

*A message from Myron Rogal, diocesan Coordinator of Justice and Peace  
and Fr. Kevin McGee, Pastor at St. Mary Parish, Saskatoon*

[A night-time warm-up site at St. Mary Parish Hall in Saskatoon has now been in operation since Dec. 4<sup>th</sup> 2023.](#) There has certainly been some learning and adapting in these early days, yet expectations have been exceeded, and overall, the site has been operating smoothly while serving its purpose: providing a safe and warm place for those without shelter on winter nights. Your prayers have certainly been a factor in this success, so thank you!

The early numbers and demographics have already presented some interesting realities. Firstly, the numbers are higher than predicted; this points to a lack of options and wider opportunities, with our neighbours facing immediate housing challenges. An analogy I've been using for this site is that of an ambulance in that the site serves as an emergency measure at the start of a wider continuum of care.

Another interesting piece is that a high number of women have been visiting the site as a refuge. This is significant as there is a feeling of safety and, at the same time, points to a vulnerable state that many women find themselves in. Communication has been another highlight from the staff and leadership of the Salvation Army, with regular reporting and sharing of concerns as well as successes. Support for maintaining the quality of the site and the experience of the guests has been another blessing from the leadership of the police service, the fire service, and respective city departments, as well as collaborating neighbourhood agencies. The desire of individuals, parishes and recently from another Christian denomination to support the initiative remains strong, and we are suggesting several ways to pour out that generosity.

**Ways to help:**

1. **Pray.** Be deliberate in taking a moment each day to pray for the guests of the site and everyone involved.
2. **Advocate.** St. Mary's is one small, albeit important piece in affirming the human dignity of the poor and vulnerable. As these are unprecedented times in the city, province and beyond, take time to meet, inform and work with elected officials as well as agencies and people of other faiths to take collective steps that will reduce poverty.

3. **Donate:**

Option #1: monetary donations:

The Community of St. Mary Parish has partnered with the Salvation Army to provide the overnight warm-up location in its upper hall for the winter months.

As the needs of those who are the most vulnerable in our city will continue beyond this time frame, St. Mary Parish will be discerning how it can continue to provide outreach and support for those in our neighbourhood who, for a variety of reasons, live without access to many basic needs. The parish hopes to eventually have the financial resources to hire or contract someone to coordinate an outreach ministry that will work with other parishes and volunteers in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon and partners like the Salvation Army. To this end, any financial support would be greatly appreciated. Donations to this project can be made in the following ways:

- a. Cheques can be made out to St. Mary's Parish, with "Warm up shelter" written in the memo line. Cheques can either be dropped off or mailed to St. Mary Parish, 211 Avenue O South, Saskatoon, SK S7M 2R6.
- b. Debit or credit card (Visa or MasterCard only). Debit or credit card donations can be made in person at the parish office, or credit card donations can be called in to the parish office.
- c. Pre-Authorized donation, if you are wanting to set up longer-term donations, please call the parish office or e-mail Ryan Baker at [rnbaker@rcdos.ca](mailto:rnbaker@rcdos.ca) to receive a pre-authorized giving form.
- d. E-transfers can be sent to [rnbaker@rcdos.ca](mailto:rnbaker@rcdos.ca). Please include your name and mailing address along with "Warm-Up Shelter" in the memo line
- e. All donations over \$20.00 will be issued a tax receipt.

#### Option #2 – donation of needed items

Suggestions for donations include blankets, mitts, gloves, toques, and jackets. Donated items can be dropped off at St. Mary Parish Office, 211 Avenue O South during office hours, or at the Salvation Army location at 339 Ave C South.

Several have also expressed a desire to volunteer. Thank you for your generous hearts! As this project is new, we are still discerning and discussing with those serving on the front lines where volunteers might be able to serve most effectively. We have not forgotten or lost track of you and will reach out when this opportunity becomes a reality.

Thank you again for your interest, your prayers, and your support!