiving, we are seeing firsthand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and our troubled economy. People who were living paycheck to paycheck are now living in poverty. Layoffs, rising prices and high unemployment rates are resulting in a growing number of people who can no longer make ends meet.



Those are the people who are coming to us in desperate need of assistance. Our lines are long at the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room, but we are doing our best to meet the growing need during this worldwide pandemic.

There are so many people who make our work possible. We are thankful for the continued support of the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation for their support of St. Vincent de Paul and all of our Holiday Helpers' efforts.

It is a blessing to be a community leader in feeding the poor and homeless on this national holiday. We are so thankful for retired Constable Reginald Brown and all the leaders of Holiday Helpers for their continued support and leadership of this effort, which brings the community together.

We thank Ronda Ruffino, Chef Peter Palisi, and the entire crew at the Raising Cane's River Center. These community leaders are once again playing a critical role in reaching people who truly need a helping hand this holiday season.

Thanksgiving is just not right without turkey, and we thank the entire Congregation B'nai Israel for doing their annual Turkey Train! They collect enough turkeys to ensure that we can continue this Thanksgiving tradition. Annually, the synagogue is the single largest contributor of turkeys for our Thanksgiving meal service to the poor. Their help is even more critical this year because of the pandemic.

At St. Vincent de Paul, the most critical ingredient in our Thanksgiving recipe is you – our supporters. Our guests are so grateful for the meals you make possible.

During these difficult times, we are all called to share God’s blessings with the less fortunate. First and foremost, we ask you to join us in praying for those we are blessed to serve. By the end of this year, we will serve over 200,000 meals, so your support is needed as we combat hunger in our area. For a gift of just \$1.00, you can help us provide a hot, nutritious meal. \$100 provides a hundred meals, and \$400 typically feeds all the guests at our dining room on any given day. You can make your gift online at svdpbr.org or by mailing a check to our St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room at P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821.

We wish everyone a happy, wonderful and safe Thanksgiving! Thank you for your support in helping us to make a difference in our community.



Bishop Michael Duca and St. Vincent de Paul Leaders gather for a photo right after the St. Vincent de Paul Annual Mass. Those in attendance followed all COVID-19 policies.

St. Vincent de Paul Annual Mass Goes Virtual

On October 7th, at the St. Joseph Chapel located on the Catholic Life Center Campus, Bishop Michael Duca and some of our Vincentian leaders gathered to celebrate another year of dedicated service in our community.

At the Mass, Bishop Duca gave a powerful homily on the work of St. Vincent de Paul in the Baton Rouge Diocese. He recognized our entire St. Vincent de Paul family and our commitment to our ministry to the needy. It was a powerful message and testimony to our 155 years of work in the community. If you missed the Mass, you can still catch it and the Bishop’s homily in our SVDP Blog at svdpbr.org.

Save on Your Taxes and Help St. Vincent de Paul

Did you know that if you are 70½ years old or older, you can give up to \$100,000 from your IRA directly to St. Vincent de Paul without paying income taxes on the money? The transfer does not generate taxable income or a deduction, so you’ll benefit even if you don’t itemize your deductions. If you haven’t taken your required minimum distribution this year, your IRA charitable rollover gift can satisfy all or part of that requirement. If your spouse is 70 ½ years old or older, they can also give up to \$100,000 from their IRA. If you have questions, please contact Michael Acaldo at macaldo@svdpbr.com or call (225) 383-7837, ext. 0.



Bishop Duca mentions the importance of our chapel project in his homily at the St. Vincent de Paul Annual Mass.

A Good News Update on Our St. Louise de Marillac Chapel Project

In our February 2020 newsletter (doesn’t February seem like a life-time ago), we reported the great news that, our chapel project had received another wonderful gift from the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Family Foundation. This significant contribution, along with other generous donations, allowed us to move forward with this project. And then...the pandemic hit, and our world changed.

Although our chapel project is a high priority, after the coronavirus outbreak we had to turn our attention to our mission of reaching and serving the poor and homeless. We have been successful in making a difference to thousands of needy people in these tumultuous times. We also had a major shelter project in the final stages of construction. We had to complete that project and get it open in some capacity before hurricane season, which we did, and that allowed us to get homeless individuals and families off the streets during Hurricanes Laura and Delta.

During all of the various challenges we have recently faced, our Board leadership has focused on the next strategic steps of our organization. As part of our strategic planning process, our leaders have put a great deal of time into our chapel project. During the slowdown caused by the pandemic, our leadership worked closely with Bob Lunsford, our architect. Bob was finishing up the design phase in June which, once we received all approvals, would have allowed us to go out for bids on our chapel. However, our Board wisely examined the original vision for the chapel, and even though the chapel design itself has not changed significantly, the Board’s vision to add much needed space is a great enhancement that will enable St. Vincent de Paul to provide desperately needed multi-use space for meetings and other gatherings for our volunteers and those we serve.

For instance, the extra space will allow for expanded involvement from local schools and church ministry groups. Many of our younger volunteers are shocked that so many people in our area are hungry and homeless, and this chapel will provide them an opportunity to connect their faith to action as they serve others. A chapel will give young and old an opportunity to pray and reflect on their experiences in serving the poor. Retreats and service projects will be held at the chapel, which will help all to grow spiritually. Of course, this enhancement will add costs to the project and, as part of our strategic planning process, we are working on getting estimates of those costs. As our strategic planning continues, we encourage you to give us your input by filling out our planning survey located at svdpbr.org. The plan will be completed this year and released in early 2021.

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Thankful During Difficult Times

The pandemic has given all of us an opportunity to reflect on what is really important. There are things we might have taken for granted in the past, but now are truly thankful for. I believe that every day is a gift from God, and when I wake up each morning, I am so thankful that He has given me another opportunity to enjoy His blessings. Obviously, I am thankful for my parents, my wife, and my children, but I am also grateful to be a part of the St. Vincent de Paul family.

Every day, when I walk through the halls of St. Vincent de Paul, even during the pandemic, I see people coming in to volunteer their time and resources to our efforts. They share their skills unselfishly and are aware of the risks they may be taking to come in and drop off a meal or a donation of soap or some other necessity. I see individuals who donate food items – everything from a bag of rice to a whole pallet of food. Some people come by to drop off a financial gift or a car title. How fortunate I am to witness their good deeds and to see such generosity every day.

At St. Vincent de Paul, there are so many things to be thankful for. Yes, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a great concern to us as the need for our services continues to grow, but every request is an opportunity to make a difference. What a blessing that is! I am thankful for you, our supporters, who are giving in every way you can and as much as you can. You are the ones that make our visions a reality.

At St. Vincent de Paul, I see our volunteers and staff members responding to local needs in an accountable way, giving a hand-up to individuals and families who have nowhere else to turn. “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me...” These are the words that motivate us and the message that touches our hearts.

We are all called to be Christ’s disciples, and I am thankful for the opportunity to see so many people who have responded to His call with kindness and generosity. I want to express my gratitude to all of you. Please be assured that everything you do is greatly appreciated. – *Michael J. Acaldo, President & CEO, St. Vincent de Paul Charities*



The first printing of “My Bicycle Journey” sold out! But don’t worry, now in its second printing, you can still get a copy of “My Bicycle Journey,” the inspirational book about the life of retired Constable Reginald Brown. All proceeds go to the charitable work of St. Vincent de Paul. You can purchase your copy, online at svdpbr.org or call us at 225-383-7837, ext. 0.