News
EarthBeat



A statue of Mary is seen May 15, 2025, at the garden at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Frankford, Del., mission parish to St. Ann in Bethany Beach. An expansive garden sitting on a third of an acre of the parish property serves neighbors in need within the boundaries of both churches and is the only one of its kind in the Diocese of Wilmington. (OSV News/The Dialog/Cathy Rossi)

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The first bounty of crops is ripe for picking and dozens of parishioners are excited to share the first vegetables of the season with their neighbors in need.

An expansive garden sitting on a third of an acre of parish property at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Frankford, the mission church of St. Ann Parish in Bethany Beach, serves neighbors in need within the boundaries of both churches and is the only one of its kind in the Wilmington Diocese.

It started about 14 years ago as a project of parish Eagle Scouts with six small garden beds; was then nurtured by a youth group and parishioner Mike Galu, and in 2016, became a ministry of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul at St. Ann, whose mission it is to feed, clothe, house and heal individuals and families, and whose volunteers, known as Vincentians, work in the garden and distribute food year-round.

"We know every family," Carol Curran, current president of the SVdP council, told The Dialog, Wilmington's diocesan news outlet.

Neighbors in need receive a bag of household staples to supplement fresh crops, thanks to the financial generosity of parishioners at both churches. When the garden is dormant during the winter, a food pantry provides neighbors with canned fruits and vegetables, and household staples monthly.

But from spring until November, the garden flourishes, with about 250 families a month receiving newly harvested vegetables, including lettuce, green beans, sweet

peas, cucumbers, carrots, broccoli and more, distributed from the parking lot.

"It's just like a farmer's market," said longtime volunteer Joann Yuvanc, as she hands a bag of lettuce to a neighbor. "Gracias, maravilloso," said a neighbor, "thank you, wonderful."

"To have enough produce for neighbors every week, we must schedule our plantings with enough rotations for a continual flow," said Master Gardener Steve McCully, a studied horticulturist, with a passion for tilling the earth who calls the rich, sandy soil of Sussex County among the best earth for crops in the country. "I've never seen better soil."

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Yet, McCully credits God for the garden's success and attributes the garden's bounty to God's good graces, "we take time to pray before we work and our results are not so much a product of our own labor, but rather, gifts from above that we are able to share."

Under Vincentians, the garden has flourished and grown in size, said Fr. John Klevence, pastor of St. Ann. "Fresh veggies are better than canned, when they're available, especially for children of families who benefit from the garden," said the priest, who has tasted tomatoes over the years.

Fr. Joseph Dovari, associate pastor, enjoys all the fresh vegetables and visits the garden often to sample its yields.

"We are grateful our pastor allows our Vincentians to fully work this garden," said Curran. "Our volunteers fertilize the ground with tender love and care in order to grow food for others."

"What neighbors get from us is better than a grocery store," said McCully. "It's our way of saying, we love you."

Bees, the latest addition near the garden, will produce honey in the future. This spring, three beehives, producing about 240,000 bees, were added under the management of parishioner Dean Clark, a studied beekeeper.

"Honeybees aren't aggressive and they play a crucial role in cross-pollination, which is essential for plant reproduction," said Clark. "Anyone who has a garden, trees, bushes, flowers within 3 miles, the bees will help take care of that. In fact, our neighbor across the street, the flower farm, may benefit with bigger, better flowers."

It takes some planning and patience, Clark said, as the first harvest of honey won't be ready until early 2026. Volunteers will then jar the honey to be gifted for distribution next spring.

"It's all about using God's creations to provide for our neighbors in need," said Klevence.