



The Chronicle

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A day at St. Clement's Outreach

It's 9 a.m. on a typical Tuesday morning at St. Clement's Church in Saratoga Springs, N.Y. Of the 100 or so daily Mass-goers, only a handful remain, chatting over a cup of coffee in the parish center. Now a dozen men and women wait in front of a door at the other end of the lobby. As it opens, they rush toward the smiling volunteer seated at a desk, jostling and arguing about who arrived first. Learning that one guest has a doctor's appointment in less than an hour, the volunteer negotiates an agreement acceptable to all.

Thus begins another day at the parish's Outreach apostolate. With a mission to perform the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, its members seek to be living examples of Catholic holiness and generosity, inspiring love of Christ and his Church. Services are offered to parishioners and community members alike, without regard to religious affiliation.

As a Redemptorist parish, St. Clement's has always been mindful of service to the community. But it was Rev. James O'Blaney who created the position of Outreach pastoral associate in the late



Volunteers with St. Clement's Outreach program pose in the food pantry. About 150 volunteers in various ministries serve more than 300 people each month.

1990s and along with it a fund for the local poor. Donation boxes were placed at each church exit, and parishioners responded generously.

Within a few years St. Clement's was providing gift cards, financial help, and holiday gifts to more than 100 households every year. St. Clement's became a leader in the Saratoga Springs service community, co-founding a network of secular and faith-based

organizations to better serve those in need. The economic crisis of 2008 brought a sharp increase in requests for assistance, and parishioners responded generously. Volunteers and donations grew; new programs developed.

Today Outreach programs provide food, financial assistance, baby and toddler items, spiritual support, and referrals/advocacy. About 150 volunteers serve

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more than 300 adults and children from 200 households each month.

As the first Outreach guest of the day is escorted by another volunteer to make her selections from the food pantry, the others help themselves to a cup of coffee, choose from a selection of holy cards, browse donated children's items, or visit with volunteers while waiting to be helped—usually no longer than 20 minutes. An average of 25 to 30 guests will go through between 9 a.m. and noon. But even when the wait is longer, it's worth it.

Guests select food for their families in the quantity needed, choosing from fresh produce, baked goods, dairy, meat, personal-hygiene and baby-care items, and non-perishable food. It's an honor system that works surprisingly well and shows respect to those who are often not treated respectfully by the world.

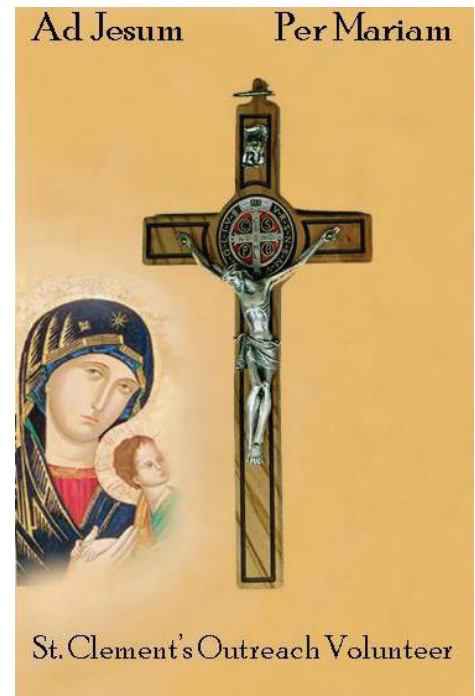
A distraught young mother approaches the welcome desk, baby on her hip and scream-

ing toddler in tow. She heard the church helps with rent. The greeter assures her the church does help with rent. But the coordinator is with someone at the moment; she'll meet with her next. In the meantime, why not go through the food pantry? The greeter asks a volunteer to find the toddler some snacks and toys, which settle him down.

The volunteer and mom fill out a Baby Blessing Basket form, listing needs for baby, toddler, and mom. In the next two weeks Elizabeth Ministry volunteers will assemble the basket, using donations from parishioners.

A gentleman volunteer pushes a cart laden with bags of food, diapers, and personal-care supplies across the parking lot and loads all into the trunk of the car. Returning to the parish center, he introduces the mother to Marianne McGhan, food pantry and financial-assistance coordinator, for an interview.

Personal interviews are integral to the financial-assistance process of St. Clement's Outreach. Seeing and listening to another



Outreach volunteers strive to see Jesus in every face and to serve with Our Lady's heart.

person makes a statement about his or her dignity as someone made in the image and likeness of God. Outreach guests often comment that the atmosphere at St. Clement's is welcoming and friendly—even peaceful. Outreach volunteers strive to see Jesus in every face and to serve with his mother's heart. Each volunteer name tag features a crucifix, the image of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, and the inscription *Ad Jesum per Mariam* (To Jesus through Mary).

With the young mother's baby asleep and her toddler once again growing restless, the interview is short. The father was injured at work. He will receive disability, but it won't start for at least three weeks, and they were already behind on their rent.

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An update from St. Alphonsus Villa

The confreres of St. Alphonsus Villa in New Smyrna Beach, Fla., faithfully continue their prayer ministry with daily prayers and Mass in the morning. They fellowship with one another during common meals shared with the confreres of Sacred Heart Parish. At times pastors from area parishes stop by to fellowship with us at mealtime.

Throughout the year we host many events, including jubilee retreats, convocations, and meetings, and we welcome vis-

itors from other communities to stay for a couple of days. This year the North American Redemptorist Spirituality Commission held its annual winter meeting locally, and the Villa provided accommodations. The guesthouse also recently hosted the annual confirmation retreat offered by The Church of the Epiphany's high school youth ministry.

Our prayer ministry takes place not only on the Villa's grounds but also at local churches. Some of our confreres help

out in the community by hearing confessions or saying Masses. And on All Souls Day we continue our tradition of visiting the local cemetery to remember our deceased confreres and hold a prayer service among their graves.

In 2017 a number of renovations and improvements were made to the Villa, including a new roof, exterior paint, new fencing, replacing old sheds with new ones, resurfacing the pool deck, and refreshing exterior signage on the grounds. ■



These photos show St. Alphonsus Villa in Smyrna Beach, Fla., before (left) and after recent renovations and improvements.

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Their income is too high for county help.

With tears in her eyes, the mother produces a three-day notice of eviction. After a few questions, Marianne is certain the eviction is not imminent and that the family is eligible for as-

sistance through St. Clement's.

She gives the mother some paperwork to complete and reassures her that all will be OK. Mom bursts into tears, overwhelmed by the outpouring of kindness she has experienced since she walked in the door.

As Marianne says goodbye

with assurances of the parish's prayers, a volunteer ushers in the next guest. Relying on Jesus through Mary, the staff and volunteers of St. Clement's Outreach will do what they can to help him leave a little less burdened than he was when he walked in. ■

Cardinal Tobin to lead afternoon of reflection in Brooklyn

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., will lead an afternoon of prayer and reflection on Thursday, June 28, at the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Brooklyn.

The event—to be held in Notre Dame Hall, 558 59th St.—is part of the parish’s ongoing 125th anniversary celebration. Cardinal Tobin is the archbishop of Newark, N.J.

Beginning at 1 p.m., the afternoon of reflection will include a talk by Cardinal Tobin, a question-and-answer session, and benediction in the upper church. Refreshments will be served.

Everyone is welcome. To RSVP, email OLPHdebbie@gmail.com. ■

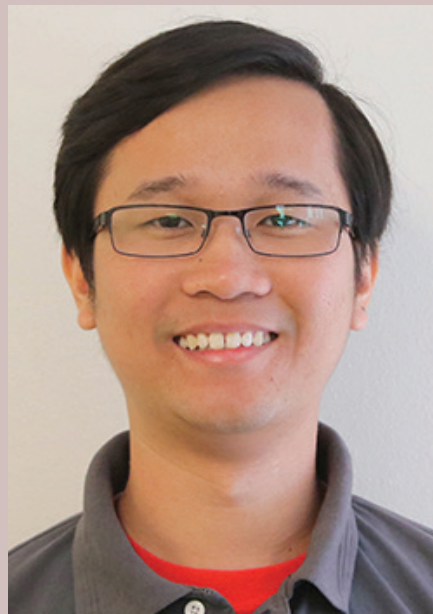


Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.

Vocation story: Trung-Tin Huynh

My name is Trung-Tin Huynh. I was born into a Vietnamese traditional family in 1991. I lived in Vietnam for around 19 years and moved to Georgia in 2010. My thought of becoming a priest came to me when I was little, and it kept coming back to me after I moved to the United States. When I was in Georgia, I studied at Georgia Perimeter College and received my associate’s degree in computer science. Even when my study was going well, my desire to become a Catholic priest also grew stronger and stronger.

I wanted to bring God to everyone. I wanted to bring everyone closer to God. I wanted to show how merciful God is. So I looked into the Archdiocese of Atlanta and one religious order. However,



Trung-Tin Huynh

I did not feel connected when I visited them. That was when I got to know the Redemptorists. I was not thrilled when I first visited them, but I immediately got at-

tracted to their prayer life and activities, most especially the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. They gave me a sense of peace and joy when I stayed with them.

My decision to join the Redemptorists was a tough one. As a young man with many dreams and many opportunities to continue in computer science, I found it tough to decide whether or not I should give up my studies. God worked in a mysterious way. As I waited and prayed, God gave me the courage to apply to formation with the Redemptorists. Now, here I am as a Redemptorist student. I hope and pray that I will not lose sight of my vocation as I continue my journey in San Antonio to find God in everyone and in myself. ■