

St. Mary's Drop-In Centre



NEWSLETTER OF THE ST MARY'S DROP-IN
CENTRE AT 260 BROCK ST. KINGSTON

One Year Anniversary Edition!



Our space in the St. Mary's Parish Centre

Our Mission Statement:

St. Mary's Drop-In Centre is a ministry of St. Mary's Cathedral living, in imitation of Christ's washing of the disciples' feet, His commandment that: "I have set you an example that you should also do as I have done to you" (John 13). Recognizing the dignity of each individual, through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy (Matthew 25:32 ff), we care for the material, emotional and spiritual needs, of the homeless and those most in need in the city of Kingston.

One BIG Year!

Thank you to all of our supporters for helping to make sure the St. Mary's Drop-In Centre had an amazing first year. On February 24, 2020, we opened our doors early to a line-up that had begun to form outside on a cold winter afternoon. The past year couldn't have been possible without all of the prayer, financial support and volunteer hours that have been given to this ministry.

For our first "birthday", we will be having 12:10PM mass at the St. Mary's celebrated in thanksgiving for the Drop-In Centre. Afterwards, we will have give out cake and ice cream to our guests and Archbishop Mulhall will be attending to offer a special blessing for our ministry and patrons. St. Rita of Cascia, *pray for us!*



Two beautiful banners
donated by Deacon Michel
Quenneville



A cozy (but socially distanced)
Christmas at St. Mary's!



Our first guests on Opening Day,
February 24, 2020



Wool mitts kindly knitted
by our volunteers

Drop-In Centre Updates:

The Lord has given us abundant blessings this year. Over the past year, we have served over 6 500 meals, given over 1 000 pieces of clothing, and produced over 22 000 pounds of produce through our Marian Donation Garden. This has only been through the dedicated work of over 50 volunteers who have given their time, talent, and treasure to serve God's most vulnerable children in Kingston.



Our new laundry service, where guests are prayed for as their laundry is completed

We have been able to purchase and set-up shower and laundry facilities for our guests, offering them more dignity while living on the street. Our Italian Nonnas have been coming regularly to cook delicious soup for our guests, stored in our two chest freezers that were donated.



Our wonderful volunteers (and their many ministries)

The pandemic has greatly affected many individuals in the vulnerable sector. We often hear about how our guests mental health and social isolation challenges have been worsened due to COVID. We opened two weeks before the pandemic began, which presented us a unique challenge, but gave us a beautiful opportunity to serve the poor during such a difficult time.



Our lovely canteen set-up, where we offer refreshments to our guests

We are always praying and thinking about what more we can do to serve the poor. We will be starting our community garden again soon, this year we will be adding everbearing strawberries and herbs for our soup! Our volunteers have been so generous with their gifts,, such as knitting warm wool mittens and making sleeping matts for the winter. We always hear that the caring volunteers are what make the Drop-In Centre so special, not to mention that our soup is the best in town!



We have been vigilant with our COVID restrictions, while always trying to connect with our guests in a safe way

Testimonials:

Please read through some recent testimonies about our work at the St. Mary's Drop-In Centre.

From our guests:

"I love coming here. I feel special here; it is a break from the reality of my life. You treat me as a king and welcome me. No one ever wants me around but this place is an exception." -Donovan

"Everyone here is so friendly and kind. They treat me with respect and always take time to talk with me. I feel loved and accepted here. All the volunteers here have the heart of a servant." -Patricia

"The highlight of my day is coming to the Drop-In Centre. I live on the street so this is a haven for me. I feel safe here. Everyone is so friendly and treats me with respect and I feel loved here." -John

"I feel safe coming here because it is a church. I am treated with kindness and the love of the volunteers is amazing. I loved the outdoor patio last summer. It made me feel like all the other people I see sitting outside downtown on patios last summer. I tell all the others living on the street that they should come to your centre" -Mike



Our birthday celebration for RJ, one of our most consistent and cherished guests! We try to celebrate each guest's birthday, as some have nobody to spend it with

From our volunteers:

"The people we meet and what they will teach us. People living in tents, in shelters, on the streets, or couch surfing. Or, shared accommodation with people they don't know, or a substandard noisy, mold infested living space, with nothing left for food once the rent is paid. Struggling with loneliness, a lack of social hope, mental illness, or, addictive behaviour patterns. 'Jesus in distressing disguise in the poor', as St. Mother Teresa put it. 'The least of these', as Jesus taught.

All these situations are uncomfortable reminders of our social brokenness. Our fragmented streets. How is it that we have accepted this as normal, the world as it is, inevitable cracks in the world that some fall through, while the rest of us prosper or at least live in the relative comfort of our owned or rented accommodation. Our societies internal refugees, displaced persons. No wonder the Social Doctrine of the Church asks; what good is the common good if it is not good for the good of the commons?

You also learn of the immense generosity of vulnerable people for each other. And the inspiring ongoing commitment of our many volunteers, both front line, and those working behind the scenes. Those who work in the kitchen, making sandwiches, or our soup Nona's. All the anonymous ones, who deliver and shop for food donations, drop off home baked goodies, and offer financial support. And the volunteers who interact the most, and know everyone's name, run the registration desk or work the canteen. And Ann, who coordinates everything and seems to be able to bilocate, work the kitchen and visit face to face (social distancing) with our guests. Together with our guests we are learning about the gospels 'preferential option for the poor'."

-Deacon Blaine Barclay



Deacon Blaine leading our volunteers in prayer to close the shift



Volunteers are needed for many different ministries! Contact Ann Lyng if you can help, there is a place for everyone.

Testimonials:

"Volunteering at the drop-in centre this past year has pried me from my comfort zone and brought about a contented joy. I think this contentment comes from helping to meet some of our patrons' needs in a practical way by offering nourishment in a friendly and welcoming space. In doing so I have become familiar with some of their struggles, a witness to their story if you will, as many live in a world so different from my own. I have also found joy in working as part of a team with other volunteers as we share our talents in enhancing the dignity of our patrons. It isn't always joyful; I have had to learn to be more patient, understanding and compassionate when faced with some of our more difficult or challenging clients. But those instances too have helped me grow and find contentment. I like to think that, in my own small way, my work at the drop-in centre has helped fulfill God's commission in meeting the needs of some Kingstonians who are hungry or poor in spirit." -Jurek Romaniec



"The king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'" Matthew 25:40

How to support us:

To continue providing much-needed services to the poor in Kingston, we need your support:

- ➔ Prayer and fasting for our mission
- ➔ Volunteer your time to help one of our teams:
 - We need your help with staffing shifts, collecting/organizing donations, working at our Community Garden, and fundraising. Contact Ann Lyng if you can help.
- ➔ We rely completely on the Providence of God. We do not accept funding from the government so that we always keep our Christ-centred mission based on Catholic social teaching. As such, financial support from the local Catholic community is crucial. Income tax receipts will be issued for all donations over \$20. You can support us through **(please specify that your donation is intended for the St. Mary's Drop-In Centre):**
 - Cheque made out to St. Mary's Cathedral
 - E-transfer to smarys@cogeco.net
 - Online at Canada Helps: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/119110443RR0033-st-marys-cathedral/>
- ➔ Food and clothing donations can be dropped off Monday-Friday, 1-4PM at 260 Brock Street:
 - Soup cans, crackers, canned chicken and tuna, pre-sliced cheese and deli meats, white/brown bread
 - Juice boxes and water bottle cases
 - Granola bars, maple cookies/chocolate chip cookies
 - Gently used or new clothing and furniture
 - Please contact Ann Lyng to inquire if we are in need of something you can donate, or for an expanded list of items we need.

If you have more questions or want to know more about how you can be involved, please contact:

Ann Lyng

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