

TALK IN CHURCH ON MAY 22 AND 23 REGARDING SVDP

I am Sandy Zajdel, president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. We are the St. Matthew Conference, one of 48 conferences that are part of the Portland Council. We have been asked to give you, the parishioners of St. Matthew parish, an update on our services during COVID.

1. **You can be Proud. We never closed our doors during COVID.** We had enough volunteers to continue serving our local community throughout. Here is how we did that.

We stopped all in person contact with clients by moving to a drive thru system. Once a month, local people come in their vehicle, sign in verbally, pop the trunk and receive three or more boxes of food. Sack lunches are available outside.

Indoor volunteers are always masked and until recently gloved. They are limited to a max of 10 and urged to keep their distance. Two volunteers attend the cars. Two attend the lunches. Others pick up donations at stores.

NOT A SINGLE VOLUNTEER HAS GOTTEN COVID or caused us to shut down.

2. **You can be GRATEFUL.** Stores have continued to give generously of their excess. Grants from City, OFB, and other organizations have totaled \$152,000 in the year from April 2020 thru March 2021. You the parishioners as well as our members have provided from your hearts and your wallets.

3. **We SHARE** what we have in food with local churches who provide meals or groceries: Methodist Church, Hillsboro Friends Church, North Plains Senior Center, Project Homeless Connect and several others.

On Monday hot breakfast to go from the Comida Kin Food Truck and hot lunch on Wednesday from the Council's Blue Bus. Food in the community right now seems to be adequate and our numbers are moderate. We look

forward to days when people can once again shop and select those foods and personal items their family most needs.

4. ABOUT **HOUSING**..... During the same 12 month period we have spent over \$330,000 on rent and utility assistance. This is a 123% increase over the same months a year earlier. Payment is given directly to the landlord or utility company and is a maximum of \$300 and max of twice a year. That is a lot of help and yet so little. These are the folk who lost jobs or lost hours... who stay home with children, who are months behind in their bills. Some have lost family members to COVID or are themselves long haulers... still suffering the effects of the illness. These are the people who will soon be most in jeopardy when evictions are allowed. We have tried month in and month out to keep people in their homes with lights on and water flowing. We have given grateful landlords some assistance as they struggle with the lease or the mortgage. **THANK YOU !** for making this possible.

5. **You can be CONCERNED.** Numbers of people with no place to live SEEM TO HAVE INCREASED. We don't know how those shut- in have weathered the long months of COVID... but we see how those shut out are doing. There is a rise in mental illness inadequately treated. A rise in drug and alcohol addiction inadequately treated. A rise in even more dangerous drugs which cause some to be loud, scary, out of control.

6. **You can be COMPASSIONATE.** Ask yourself what would Jesus do? Do I see the face of Jesus in the poorest among us and sickest among us? Do I realize that I too could be there... or my child... or my siblings... or my friends. Be kind and be respectful at the same time as you are being safe and smart. We at SVDP use the model of two together at all times in all contacts.

7. **You can be INFORMED.** Urge your friends, neighbors, government officials, health providers, community organizers to put their best services to bear on what is so obviously a local crisis. Do not turn a blind eye to the needs of the poor. Do you know that a city approved camp will be opening on

south First providing water and dumpsters and restrooms and permission to stay for a while? Have you heard that our local Goodwill store is closing? Ask questions, read, attend meetings, speak up. We can be a part of bringing about change in our community, change for good.

8. You are PEOPLE OF FAITH AND PEOPLE OF PRAYER.

As you continue to give generously of your resources, make the needs of others a part of your worship and daily prayers. Pray for our town, our parish, and all who come to us in need.

Our Motto at SVDP is ***“Together in Christ’s Love, we serve those in need.”***
(repeat) **“TOGETHER IN CHRIST’S LOVE, WE SERVE THOSE IN NEED.”**

Thank you.