



BECAUSE *we are* CATHOLIC

Our Daily Bread: Serving Baltimore for more than 12,600 consecutive days – and counting

An inscription in a New York City Post Office reads, "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." The United States Post Office has nothing on Our Daily Bread, who today celebrates its 12,660th consecutive day of serving the needy in Baltimore.

The facility has never missed a day since opening its doors June 1, 1981, including last weekend when a blizzard dumped a record 29 inches of snow. Our Daily Bread served more than 1,000 meals from Saturday through Monday.

"Hundreds of Baltimoreans in need turn to Our Daily Bread for sustenance each day, and for many this is the only meal they will eat on any given day," said Catholic Charities executive director Bill McCarthy. "During weather events like the blizzard this past weekend, what is often lost is the plight of the truly vulnerable – the homeless and the hungry. That's why it is so critically important that we continue to provide for people in need."

One of the many services offered by Catholic Charities, Our Daily Bread Employment Center has served more than seven million meals to date, welcoming all who come with a hot meal and a reprieve from the streets. The program also encourages men to



Patrons of Our Daily Bread enjoy a meal.

visit the Work for Success, an intensive two-week employment preparation program open to clients of Our Daily Bread.

"The goal is to treat our guests with dignity and give them options for the future," said Penny Lewis, Director of the Our Daily Bread Employment Center. "On every table, there are pictures of food stamps, housing and soft skills education with the hope that they capture their attention while they are eating. Our guests can take advantage and upon completion of the class, get a certificate and we help get them placed in a job. It sounds so cliché, but our goal every day is to make a difference."

And that they have. As the number of meals increased throughout the years, Our Daily Bread has expanded twice, thanks to state support, and has been located at 725 Fallsway, near the Jones Falls Expressway, since 2007. The original building at Franklin Street and Park Avenue has been converted into My Sister's Place, a center providing the same services for women and children.

"The mission sells itself. I just want people

to come and get a tour," added Lewis. "Once they get in the building to see what we do, they are going to keep coming back." Liz Turnbaugh and Anne Shelton are examples of that. Both started volunteering at Our Daily Bread in the mid-1980's and more than 30 years later are still doing so.

On October 8, 1995, Our Daily Bread hosted Pope John Paul II during his 10-hour stop in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, which also included a Mass at Oriole Park at Camden Yards before 60,000. The Holy Father ate the same meal served to guests that day: creamed chicken casserole, vegetables and a dinner roll. The casseroles, donated by parishes throughout the Archdiocese, have been the mainstay of the program.

"The casserole numbers had been dwindling for several years," said Lewis, who left Bank of America six months ago after 16 years. "The donations were not where they needed to be. We operate off \$44,000 a year, so we have to rely heavily on donations and volunteers. We made a deliberate message to go to all of the churches and say thank you. We now have more than 7,000 casseroles."

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN MARYLAND SERVES AND ADVOCATES FOR THE POOR, VULNERABLE AND THOSE IN NEED NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE CATHOLIC, BUT BECAUSE WE ARE CATHOLIC.

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