

Mary, Mother of God Parish

# Outreach Newsletter

Spring 2024



## Our Deep Thanks to John Ceisel

When the Food Pantry returned to a parish-led operation in October 2023, John Ceisel stepped up to serve as our interim pantry manager. He volunteered more than just his time, he also shared his knowledge of food systems, and dedication to service.

Over the past six months, John has worked diligently with volunteers to keep the pantry stocked and open. They have rescued 40,000 pounds of excess food that would have been thrown away and fed 5,067 individuals who needed groceries.

Thank you, John for your commitment to our parish and our neighbors in need. You have truly taken Christ's words to heart:

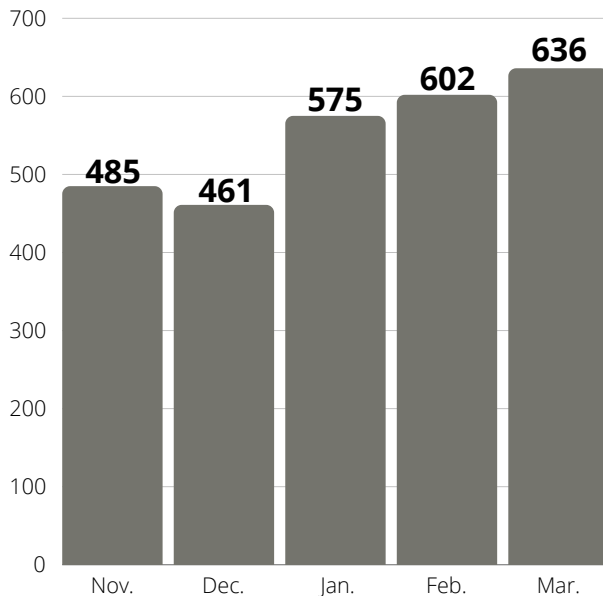
*"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink..."*



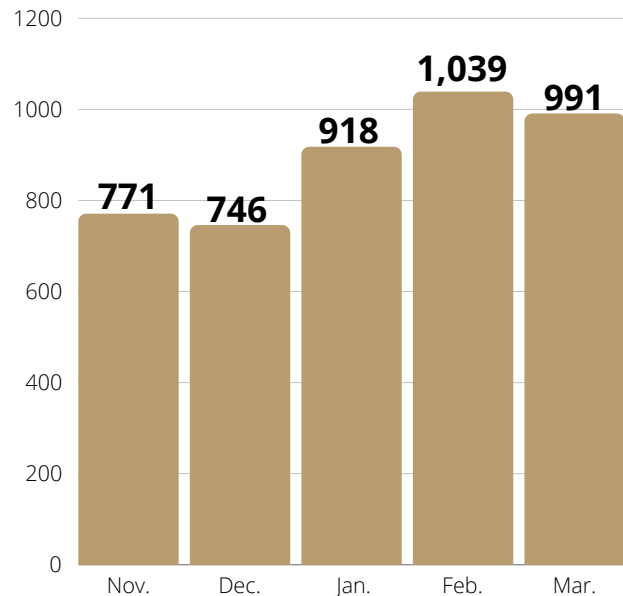
[motherofgodchicago.org/outreach-ministries](https://motherofgodchicago.org/outreach-ministries)

# Food Pantry

## Households Served



## Individuals Served



## Students Reflect on Poverty & Hunger

This spring, students and staff from Mount Carmel High School visited the Outreach Ministries at St. Thomas of Canterbury church. They spoke with Br. Ayub about the clients who visit the Food Pantry and then helped stock shelves and clean.

After the students ate lunch at Canterbury House, two mothers who recently arrived from South America spoke to them. They explained how poverty and hunger in their home countries led them to the United States. The mothers also spoke of their long journey through jungles and dangerous river crossings with their children. They shared their hopes and dreams for their families and their futures. It was a beautiful and powerful way to end the students' visit.

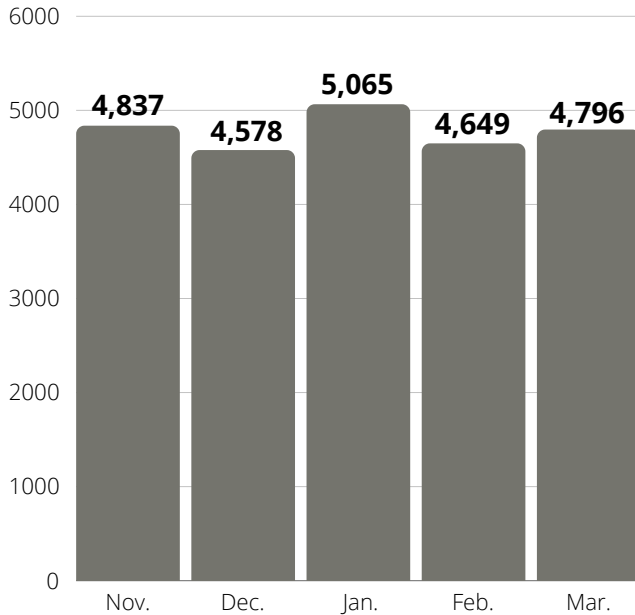


“Many guests have mentioned to me that the difference between our food pantry and others in Chicago is not only the ability to choose what they want, but also the way they are treated. I always remind our volunteers to be kind and compassionate to the people and if possible, serve them with a smile on their faces. These little acts of kindness go a long way to make a difference in people’s lives. I love serving the people here and it is satisfying to see people appreciating my presence.”

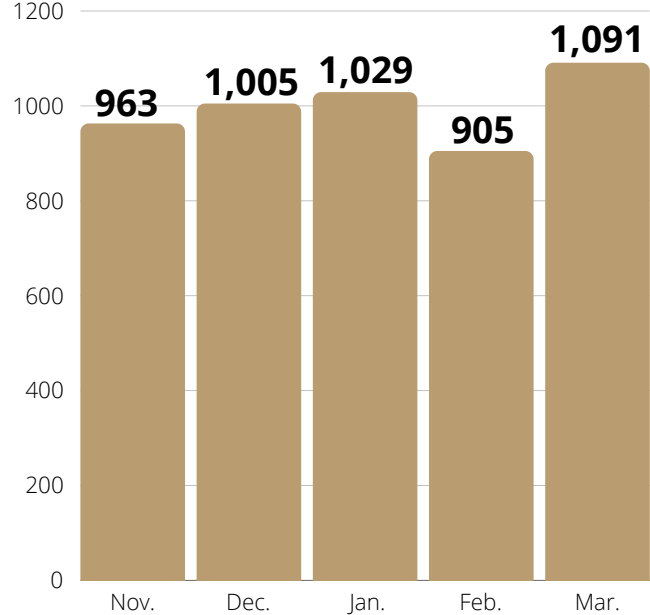
– **Br. Ayub Mwenda**  
Food Pantry Manager

# Soup Kitchen

## Meals Served



## Guests Served



## Thank you to the American Medical Student Association

Several of the dedicated volunteers at the Soup Kitchen are members of the AMSA chapter at Loyola University. They directed contributions from their April fundraiser to the Soup Kitchen. Their volunteer efforts are a blessing - as is their \$1,273 donation!

## Support Our Outreach Ministries With...

- Donations of canned tomatoes, onions, & carrots
- Financial gifts via check or online through GiveCentral
- Serving on Mondays & Thursdays in the Food Pantry
- Cooking on Tuesdays & Fridays in the Soup Kitchen



Learn more about how to get involved on the parish website: [motherofgodchicago.org/outreach-ministries](https://motherofgodchicago.org/outreach-ministries)

“The soup kitchen is a place where people of all different backgrounds and beliefs come together for a purpose: to be fed or to serve those who are hungry. It is a work of charity, seeing the face of Christ in those who come to be fed and recognizing the inherent value of each individual person.”

– **Jennifer Franco**  
Coordinator of Outreach Volunteers

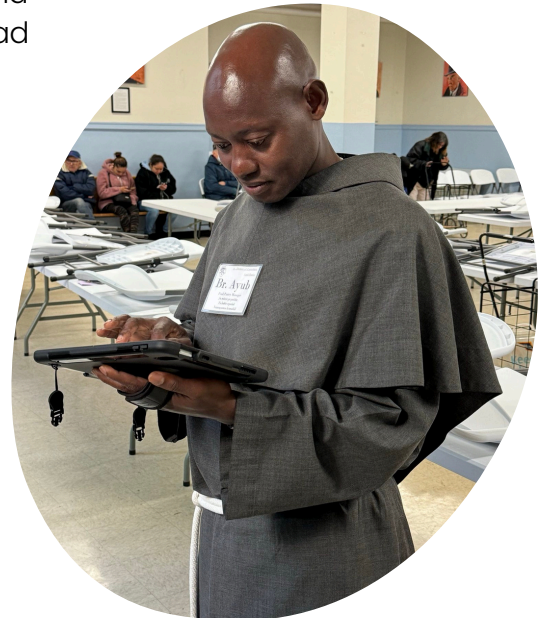
# Introducing Our New Food Pantry Manager!

## Interview with Br. Ayub Mwenda OFM, Conv.

Meet the newest (and returning) member of our parish staff and local Conventual Franciscan community, Br. Ayub Mwenda! Read on so you can get to know him a little bit better and see what work he'll be doing around the parish.

### What drew you to the Franciscans?

I first learned about the Conventual Franciscans through a Catholic Magazine which landed into my hands back in High School. I read about St. Francis of Assisi for the very first time and the good works the friars were doing in Kenya while following in his footsteps. I took a piece of paper and a pen and wrote to the friars requesting to become one of them. I was invited for the "Come and See" program and I would say, it was during this program that I fell in love with the way of life the friars were living. I made a definitive decision to become one of them.



### Where were you before coming to Mary, Mother of God Parish?

I have been serving in the Diocese of Green Bay as an Administrative Assistant in the Parishes of St. Patrick, Stephenville, WI and St. Denis, Shiocton, WI. When I first arrived in the United States (February 15, 2019), I served in this parish as a Pastoral Associate and also as the Director of the Outreach Ministry. It feels like coming back home to see familiar faces and also encouraging to see them still keeping the faith.

### What will you be doing here at the Parish?

I am assigned here to manage the operations of our Parish Food Pantry.

### What are some of the things you enjoy in your spare time?

During my spare time I like to run a lot. While I was here, I participated and completed the Chicago Marathon, and it is on my bucket list to do it again. I am also an avid reader. I read as much as I can and wherever I can. I also enjoy learning new languages and watching soccer games.

