Branches on the Vine

SEPTEMBER 13 - 19, 2025



A case of canned food is carried in by volunteers of Mother Teresa Food Pantry which operates from St. Ann Church in Bristol. PHOTO BY KAREN A AVITABILE

GUIDED BY ST. TERESA'S EXAMPLE, FOOD PANTRY NOURISHES BRISTOL

COMMUNITY

F or more than 25 years, parishioners of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Bristol have been honoring St. Teresa of Calcutta by helping to combat food insecurity in their town.

The parish has been running its own Mother Teresa Food Pantry for the saint who dedicated her life to providing food, shelter and medical care to people who needed it the most around the world.

Canonized in 2016 by Pope Francis, St. Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for her perseverance to alleviating poverty and hardship. The anniversary of her death, on Sept. 5, is observed as her feast day.

Food pantry volunteers from St. Francis de Sales parish churches of St. Ann and St. Anthony of Padua organize collections of non-perishable food items and then fill grocery bags with them.

Spearheaded by Jacqueline Taber, Mother Teresa Food Pantry is open on Tuesdays and Thursday mornings at St. Ann Church for collection pickups.

"I enjoy helping people," says Taber, who has been involved with the food pantry for close to 20 years with her husband, Philip. "You see the smiles on people's faces when you give them the food."



dates of canned food donations. PHOTO BY KAREN A. AVITABILE

Once a month, Bristol residents who need assistance are able to pick up a grocery bag or two bags for a family - at St. Ann Church. No questions are asked. Clients range from young individuals to older adults, along with numerous families. During the holiday seasons, the food pantry volunteers see an increase in need; so, they also collect and distribute turkeys and hams donated by the parish.

Canned food items can be dropped off at the entrances of St. Ann and St. Anthony of Padua churches before weekend Masses. During bingo fundraisers on Thursday evenings in St. Ann Church Hall, donations are also accepted.

Parishioners of nearby St. Matthew & St. Gregory the Great Parish, with churches in Bristol and Forestville, also collect canned goods in their churches and drop them off at St. Ann Church.

"I feel this is beneficial for those people who need a little support," says Jackie Samele, a food pantry volunteer for 10 years. "Back then, the food pantry needed volunteers and I stepped up."

The Mother Terese Food Pantry team is made up of about a dozen volunteers. Like Taber, who retired and was looking for something extra to keep her busy, most of the volunteers are retirees who want to remain active, stay socially connected and make a difference in their own community. They say working with the clients enhances their own lives.

"It brings me happiness to see their joy," says five-year volunteer Marthe Trudel. "I try to make someone else happy."

For Sylvia Caron, giving to others has made her more thankful. "It gives you such a warm feeling to see their eyes light up and listen to them," she says. "It's a great feeling to do something for them. I love it."

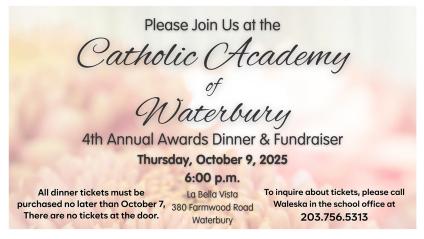
Long-time volunteer Claudine Tanguay describes her volunteer work as "helping others while having fun at the same time."

- Story by Karen A. Avitabile



Upcoming Events







Archdiocese of Hartford 467 Bloomfield Ave, Bloomfield, CT 06002 860-541-6491



09/28 SUNDAY 3PM

A CLASSICAL CONCERT WITH CORBIN BEISNER

Our Lady of Knock Parish -St. Mary Star of the Sea Church, 145 Main St, Unionville

Come enjoy classical music performed by award-winning, renowned concert pianist Corbin Beisner! For over two decades, Corbin has performed in numerous venues throughout the United States and Europe, and has received several accolades and awards. He holds degrees in piano performance from the Hartt School of Music and the prestigious Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, Hungary.

There is no charge for this concert and all are invited. Attendees will have the opportunity to make a free-will offering with proceeds benefiting the Our Lady of Knock Parish & St. Patrick Church Collinsville Haiti Ministry's programs at St. Thérèse School in Lilavois, Haiti.

Refreshments will be served after the concert! For more information about the Haiti Ministry and this event, visit ourladyofknock.org/haiti.

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