



Pilgrims of Hope

Jubilee celebration held at AMM Shrine in Perryville

The Western Province held an event Saturday, Nov. 15, at St. Mary's of the Barrens in Perryville, Missouri, in observation of the 2025 jubilee in the Catholic Church, as designated by Pope Francis with the theme, "Pilgrims of Hope."

The event included tours of the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, praying of the Rosary on the Rosary Walk located on the St. Mary's grounds, a Mass, and a luncheon. The shrine is one of nine pilgrimage sites in the St. Louis Archdiocese established by Archbishop Mitchell Rozanski at which visitors may obtain a jubilee indulgence this year.

(continued, p.2)



Winter 2025

- 3 Donor Spotlight
- 4 Colorado Vincentian Volunteers
- 6 Annual Development Financial Report
- 7 A Tornado of Charity

(continued
from cover)



Dear Friends,

Grace and Peace in the Lord Jesus!

While it hardly seems possible, we are coming up on the end of another year, and while we can and should look back and reflect, we are also in the season of Advent, which prompts us to look forward to the coming of Jesus Christ.

In the spirit of looking back, we are doing that in this issue with our annual development financial report, which shows how we have used the funds that our Development Office raised in the prior year. It gives me great joy to see the impact that we have had in many communities in the Western Province and beyond, including assistance to the poor, education and formation, and evangelization.

Looking forward, we are currently conducting our Annual Appeal, which launched earlier this fall. You may have received the mailing for that, and if not, you can read more about it and the initiatives it helps fund in this newsletter. I hope you will consider supporting the appeal, which makes a tremendous difference in the lives of those that we serve.

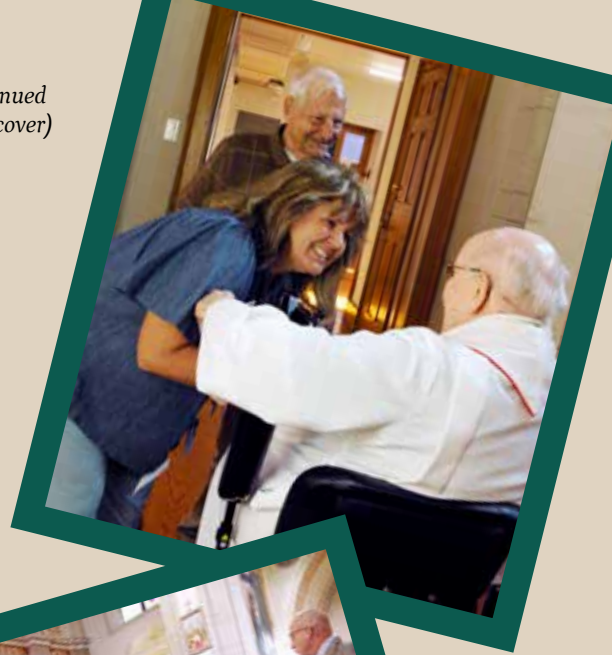
I wish you a merry Christmas and abundant blessings in the new year. We truly could not do the work we do without you.

Please pray for me as I do for you.

Sincerely in St. Vincent,

Rev. Joseph S. Williams cm

Fr. Joseph S. Williams, C.M.
Provincial Superior



⬆ (top) Fr. Tom Hinni, C.M., shares a moment with a friend and (bottom) Don Fulford, CEO of the Association of the Miraculous Medal, addresses the attendees at the Western Province Jubilee event in Perryville.



**Help Us
Preserve
Resources**



If you would like to go paperless and receive *The Vincentian* online, scan this code and submit the form. As a reader of the online version of the newsletter, you can help preserve resources for printing and mailing, which we can use for St. Vincent's mission to evangelize the poor, educate the clergy and laity, and spread the gospel.

Couple Values Vincentian Mission to Serve the Poor And Form Tomorrow's Spiritual Leaders

Mike Brennan "grew up very Catholic."

The 66-year-old St. Louis native says his parents modeled their faith in word and deed. "Our mom and dad didn't have much, but they were always giving to others, helping feed the poor, volunteering with Meals on Wheels, and working up at our parish, St. Pius V."

After Mike's sister began working for the Western Province of the Congregation of the Mission, Mike and his wife Joan began to learn about the Vincentian ministries and outreach to the poor.

"I hadn't known the extent of their work – their missionary outreach overseas and their involvement following the Ukraine tragedy, helping displaced persons and providing other material support. That gave us a vehicle to be involved; Joan and I have real faith that the Vincentians spend our gifts well."

When Mike's nephew Brendan (pictured bottom left) returned from a Vincentian missionary trip to Kenya, Mike could see the journey had made an immense impact. "It was life-changing for Brendan, to see how desperate some of those folks were, but also to see the joy he described so many of them as having – and how grateful they were for any support received."

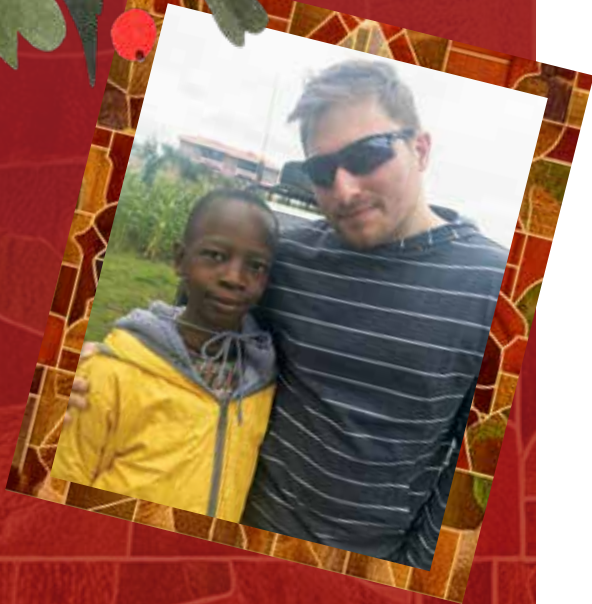
Hearing Brendan's testimony further deepened the Brennans' appreciation of the work the priests and brothers are doing abroad.

Mike also values and supports the Province's ongoing vocational formation for seminarians, as well as spiritual formation and leadership training that active CM priests and brothers take part in. Coming from his own corporate background as a long-time CEO of a nonprofit organization serving children, Mike notes, "It's very important to me to train the next generation of leaders to be compassionate and committed in whatever their vocation may be."

Underscoring it all, the couple recognize and eagerly support what Mike calls the Vincentians' "deep level of devotion and respect for people who are poor."

That, he believes, is essential for tomorrow's Church. "Right now in our world, we seem to be in an era where we could all use a lot more empathy, a lot more of putting ourselves in others' shoes. Too many folks don't seem to be able to do that too well. The Vincentians do that very well."

Michael Brennan is retired from Every Child's Hope (ECH) in St. Louis, where he had worked since 1983. Annually, ECH helps more than 1,600 families and children find healing and hope for the future. Joan Brennan is a metallurgical engineer, recently retired from a 40-year career at Olin Brass in St. Louis. They have two grown children and one grandchild.





A Heart for the Poor

Colorado Vincentian Volunteers celebrates 30 years of formation in the Vincentian charism

Rolling through Denver's urban streets in his Toyota Prius, Tony Haas rattles off the four pillars of Colorado Vincentian Volunteers, for which he serves as executive director and which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year.

"Direct service and advocacy, prayer and spirituality, community, and reflection and discussion," he says. "The pillars were established at the founding of CVV by Bill and Mary Frances Jaster in 1995."

The program matches its participants, recent college graduates, with specific volunteer assignments at Denver-area nonprofits that serve the poor and marginalized. During the program, the volunteers live in community and are formed in Vincentian spirituality through retreats, community prayer, Catholic liturgies, interfaith services, and spiritual direction.

"The mission is about transforming the hearts and minds of young people through direct service to those living in poverty," Tony said. "That comes through living out the spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, who said, 'Go to the poor, and you will find God.'"

Tony said that frequently, volunteers wind up finding



Scan for a video on CVV

employment at their assignments after their year is over. For instance, Annunciation School, where one of the volunteers is stationed this year, has three former volunteers on its faculty.

"Definitely, they come thinking of their next steps, and they leave here with a heart for the poor and experience relating with people from all walks of life," Tony said.

Fr. Tom Esselman, C.M., who serves as the Western Province liaison for CVV, was with the Jasters at the beginning, helping flesh out the idea and connecting the program with the Province, which served as its primary sponsor initially. Today, he is involved in program planning and handles orientation in Vincentian spirituality. He follows up throughout the year and invites other Vincentians to come and work with the volunteers.

"There is nothing better than being around a bunch of young people who are idealistic and have life," Fr. Tom said. "I think it is one of the ways we serve young people, and I want the program to prosper."

Tony admits that this year's cohort of three volunteers is well below the program's capacity and at the bottom of a dip in participation. He is, however, confident the program will rebound and participation will stabilize around a dozen; the year before last, there were 15. He and Program Director Theresa Marten are already hard at work with recruiting trips to colleges around the country for next year's group.

"You don't need to be Catholic to participate," he pointed out. "You merely need a heart to serve."

For more information on Colorado Vincentian Volunteers or to find the online application, visit covivo.org.

Volunteers Embrace Vincentian Charism in Service

Sye Berhe, 22, Denver, Colorado

Sye, whose family emigrated to the United States from Eritrea in East Africa when she was 11, found out about Colorado Vincentian Volunteers at Regis University in Denver, from which she graduated in May. A staff member there was an alumna of the program and recommended it.

As a teaching assistant at Annunciation Catholic School, she is able to work with the poor and marginalized

students at the school and deepen her Catholic faith with the spiritual and formative aspects of the program, for which Fridays are set aside.

"I knew nothing about St. Vincent before starting at CVV," she said. "I appreciate that he didn't

just give them food; he tried to change the system."

She said her experience has helped shape her career plan.

"I still want to go to law school and become a lawyer in social work or immigration law," she said. "I don't want to be in an office without working with children."



Hannah Thurow, 22, San Antonio, Texas

Hannah grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, moved to San Antonio 10 years ago, and graduated from Notre Dame University with degrees in liberal studies and global affairs. Pondering her next moves, she learned about CVV at a recruiting event.

"I wanted to continue my progress in the nonprofit world and build experience in a more personal way," she said.

Her CVV assignment is at Work Options, which offers job training, specifically in the culinary area, as well as job search training and help dealing with barriers to employment. She helps clients apply for jobs and prepare for interviews and teaches classes on occasion.

(continued, p.8)



CVV Grew from Bill and Mary Frances Jaster's Vision

Bill and Mary Frances Jaster of Denver, Colorado, had been working in youth and young adult ministry for more than 20 years in the early 1990s when they began discussing the lack of opportunity for young adults to put their faith into action for the poor while living in community within a spiritually formative environment.

Long associated with the Vincentians, they fleshed out the framework for Colorado Vincentian Volunteers with Fr. Tom Esselman, C.M., who presented it to the Midwest Province for initial funding. The program launched in the fall of 1994 with the Midwest Province as its principal sponsor and the Jasters as its first executive directors.

"Along with Vie Thorgren and Mary Frances and Bill, I helped to develop the apostolic, common life, and Vincentian formation pieces, and they took it from there," Fr. Tom said. "Were it not for them, the program would not have survived."

Thirty years later, the program's very existence is tied to the Jasters' commitment to it, from its conception through the years in which they directed it.

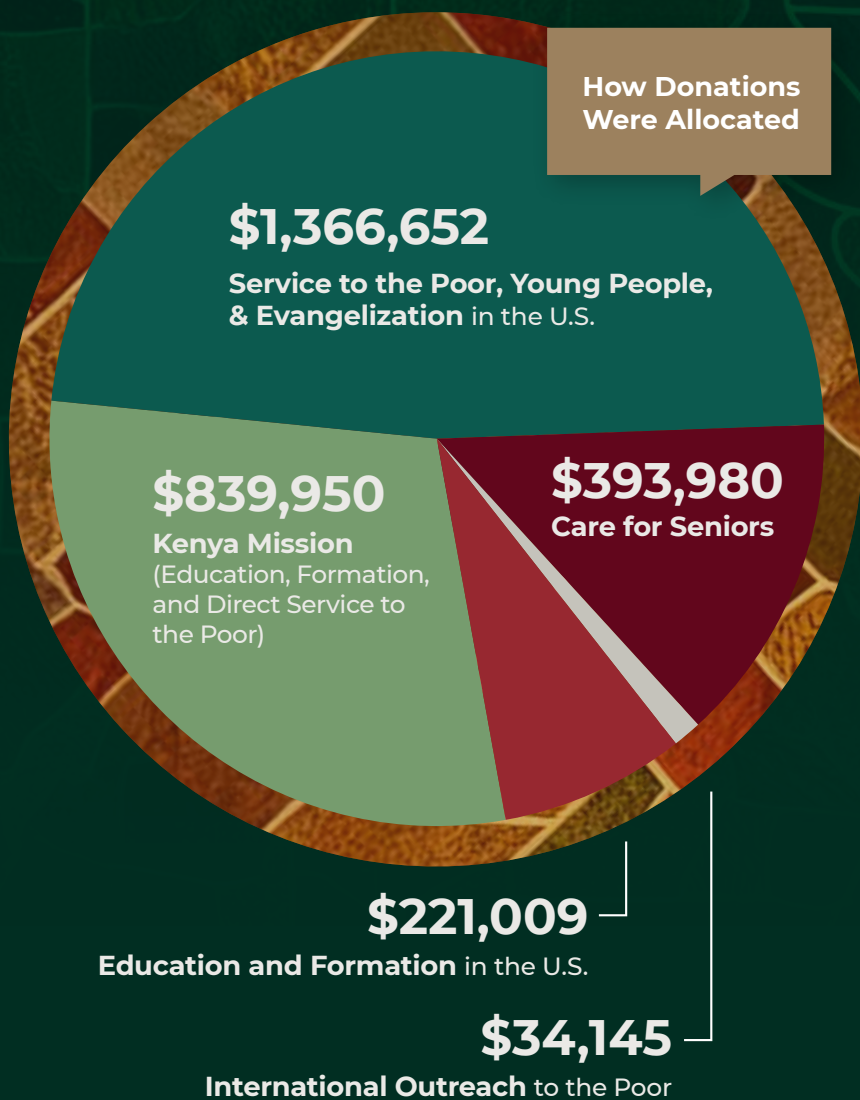
"Throughout the years, we witnessed profound transformation in the lives of many young people as they embraced the Vincentian charism, a charism that honors St. Vincent DePaul and St. Louise de Marillac as they saw Christ in each person they encountered," said Mary Frances. "These young people recognize Christ present in those who are poor and in those with whom they lived in community."



Your Gifts Support the Vincentian Mission

Western Province Development Revenue for Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025)

How Donations Were Allocated



Total Amount Donated in FY25:

\$2,855,736

Number of Gifts in FY25:

14,718

81% of the Western Province expenses are allocated for mission and ministries,

leaving 19% for administrative and fundraising, which is well within the acceptable range for national and international organizations.

2025-26 Annual Appeal Under Way

“Charity is not just a promise. It is a present reality to be embraced with joy and responsibility.” -Pope Leo XIV

In the first teaching document of his papacy, released in October 2025, Pope Leo XIV writes passionately about charity and its integral place in our relationship with Jesus Christ. The spirit of charity inspired and animated St. Vincent de Paul to found the Congregation of the Mission 400 years ago, and it continues to motivate the Vincentians today.

Our 2025-26 Annual Appeal, which launched in October, is an opportunity for our generous supporters to embrace that spirit of charity by supporting the work of the Vincentians throughout the Western Province and beyond.

Contributions will support direct service to the poor, evangelization, and education and formation efforts, along with care for our senior Vincentians who have devoted their lives to St. Vincent’s mission and continue to be active in “retirement.”

We encourage you to stand with Pope Leo and the Vincentians and help fund this important work. There are many easy options for giving online by scanning this QR code, or you can send donations to Congregation of the Mission Western Province, 3701 Forest Park Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63108.



Scan to give!

A Tornado of Charity

On the afternoon of May 16, 2025, an intense and destructive tornado tracked through the urban areas of the greater St. Louis area. On the north side of St. Louis, scores of homes, churches, and businesses were damaged or destroyed – many of them in low-income neighborhoods. Over its 23-mile path, the tornado was cited as the official cause of 5 deaths and 38 injuries.

Within hours of the disaster, the call went out to the various branches of the Vincentian family for assistance. In the ensuing days, Fr. Dan Thiess, C.M., was in the middle of bringing relief to the poor. Fr. Dan was uniquely suited to bring many people together in response to the storm, being both the chaplain for Catholic Charities of St. Louis and spiritual advisor to Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Looking like a tornado of charity himself, Fr. Dan made dozens of connections that brought food, shelter, and bit of hope to those who suffered great losses.

An article published two weeks later in the *St. Louis Review* about Fr. Dan and the work of Catholic Charities stated, “[Father Dan] has been overwhelmed by people’s generosity — and some of that has included unexpected donations, which he’s happy to get into the hands of those who need it. ‘It’s every day, sometimes twice a day — with whatever I can collect.’”



“I think we can bring a little hope to some people, one person at a time, once day at a time, one moment at time.”

— Fr. Dan Thiess, C.M.

Fr. Dan has years of experience in bringing people together to serve the poor. Before working with Catholic Charities and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, he was the driving force behind much of the charitable work at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in St. Louis, which has a food pantry, daily sandwich window, an end-of-the-month meal program, and many other programs. No donation, no help was too big or too small for Fr. Dan to jump into his car and drive to collect it.

Those past experiences at St. Vincent’s parish have now enabled Fr. Dan to ramp up his organizational skills to a higher level. This year, as we approach the holiday season, Fr. Dan will be working with Catholic Charities and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to coordinate turkey and food drives at a number of parishes in the Archdiocese of St. Louis. Collections of food from these efforts will help feed hundreds of people in need, especially those affected by the May 15 tornado as well as rural parishes in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

Throughout his many years of bringing people together in response to those in need, Fr. Dan states that the most important part of his work is to give people hope. In an interview with a local television station, Fr. Dan said, “I think we can bring a little hope to some people, one person at a time, once day at a time, one moment at time.”



**CONGREGATION
of the MISSION**

THE VINCENTIANS
WESTERN PROVINCE

3701 Forest Park Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63108



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

2025 WINTER NEWSLETTER

Learn more about the Congregation of the Mission Western Province, join us in prayer, and offer your support. Visit us online at vincentian.org and like us on Facebook at facebook.com/CMWesternProvince.

(continued from p.5)

"I thought I wasn't good with people and did my best work serving in indirect ways," she said. "I love being with my clients and helping them through the process. I gain a lot from that and serving in a different way that I find very fulfilling."

She said learning about the Vincentian charism has resonated with her.

"I really connect with the pillars, seeing the world in a holistic way, and doing something about it," she said. "I feel the most spiritually connected to God in acts of service. Seeing a saint live that out has been really affirming to me."

Debbie Adekunle, 21, Providence, Rhode Island

Debbie graduated in May from College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, a small Jesuit school where she studied neuroscience and education, specifically how one affects the other.

For CVV, she volunteers at Stout Street, a health center run by the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.

"The biggest takeaway for me is that most patients just want someone to talk to and to feel human," she said. "They need someone to make them feel human and listen to them."



Though not Catholic, she has appreciated the focus on spiritual development. She admits she was not aware of St. Vincent before now.

"I think that humility and generosity and the outpouring of one's self has really inspired me," she said. "I love giving

gifts. That has always been to people that I know. Now, I am learning to be generous and give of myself in different ways, even to people I've never met before."

She hopes to determine whether to pursue a Ph.D. or an M.D. CVV has shown her she has a passion for patient care.

"I am definitely drawn to patient care, even if it is not as a doctor," she said. "I want to tie my passion for research into that."