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Rotarians learn about Capuchin outreach

By Julie Brown • O&E STAFF WRITER • May 6, 2010

Brother Vincent Reyes recalls Oct. 1, 1998, when he arrived at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit.

"That experience was in some ways shocking," the Capuchin Franciscan brother said Thursday, April 29, speaking at Westland Rotary.

The Connor kitchen, which serves a lot of children and families, had a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. Reyes, who lives at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Detroit, sat and talked with families.

One father said, "I wanted my son to have the same experience I did with my dad. Where did we screw up? We were feeding the third generation."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Reyes and others began to collect children's books from area parishes, and now have a 5,000-book library at that site, one of four operated by the Capuchins in Detroit.

"We want to feed people, but we want to fill their hearts with hope," Reyes said.

He spent 11 years as an emergency room chaplain at a Chicago hospital, and burned out on that. "It gave me an appreciation for life and all its many facets."

The soup kitchen has operated since 1929. The Meldrum kitchen serves many homeless, including those with alcohol or drug problems, as well as mentally ill people.

Reyes is asked why people don't get off their butts and work. "I'm sorry, they can't. They don't know how." They haven't had such models, he said.

"They have so little hope, so little hope. We were only poor because we didn't have very much money," Reyes said of his growing up years. "We had everything else."

HIS PHOTOGRAPHY

He brought two copies of the book *My Name Is ...* which has photos and profiles of those who use the Capuchin services.

"I got to know them as human beings. It changed me in a beautiful way," said Reyes, one of the photographers for the 2007 book, along with two Detroit News and two Detroit Free Press photographers. "I was trying to humanize the poor. They're very much like us."

Clothing and appliance help is also offered, with the main focus on food. At the Capuchins' Jefferson House, men out of prison usually with addictions train as bakers with the On the Rise effort.

"It's an opportunity to take care of people and we've been doing it since 1929," the brother said. "We have learned a lot," and benefit spiritually from the experience.

Donations may be sent to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, 1820 Mt. Elliott, Detroit, MI 48207. Reyes noted they serve more than 2,000 hot meals daily.

"Everybody wants to feel like they've got some sort of dignity," he said. When asked by Rotarian Margaret Harlow about similarities to the Salvation Army, Reyes said, "I think we're very much alike. I never really thought about the differences."

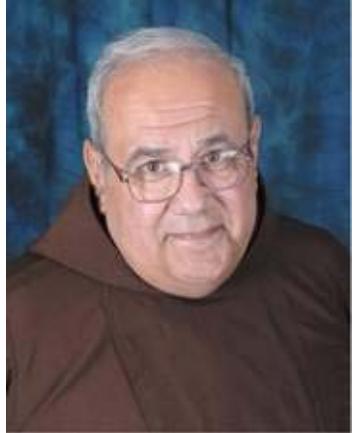
He met Capt. Derek Rose, corps commander with wife Joanna, of the Wayne-Westland Salvation Army.

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"A lot of people need help out there," Derek Rose said, noting there's poverty in Wayne-Westland as well as Detroit.



Brother Vincent Reyes spoke recently to the Westland Rotary about work at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit, which has been open since 1929.

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costume to the grocery
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NO, I have some rules!

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A photograph of a young girl with curly hair, wearing a pink princess costume and a silver tiara. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a plain, light color.

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