

THEY MAKE 60 PANS OF TEXAS HASH

Parishioners of St. Charles Borromeo cook up some nourishment for soup kitchen

By Bryna Zumer



Bill Seeley, a member of St. Charles Borromeo Church, loads the bed of his truck with casseroles destined for Our Daily Bread soup kitchen in Baltimore.

St. Charles Borromeo Roman Catholic Church presents a quiet, humble facade to its surrounding Pikesville neighborhood. But behind the scenes, some parishioners have been baking up a storm.

For 26 years, a dedicated group at the church has produced a steady flow of homemade casseroles for Our Daily Bread soup kitchen in downtown Baltimore. Every month, at least 60 batches of Texas hash casserole—a recipe established by the soup kitchen—are shipped downtown. Many of the volunteers also help serve them to Our Daily Bread's recipients.

Parishes throughout the 10-county Archdiocese of Baltimore take part in the casserole program, which is run by Catholic Charities and serves more than 250,000 meals to city residents annually. At St. Charles Borromeo, Elizabeth Turnbaugh, of Pikesville, has been the driving force behind the program for 22 years and regularly makes five casseroles each month.

She is also hoping to get more parishioners to join in, as many of the church's members

grow older and are unable to participate. Early this year, the supply of casseroles consequently dwindled, as there were only enough contributors to produce about 30 for January.

But Turnbaugh rallied the troops, speaking at Masses and urging the congregation to churn out 75 to 100 casseroles for the soup kitchen. It seems to be working—the count is back up to 60.

She said she is zealous about the project, both baking the casseroles and serving at Our Daily Bread. "I am so enthused about it. I keep praying that I can do it for many years," she said, adding jokingly that, when it comes time to get the ingredients for her casseroles, she also prays for a sale on ground beef.

Turnbaugh said she also believes that if people served meals at Our Daily Bread, they would be more enthusiastic about baking the casseroles. "To me, when I work down there, I'm tired, but it's something that you feel good about. I mean, you are helping people out," she said.

Barbara Callahan, another parishioner who lives in Rockdale, near Randallstown, began making two casseroles a month about two years ago, after retiring from her job as a microbiologist. The project was easier than she expected, she said. "It's just a big pot of stuff you have to put together," Callahan said, adding that it has also been rewarding. "It's something to do for people who need it, and you feel like you are helping people. Once you go (to Our Daily Bread), you will go back. It really draws you in."

Callahan also praised Turnbaugh for keeping the project going. "She's so passionate about it, it's like her love," Callahan said. "She is a very remarkable woman."