

Taste the

NEW WINE



HOLY FAMILY PARISH

A CARING COMMUNITY

Summer, 2014

Holy Family Back to School Program—The History

by Barb Sawatzki

One hot summer afternoon about thirty years ago, I was sitting in the Door Ministry office with Dolores Goodlett, our Door Minister; Deacon George Stanton, our Parish Administrator; and his wife, Peggy. We were discussing the many donations of children's clothing that had piled up in recent weeks and wondered how best to distribute to those who needed them.

"Since school will be starting soon, why not hold a children's clothing giveaway," one of us said, "and let parents take as much as they want." Up to that point we had been giving only one outfit at a time, as people came in asking for them. But there now seemed to be an unusual excess.

And, thus, the Holy Family Back to School Clothes Giveaway was born, to be followed by many more over the years.

I think we served about thirty children that first year, which seemed a large feat at the time. However, Dolores and her half dozen or so cohorts led us to serve thousands of children over the last three decades. This group of dedicated ministers to the poor would begin meeting about February each year, usually centered around a meal of some kind—ideas seemed to flow better with food. The main jobs that I recall included publicity, fundraising, recruiting the many volunteers needed for setup and the giveaway, plus the take down afterward, and, of course a luncheon for these wonderful and generous volunteers.

For several years, all of the clothing was used, which we had carefully sorted throughout the year, following Dolores' adage, "if it's not good enough for your child to wear, it won't do for our clients, either."

Then one year we received an unexpected donation of brand new children's socks and underwear when my daughter, who worked for a department store in Omaha, convinced the manager to give us the season's leftovers that normally would have been thrown out. The only condition required was that we cut through labels on each item so it could not be returned, which we were happy to do. There were also some years that we had new jeans to distribute.

I recall the hours and hours it took to set up tables throughout the church's ground street level, then cover them with piles and piles of children's clothing—according to size and sex. Even the hallways were utilized for this expanding program. And some years we included a "career closet" for working women, providing nice suits and coats.

Some of the best memories of these giveaways are the luncheons held in the rectory. The giveaway would usually end around noon each day and many of the volunteers gathered in the rectory dining room to feast on a main course (Kentucky fried chicken one day, sub sandwiches the next, and perhaps pizza on the last day), generously financed by a long-time member of the parish. Each luncheon also included home made deserts and salads lovingly

prepared and provided by members of Holy Family Church, some of whom also worked at the giveaway.

It was such a treat to reconnect with so many people from all over the community who came each year to assist us in serving the children. The luncheon also provided an opportunity for volunteers to share their experience of service that day—there were stories to tell that brought both laughter and tears. We would also discuss what worked well and what improvements we might consider for the next year.

For example, it was noted by some of the volunteers that clients seemed more interested in the new items, heading for those tables first. In fact many people would leave without even looking at the used clothing. So, the decision was made to eliminate the used clothing for the giveaway in the summer, and have a year-round children's clothing room for used clothes. No one was disappointed by not having to set up all those tables and piles of clothing that we'd been doing for so many years.

Dolores listened to her volunteers and paid attention to the needs of those we serve, making changes accordingly. Another of her adages I recall was "keep it simple, with the least amount of work," or something like that. And so, the "Back to School Clothes Giveaway" evolved into the "Sock and Underwear Program," first only at Holy Family but later at a second location in South Omaha to better serve our clients.

Who is Our Neighbor?

A revived reflection from Dolores Goodlett

The Gospel commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Who, then, is our neighbor?

Is my neighbor the person living next door whose children go to school with mine? Those with whom we work? Is my neighbor well-dressed, well-fed, well-educated, and well-spoken?

Or is my neighbor Leroy who comes to the door of the church? He who is sunk so far in despair that he hates himself and is offensive to nose and eye? Is my neighbor Phyllis who sleeps in the doorway at Francis House and has enough pride left to deny to me that she is homeless, when I know who she is?

Is my neighbor the woman in an affluent neighborhood in West Omaha whose husband has abandoned her, helpless and frightened at the prospect of feeding her family with no work experience, no saleable skills, and ignorant of the procedures for state assistance?

Is my neighbor the 18 year old pregnant mother of four who has

been abandoned by her family and comes to Holy Family from the shelter to ask for assistance in setting up a household? Is my neighbor the local American Indian population who feel welcome at the Door Ministry while being ostracized by the local established agencies?

Jesus said to love Him as yourself. When He asked Peter, "Do you love me," He did not say, "Feed the deserving sheep." He said, "Feed my sheep."

In the day-to-day interaction with and for our neighbors who come to us for help, I sometimes lose sight of why I am doing this, why I am inwardly weeping with a person sitting across from me. Why I sit in meetings with the people who make policies that make it harder for people to eat and sleep, and suppress indignation at a system that daily reduces human beings to beggars. The Gospel reminds me why I must. The Door Ministry manifests an active, caring, witnessing love of neighbor.

I am deeply moved and inspired by the mission statement of Holy Family. My personal experience here has taught me that it isn't just words. When I came to this church I was suffering physically, emotionally, and spiritually. As I observed the parishioners minister to each other at a time of deep sorrow, I began to heal. As I was called to implement the spirit of the mission statement, I was blessed by the opportunity to serve others.

As I watch conditions worsen—more people hungry, more families on welfare, laws that adversely affect the elderly, and a population where children are the highest number of the poor, I am encouraged to live out the vision expressed by the parish.

In this city and nation of wealth and prosperity, I wonder why we are building new shelters for the homeless. Who are these women and children who are facing the same situation that Mary and Joseph faced 2000 years ago? Who are these citizens of America who must beg food pantries every month for their daily bread? Who are these elderly who are discharged from hospitals because their "DRGs" are used up? Who are these people who do not "qualify" for needed medication and are asked to sell all they have, however meager, before the state will help them? Whose neighbors are these?

There are those who say, "There are food stamps, energy assistance, AFDC, etc., to help these people." Ask about the process that keeps these programs at arms length from those who need them. I admit to having serious problems with the terms *deserving* and *eligibility*. It is my contention that being hungry makes one eligible, that requirements for service are satisfied simply by need.

THAT WAS THEN -- THIS IS NOW

by Lucille Saunders

After many years of distributing socks and underwear, the crew doing the work has grown smaller and, unfortunately, older. This year, the committee planning the event took these facts into consideration as they were preparing for this year's event. This resulted in some drastic changes.

No more lifting heavy boxes of the product. No more sorting sizes and styles! This year, volunteers will simply register the clients and give the parent a voucher for the socks and underwear needed for their children. All they have to do is take this voucher to a Target store and pick up the items needed.

Some things haven't changed. As usual, volunteers will be needed on the days that the vouchers are distributed. To volunteer, call Rosemary Ohri, (402) 553-3045. Also, we will appreciate donations. Send these to the Holy Family Door Ministry, 1715 Iazard Street, Omaha, NE 68102.

Of garden delights and other signs of God's goodness

by Paul Leingang - Courtest of the Christian Family Movement

As a child, I had the good fortune to grow up on a farm. Even after we moved from the farm itself, my father and mother raised vegetables for us and for others. For me, in recent years as a shareholder in the Seton Harvest project (in Evansville, Indiana), the zest and flavor of close association with the earth has returned.

As the sunset over the ocean may make a heart beat with appreciation for God's greatness, so for me does a sweet ripe strawberry or a tangy radish, a sprig of parsley, a few leaves of dill. Again, I reflect, how is it possible that something so good is really so good?

Words on the tongue are no match for the juice and texture of naturally grown vegetables, but these are tasty words, too, from Seton Harvest. "As a responsible steward of the land and community, Seton Harvest, a ministry of the Daughters of Charity, will use the land in a just and environmentally conscious way by sharing locally grown food with shareholders, including persons who are poor and homeless and by providing educational opportunities around sustainable agriculture."

The farm and its shareholders make sure that thousands of pounds of fresh vegetables each year are distributed to food pantries and shelters, so that the poor and the homeless may also enjoy God's goodness brought forth by the blessed work of human hands.

Encouragement to care for the earth comes from many sources, including Pope Benedict XVI. A *Newsweek* article (April 17, 2008) reported that "Benedict may not be a typical environmentalist in the modern

secular sense. The Vatican won't say whether he tries to save gas on the Vatican grounds or uses devices like energy-saving light bulbs. For him the green issue seems to be more about being a steward to God's creation. Speaking to the faithful, he stresses that taking care of the earth speaks directly to protecting what the Bible says was created in Genesis. He has also made a connection between how a greener lifestyle falls within the human responsibility to protect the world's poorest communities, which are often the first to feel a changing climate's ecological effects, such as floods or droughts, which can cause conflicts over resources."

My experience of wonderful food in a nearly carefree childhood was likely quite different from the experience of my parents, tired and aching after another long day of hard work. But my hope is that everyone struggling to make ends meet, even those who have no home of their own, will experience the small joy of creation, if only a single fresh tomato.

I invite you to savor God's goodness, and to share it with those who have less than you. Read the eighth chapter of Nehemiah, how the Chosen People returned from captivity, rebuilt Jerusalem and learned again about the Law and their relationship with the Lord. How they were commanded to end their weeping. How Nehemiah said, "Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and allot portions to those who had nothing prepared; for today is holy to our LORD. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the LORD must be your strength!"

Deacon's Corner

by Ralph Hueser

My health: I talked to the Archbishop on May 20, tendering my retirement from Holy Family parish. I received information from my oncologist that I have a tumor in my brain. It is the same type of cancer as I have in the rest of my body, lymphoma. I will be working at Holy Family until such time as I am replaced there. So much for that.

Everything seems to be functioning at Holy Family. The Door Ministry continues to serve clients from the community at-large, especially those from Sienna Francis House. The lunch program is serving in excess of 9,000 people a month. The food redistribution program is operating two vans but with some difficulty due to availability of volunteers. *Nebraska Criminal Justice Review* is operating well also.

This year we are changing the underwear and sock program to a voucher system. What this means is that instead of getting product at two locations, we will be giving a voucher to be exchanged at any one of three Target stores. This will be the first year that we are trying this option.

Again, I want to thank you for your support of me while I have been the Administrator of Holy Family. May my blessings be upon you.





2014 - Sock and Underwear Give-away

Holy Family Back to School Giveaway
will be held at Holy Family Church
1715 Izard St, one block north of Cuming
July 24 & July 25, 2014 from 4 to 7pm

We are changing the program from years past.
Instead of handing out children's socks and underwear,
we will be issuing vouchers to be redeemed at Target
stores.

Donations may be sent to Holy Family Door Ministry
(address above)

Volunteers Needed—Please Contact Rosemary Ohri
(402) 553-3045



TASTE THE NEW WINE

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