

Find Joy in Giving



This third week of Advent is a time to focus on the joy we receive as we seek greatness in Christ. It is also a time to be more mindful of how we can be Christ for others.

So, as we refocus our minds and intentions on how we can be and do more for the Son of the Father who was born to save each one of us, we need to thank God for placing people in our lives who bring us joy.

Moreover, sing the praises of those who bring hope to the hopeless - those who for whatever their circumstance must rely on the goodness of others to get by.

Father Thien Nguyen of Risen Lord Mission and St. Thomas Parish in Braxton and Clay counties recently honored his team of more than 40 local volunteers that keep his food pantries open and stocked to feed hundreds of families in need.

Also in attendance by invitation was Charles Town's Deacon Dave Galvin, who Fr. Thien surprised and presented with his "Matthew 25 Award" - an award that exemplifies "it is better to give than to receive."

Matthew chapter 25 focuses on the importance of performing good deeds. God created each one of us with skills and abilities. Therefore, it is critical to without hesitation use those to help one another when we see an opportunity. The Gospel of Matthew reminds us we will be held accountable.

According to Fr. Thien, Deacon Dave and the Outreach Ministry of Saint James the Greater Catholic Church in Charles Town, although 300 miles away from his food pantries, have "given countless hours and many ways in which they live the Gospel by bringing comfort, food, and care to our brothers and sisters in need in West Virginia, particularly in Clay and Braxton counties for the past eight years.

"Many times, during the year, they bring clothes, diapers, furniture, and food."

Each year the St. James Outreach Ministry has delivered between 3,000 to 6,000 pounds of vegetables between June-December to help feed the 250-300 families that depend on the food pantries run by Thien's faithful.

Deacon Dave's group also installed a fence around the food pantries' gardens and on the day of the recognition dinner they brought 20 living chickens for people to raise. In all 50 chickens have been brought to those families.

Father Thien said taking time to honor those who choose to do good on earth to bring a bit of joy to others is an important moment, "an opportunity (to thank them for letting their) 'light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven' (Mt 5:16)."

