

The ADVOCATE

Queen of Peace Quarterly Newsletter

SUMMER 2022



In this issue...

- 1.. Feast on the Streets
- 3.. OLQP COVID-19 Fund
- 4.. Pet Pantry Teams with OLQP
- 5.. My Home Away from Home
- 7.. A Saint for Our Time
- 8.. Haiti Update
- 9.. RIP Dr. Paul Farmer

Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church

2700 19th Street South
Arlington VA 22204
Phone: 703-979-5580
Fax: 703-979-5590
www.olqpva.org

Editor's Note: *The Spring issue of The Advocate recounts some of OLQP's efforts to mitigate the effects of Covid-19 — both on the homeless and on those fortunate enough to have housing — and even on pets! The issue continues with one parishioner's personal reflection on OLQP as "a home away from home"; an account of the inspiring life and work of Sister Thea Bowman (a candidate for canonization); a report on developments in Haiti; and an "in memoriam" for global health advocate Dr. Paul Farmer.*

*Paula Cruickshank
Editor, The Advocate*

"Feast on the Street" – OLQP feeding the Unhoused

By Katie Remedios and Kathy Desmond

*"What we would like to do is change the world —
make it a little simpler for people
to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves
as God intended them to."*

Dorothy Day

The Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House (DDCWH) in Washington, D.C., had been serving outdoor meals to the homeless for years as part of their hospitality mission. Every Thursday afternoon, you would find members of the DDCWH on the streets, providing hot meals they solicited from local DC restaurants and vendors. On occasion, a few OLQP parishioners helped. Thirty years ago, OLQP parishioner Jack McHale joined the group that brought food to McPherson Square and even began to pinch hit once a month when the group had a conflict. Jack would recruit friends from his Sunday morning basketball group to cook and serve chili to the homeless as needed. Years later, Katie Remedios joined Jack — as a former Division 1 college basketball player, she liked hanging out with the basketball players, and was passionate about helping those on the margins.

Then Covid-19 struck the world. DC shut down, as every place else did. Businesses closed. People worked from home, and the many resources that the Catholic Workers depended on, were gone. DDCWH called Jack. Would the good people of OLQP take over and continue the ministry? There was only one answer . . . YES!

A Facebook announcement was posted on the OLQP page, asking if anyone would be willing to donate brown bag sandwich dinners for those living on the streets of DC, and if so, drop them off in socially distanced bins placed outside of the Ministry Center. Amazingly, 750 sandwich dinner bags, many of them beautifully decorated with messages of hope and love, appeared that first Thursday. There was enough food not only for those in McPherson Square, but also for the unhoused living in tent cities nearby and local day laborers.

And so, a new OLQP Ministry was born — Feast on the Streets! The incredible generosity of OLQP families who were willing to make sandwiches, bake sweets, donate fruit, and write personal messages of

Continued on page 2

Feast on the Street

Continued from page 1

strength and care, has continued every Thursday for the past two years. Eight volunteers, heavily gloved and masked, go out to distribute the food, while 30-plus others assemble, cook, and bake behind the scenes. Together, they serve an average of 125 people each week.

“After our first six months on the street, says Remedios, we noticed how dire the need for clothing and toiletries was. Jean Johnson, an active



Photo: Jack McHale

Distributing Christmas presents with wrapped winter coats.
“We all wore red hats and Christmas things.”



Photo: Jack McHale

Jack with Malcom (40) and Jerry (63) as the group celebrates their birthdays with cake, song, and a gift.

Food Pantry and Matt 25 volunteer, with the blessing of Fr. Tim and Sally Diaz-Wells (Social Justice and Outreach Minister) began collecting toiletries and personal items to distribute. This act quickly became as popular as the sandwich choices of turkey, ham, PBJ, and tuna. Soon fundraisers provided new shoes, winter coats, and other much needed

necessities. Parishioners Elaine Duffy and Pat Vinkenes are instrumental in sorting, packing, and distributing clothing from Matt 25 each week. The interaction between Duffy, Vinkenes, and our friends in need, is truly something to behold! Pure care and tenderness. The people absolutely love them!”

The volunteers, building a community of trust, began to receive requests for housing and access to other services. They recently reached out to “Pathways to Housing,” a DC-based service provider, to learn about what more can be done.

As the parish ministry begins to grow, the Front-Line Team is hoping to expand the number of volunteers so that each team member can take an occasional Thursday off after two full years of intense work. This will happen slowly because it takes time for people living on the street to trust new people and because it takes time to train new people for this work.

Driving home on Thursdays, Jack feels contented. “We’ve done something good today — with the backing of 40 actively engaged people and the OLQP parish.”

By Jack Sullivan

The pandemic has affected OLQP and its Matt. 25 mandate in ways never before anticipated. Sally Diaz-Wells, the Social Justice and Outreach Minister, knows this intimately as the administrator of the parish Covid-19 Fund. The fund was created early in 2020 from parishioners who wanted to donate their government Covid checks rather than keep the money and thereby help others in greater need. Sally has provided examples.

The fund was created early in 2020 from parishioners who wanted to donate their government Covid checks rather than keep the money

Let us call him “John,” a retired parishioner who assists regularly with the food pantry. He lives on a fixed income and has a rented apartment in Arlington. Although his income was not affected by the pandemic, it led to a major unanticipated hike in his monthly rent. The landlord, faced with a spate of vacancies because of lost jobs and no easy way of obtaining new tenants raised the rent of remaining occupants by an astounding \$50 per month.

Unable to pay that increase John faced losing his residence. Sally recognized him as someone willing to contribute his time and energies to help others and a solution was reached. The Covid-19 Fund has committed to pay John’s rent increase for a year while he realigns his spending to make it possible for him to afford the increase and keep his home.

When “Jorge and Marta” in their South American country of unrest learned that they had received the necessary approvals to immigrate to the United

State legally, they were overjoyed. Upon arrival they were aware that the next step for Jorge, a professional, were “permission to work” papers to allow him to become employed. Normally a simple procedure, the necessary paperwork was delayed by multiple office closings at a result of Covid-19. The couple found their savings being depleted rapidly and, in addition, Marta was pregnant.

The couple was directed to OLQP where help came in the form of temporary assistance with their rent and utility bills. Given that boost, the necessary paperwork finally was completed and Jorge found employment and began earning a paycheck. Sally recently received a thank you card from the couple with the photo of their newborn.

“Marie” is a single woman residing in Arlington who has made her living cleaning homes for one of the many maid service companies in Northern Virginia. When the Covid-19 pandemic erupted many householders out of “an abundance of caution” suspended their cleaning services. This left Marie idle much of the time and reduced her income significantly. She was unable to pay her utility bills and in danger of losing her electricity.

Through the Covid-19 Fund the parish was able to assist her bridge the gap temporarily until the pandemic abated somewhat and vaccines became available

Hearing that OLQP had assisted others experiencing loss of employment Maria applied for help. Through the Covid-19 Fund the parish was able to assist her bridge the gap temporarily until the pandemic abated somewhat and vaccines

Continued on page 4

Feast on the Street

Continued from page 3

became available. Her work opportunities subsequently rebounded.

Assistance is not limited to members of the parish but is restricted to residents of South Arlington areas, including Green Valley, the neighborhood in

which the church is located. Although Queen of Peace has not widely advertised its services, Sally said, “the news has spread everywhere by word of mouth.” She is grateful to the parishioners who have continued to contribute to the fund as Covid-19 in its various forms has persisted.

AWLA Pet Pantry Teams with OLQP to Distribute Dog and Cat Supplies to Needy Families

By Paula Cruickshank

It was Wednesday morning at the OLQP Food Pantry. The tables inside Father Ray were lined with hundreds of bags of groceries soon to be distributed to needy families. But on this particular morning, another table outside the entrance was lined with bags, too. Only these items had signs



The AWLA mobile pet pantry makes its quarterly stop at OLQP.



One-stop shopping at the Wednesday food pantry.

identifying them in English and Spanish: “Cat Dry Food; Cat Wet Food; Dog Wet Food; and Cat Litter.”

Thanks to the Animal Welfare League of Arlington (AWLA), its mobile Pet Pantry distributes pet items and supplies to OLQP’s Food Pantry once every quarter. On February 9, the AWLA Community Support team and OLQP volunteers stood behind the long table and passed out 300 pounds of dog food, 145 pounds of cat food, 135 pounds of cat litter, and 360 cans of wet food. “It was another terrific day working alongside the OLQP crew.”

Continued on page 5

Pet Pantry

Continued from page 4

noted Community Outreach Specialist Jennifer Davies. She added that the demand was so high, they ran out of supplies in 45 minutes. Plans are to have enough on hand to meet the need at the next pet pantry day.

As prices at the grocery store continue to soar, so does the cost of pet food and supplies. It is especially hard for those families who are struggling to make ends meet. Pets in a loving household

become an indispensable part of the family. The AWLA welcomes donations to ensure it can continue its mission to offer a variety of services and resources to support pets and families in the Arlington community. Pet food and Chewy/Amazon gift cards (to buy these items) can be dropped off at the AWLA animal shelter (2650 S Arlington Mill Drive, Arlington, VA 22205). Contributors also can shop AWLA's Wish List at buff.ly/3erOeLW or make a donation at <https://www.awla.org>.

OLQP, My Home Away from Home

By Alejandra Gonzalez

In October 2010, I moved to the DC area and was excited about my new adventure. Born in Mexico and raised by a Venezuelan devoted Catholic mom, I needed a church to attend on Sundays. I didn't have a car, so my first choice was Our Lady of Lourdes in Arlington. It was walking distance from my Crystal City Apartment. After obtaining a driver's license, I bought a car which gave me a chance to explore further.

At Lady of Lourdes, I used to attend the 5 PM mass, one day I was watching a movie and I was going to be late for church, so I googled options and found OLQP, which offered a 6 pm mass that would allow me to finish watching my movie and visit my friend Jesus. He always helps me have enough time for all I do.



OLQPhoto - OLQP parish directory

OLQP team packs bags of fresh produce for Wednesday food pantry. (Alejandra Gonzalez - Front right)

Continued on page 6

Home Away from Home

Continued from page 5

I just loved the parish, the community, and Father Tim's sermon. Since then, I became a regular 6 pm Sunday parishioner. Through the bulletin, I learned about the different ministries I could join. Given my work schedule there weren't many options; however, one day in 2012, former social justice minister, Michelle Knight, recommended an activity that was the perfect fit — Tuesday night produce-packing. This was the door to my home away from home.

In the eight years that I have served as the leader of this ministry, I have met many dedicated parishioners. OLQP's community is so engaged with

social justice and it walks the walk — something I did not experience growing up in Mexico. Today, I also serve as a Just Dollars seller, a member of the Stephen Ministry, which serves those who have experienced the loss of a loved one. I am also an “aunty” with Building Forever Families.

Many thanks to the OLQP community that has made me feel so at home. My parents have also enjoyed helping at the Tuesday packing night and have met most of my friends from the different ministries and Father Tim Hickey, Father Joe Nangle, and Father Brandon.

Sister Thea Bowman: A Saint for Our Time

By Gail Meighan

This is the story of Sister Thea Bowman who is up for canonization in the Catholic Church. She was an extraordinary, devoted Catholic convert who helped to bring about integration of Black people and Black liturgies and traditions in our Church, and she worked tirelessly for all people, demonstrating that we humans can live together in peace and work for the betterment of all.

Sr. Thea was born Bertha Bowman in 1937 to African American parents, Mary Coleman Bowman, a school-teacher and her husband, Dr. Theon Bowman, a medical doctor in Canton, Mississippi. She was the only child of elderly parents and grew up with older folks all around her. It was from them that she learned early on to celebrate African American traditions of the rural South.

At an early age it was clear that Bertha was very intelligent and inquisitive and her parents (though not Catholic) decided to send her to the Catholic school in Canton, recently founded by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration from La Crosse, Wisconsin. Even at an early age, Bertha appreciated the challenging work of the nuns,

Continued on page 11



Sr. The Bowman

Art clip: Anthony VanArsdale

Sister Thea

Continued from page 6

priests, and laity and their devotion to the poor. She later said it was their devotion to those in poverty that encouraged her to become a Catholic.

At the tender age of 15, Bertha announced that she wanted to become a nun. At first her parents refused, but realizing their daughter's strong sense of purpose, they relented. Bertha went to La Crosse, Wisconsin, to study to become a Franciscan sister. Her life in the convent was filled with prayer, studies, and hard work as well as with the challenge of handling prejudice. As the only Black person she was sometimes teased about her color and her hair, but she smiled and passed it off and grew in faith and love and became a nun, Sister Thea Bowman

After she graduated from college, Sister Thea taught in Catholic schools at all grade levels and she enthusiastically encouraged all the children to use their own heads and to do their best. After years of teaching in La Crosse and in Canton, Sister Thea attended Catholic University in Washington, DC, and earned a PhD in English. She was an excellent student who loved literature, music, philosophy and aesthetics. But she loved God above all and wanted to serve him, never forgetting the lessons of the "old folks" with their joyful celebrations of faith. Inspired by their faith, Sister Thea wanted to incorporate those African American traditions into her faith life, her teaching, and the Church.

Sister Thea was able to fulfill her dream at Viterbo College in La Crosse, Wisconsin, where she taught English after she received her doctorate in 1972. She also taught Black literature and became Chair of the English Department. Sister Thea added lectures on Negro music and culture and she organized a group of vocalists called the Hallelujah Singers. Her message of Black inclusion, warm personal style, and ability to build bridges became well-known. She was invited to speak at many conferences throughout the country and maintained this heavy teaching and speaking schedule for the next six years.

Prayer of Sister Thea Bowman

O Lord, help us to be attentive to your commands.

Help us to walk in unity, help us to celebrate who we are and whose we are.

Help us to overcome selfishness, anger, and violence in our hearts, in our homes, in our Church, in our world.

Help us to knock down, pull down, shout down the walls of racism, sexism, classism, materialism and militarism that divide and separate us.

Help us to live as your united people proclaiming with one voice, our faith, our hope, our love, our joy.

Amen

from Sister Thea: Songs of My People

In late 1978, Sister Thea received a new assignment to return home to Canton, Mississippi, because her beloved parents were failing in health. She oversaw their care and also accepted a position with the new Office for Intercultural Awareness in the Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi. As Director, she sought to promote appreciation of Black life and culture and specifically to include African songs and traditions in Church liturgies. These goals were the themes of the talks and conferences that she continued to give around the country.

Two years later, Sister Thea was invited to teach at the newly founded Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University in New Orleans, the only

Continued on page 8

A Saint for Our Times

Continued from page 7

historically Black Catholic university in the U.S. The institute offered courses in pastoral theology, religious education, and ministry. It encouraged intellectual, spiritual, and cultural immersion in the Black Catholic experience. Thea explained the importance of implementing these changes in the Catholic Church as she told conferees in Washington, D.C. in 1982:

“Black people have developed their own way of worship, of seeing God.
They read Scriptures and relate it to their own experience in this country.
The Church has called us to be ourselves. Part of our work is to challenge
The Church universal to the diversity that is within theology.”

p.78, M. Nutt

About the same time that Thea's beloved parents were called to the Lord, in late 1984, she herself received shocking news about her own health. She was diagnosed with breast cancer. Fortunately, after some treatment and care, Sister Thea was in remission for a time. She didn't complain, but prayed, “Lord, let me live until I die,” and she continued her busy schedule of speaking engagements, teaching, and encouraging change in

the Church.

In June, 1989, Sister Thea was invited to address the US Catholic Bishops at their annual meeting held at Seton Hall University in South Orange, N.J. She was quite ill as the cancer had now reached her bones. However, she looked beautiful in her African cloth, and smiled as she sat in a wheelchair. Her exuberance was evident as she spoke to the bishops reminding them that Black people are still victims within the church and insisted that they must work harder to welcome Black people and to integrate Black traditions in the Church. When she concluded her talk, she smiled and asked the bishops to move together, to join arms, and sing along with her “We Shall Overcome.” They did and she received dynamic applause from the bishops.

” Lord, let me live until I die” was the mantra that Sister Thea followed until her very last day. She died on March 30, 1990, at age 53. At her funeral, Father Fernand Cheri led the singing of “I'll be Singing Up There” and the mourners could almost hear Sister Thea shouting, “Amen.”

For more information about Servant of God Sr. Thea Bowman, FSPA:

<https://www.sistertheabowman.com>



Founding members of the National Black Sisters Conference (1968) including Sr. Thea Bowman, FSPA.

Medor: Coping Amidst Haiti's Challenges

By Sue Carlson, M.D.

In the past year, Haiti has endured many challenges: its president was assassinated, leaving no sitting president, and there is no functioning parliament because elections have not been held.

The country faces a constitutional crisis; attempts have been made on the acting prime minister's life; a 7.2 magnitude earthquake killed more than 2,250 people and left 650,000 homeless; 4.3 million Haitians, 44% of the population, suffer from food insecurity; the inflation rate was 24.6% in November; there has been a prolonged fuel crises; and the country has the third lowest COVID-19 vaccination rate in the world.

Gangs have stepped into the political void and now control some portions of the nation, funding themselves through kidnappings. Meanwhile, the United States continues to employ a law that uses the



Students in St. Joseph Primary School

coronavirus pandemic as justification to deport Haitians back to Haiti, to date sending 17,000 Haitians back to a country that is on the brink.

Despite Haiti's recent challenges, daily life in Medor continues unabated, and the programs we share with the people in Medor continue to thrive. St. Joseph parish's rural location shields it from gang activity and political unrest. Its remoteness may also be a factor in its lack of COVID-19 cases.



Altar in St. Joseph church: a Medor seamstress embroidered the altar cloth; parishioners donated the produce during a Sunday offertory procession.

Continued on page 10

Medor: Coping

Continued from page 9

Three thousand children and their teachers attend school as planned. Despite the fuel shortage, Father Frantz, pastor of St. Joseph's, was able to get the school supplies and lunch food up the mountain so that each student has pencils and workbooks and a daily meal.

The agro-forestry program entered a new phase in 2021 with nursery technicians and two recent university graduates, and Medor residents assuming greater leadership responsibilities, a giant step toward sustainability. Last year the community transplanted 76,000 trees, bringing the total number transplanted since 2010 to 867,000.

There is an indirect effect of Haiti's insecurity on the

people of Medor. Costs have gone up dramatically and items that are usually obtained from Port au Prince are simply done without or substituted for items available nearby.

Father Frantz describes the current achievements in Medor, stating, "The school activities continue to go well and each student receives a hot meal every school day. Church activities are well attended. Trees and crops are being planted. Even though Haiti currently faces daunting political, economic, security, and social challenges, by the grace of God, and with the help of Our Lady Queen of Peace, Medor is strong, capable, and resilient. We are holding on and we can continue holding on!"

Dr. Paul Farmer's Influence on the Twinning Relationship Between Our Lady Queen of Peace and St. Joseph Parish of Medor, Haiti

By Sue Carlson, M.D.

Our Lady Queen of Peace's Haiti Ministry joins the world in mourning the loss of Dr. Paul Farmer. Although I did not know Paul personally, I first became familiar with his work in 2000 while preparing for my first trip to Medor, and I had the privilege of hearing him speak at two church-sponsored Haiti conferences. His moral clarity about the imperative to "accompany" the poor, providing the same healthcare to the poor as the care we expect for our own families, touched everyone attending the conferences and has revolutionized healthcare throughout the world.

Paul Farmer's accompaniment approach involves listening to patients and addressing the root causes of disease in their social and economic contexts. For example, a person with tuberculosis needs proper medication to heal, but if that person does not also have food, clean water, and a secure living arrangement, how can healing occur? Paul challenged the world to address broken systems, such as the Haitian government's inability to provide basic services like healthcare, education, electricity, and support for economic development, as well as the policies of the international community in "using" Haiti for its own benefit, in order to heal the whole person.

OLQP's Haiti Ministry is inspired by Paul Farmer's holistic vision and strives to practice his accompaniment for the poor through our twinning relationship with St. Joseph parish in Medor. The goals of the twinning relationship include coming together in solidarity to deepen the relationship between our communities as well as supporting the sustainable community-based development of the people living in Medor. Members of both communities strive to live up to our belief that "we are one family, the body of Christ". The partnership emphasizes a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust, and equality, attributes included in Paul's worldview.

Continued on page 11

Dr. Paul Farmer

Continued from page 10

OLQP's Haiti Ministry is grateful to Paul Farmer for his fight for human rights in Haiti and many other countries, and we attempt, in our small way, to follow his lead, advancing social justice through the work we share with our family in Medor.

Thank you, Paul Farmer, for your humanitarian leadership. Thank you for reminding us that "the idea that some lives matter less is the root of all that is wrong with the world." Paul Farmer, M.D.

May you rest in peace knowing that many are striving to continue your advocacy for the poor and marginalized throughout our world.

Learn more about Dr. Paul Farmer in this article from *The Arlington Catholic Herald*:
https://www.catholicherald.com/News/National__Catholic_physician_founded_clinic_network_for_rural_poor/



Photo credit: Boston Globe

Paul Farmer with patient in Haiti

Advocate Staff

Feature Writers: **Sue Carlson, M.D., Kathy Desmond,
Alejandra Gonzalez, Gail Meighan,
Katie Remedios, and Jack Sullivan**

Layout: **Dan Larkins**

Distribution: **Jeannette Gantz Daly**

Please send an email message to jgantz Daly@olqpva.org to receive

The Advocate by email or to have it sent to your home address.