

# St. Ambrose Parish

JUNE 23, 2024  
BEEHIVE



## Earthworks Urban Farm

Driving through Detroit's lower east side you may see derelict shops, rotting Victorian homes, dilapidated factories slated for demolition, ragweed growing violently over sidewalks, and creeper vines enveloping telephone poles and old street lights, reclaiming the land. You may also see dazzling street art on the crumbling wall of an old school or church, admonishing the doubtful that "Detroit never left," designers restoring historic homes to their old glory, Michelin-star restaurants donating to local charities, and, among all these sidewalk-crack dandelions there is **Earthworks Urban Farm**.

Turning onto Meldrum at Mt. Elliott Cemetery, where some of the most elite Detroiters of the 1800s were laid to rest, a statue of Saint Francis of Assisi greets you outside a greenhouse as if to say, "This is the place."

Earthworks Urban Farm is a nearly two-acre certified-organic farm spread out over several blocks. The primary growing space, a half-acre behind a community food bank, boasts rows of radishes, arugula, mustard greens, potatoes, garlic, and spinach. There is also a greenhouse for year-round production. Earthworks has orchards with cherry, apple, and peach trees, an area where they make their own compost, and an apiary hosting forty hives. Every year they send approximately four tons of food directly to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, just a stone's throw away.

It was Brother Rick Samyn who dreamed these two wild, overgrown acres into a farm in the 1990s. He was a member of the order of Capuchin Franciscans, who first made their home in Detroit's Islandview neighborhood back in the 1880s, when the area was still farmland. They built St. Bonaventure monastery and traveled by foot, horse, and buggy to the far reaches of metro Detroit to offer confession and spiritual advice. During the Great Depression they expanded their focus when the neighborhood's poor started knocking on the door to ask for bread. "They are hungry; get them some soup and sandwiches," the doorkeeper, Fr. Solanus Casey (now beatified and on his way to canonization in the Catholic Church) was known for saying.

Their *ad hoc* soup kitchen grew as word spread; in time the lines grew to more than 2,000 people a day. This inspired the Islandview Capuchins to evolve through the years to respond to the needs of their neighborhood in whatever hunger arose. When the neighboring Packard Automotive Plant, which had employed 40,000 at its peak, closed in the 1950s and thousands of Islandview residents were unemployed, they knew where to turn. In the 1960s when the KKK rose again in prominence, burning crosses in neighborhood yards, the Capuchins delivered fiery homilies against racism

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# Earthworks

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and marched for civil rights. Through UAW strikes, race riots, deindustrialization, and the ensuing unemployment and poverty, the Capuchin brothers were a lighthouse.

So, in the 1990s, when the leader of the Capuchins' youth outreach programs, Brother Rick Samyn, was making a grocery list and a neighborhood child asked him, "What gas station do you get your groceries from?" it was a clear alert to neighborhood need. The Capuchins would do what they always did: they would feed the hungry.

"There was this food desert, like so many urban areas. No grocery stores. Not much in terms of gardens," explains Brother Gary Wegner, the current executive director of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen. "And so it started with Brother Rick wanting to give kids an opportunity to see where food really comes from."

At that time, nineteen of Detroit's neighborhoods were labeled food deserts by the Michigan Department of Agriculture. Over thirty thousand residents didn't have access to a full-line grocery store and 50 percent of households were food insecure, relying on corner stores, liquor stores, or fast-food chains to eat. People would have to travel miles away from their homes for adequate or healthy food, which posed a problem for the third of Motor City residents who didn't have access to a vehicle.

"After the riots in the sixties, people were moving out of the city in droves, so over time these vacant buildings were demolished and the lots left vacant," says Wendy Casey, director of Earthworks.

"Deindustrialization, automation, industry consolidation, and disinvestment really hit the neighborhood particularly hard," explains Tim Hinkle, director of public relations for the Capuchins. "Schools closed. Shops closed. Grocery stores closed, including the one that was right on the spot where Earthworks is now." The population of Detroit dropped from two million in 1950 to 680,000. At one point, 37 percent of Detroit was vacant land. As residents left the neighborhood for the suburbs, supporting businesses closed, including the little grocery store on the plot of land across from the Capuchins. Eventually that store, along with most of the surrounding homes and businesses, was demolished. Aerial photographs from that time show urban core receding to urban prairie, a reality that yielded unlikely juxtapositions. Pheasants moved in. Deer are still frequent grazers at the Earthworks garden, and are becoming the latest nuisance in Detroit backyards. "It's an industrial city that has aspects of rural now," says Brother Gary.

"It was during a time when there was a lot of attention on Detroit and how to repurpose all of the vacant land," remembers Wendy. "What do we do with these urban centers that have been decimated by disinvestment?" Many real estate developers saw the situation as an investment opportunity.

*Concluded on page 7...*

## NOVENA OF BLESSED SOLANUS CASEY



Blessed Solanus Casey, Detroit's beloved Capuchin priest on the road to sainthood in the Catholic Church, will be remembered at the Solanus Casey Center with a nine-day novena beginning on July 22 and culminating with the Feast of Solanus Casey on July 30.

Confessions will be heard by Capuchin priests during the novena week from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with masses held each day during the novena in St. Bonaventure Chapel at Noon (except Sunday, July 28).

The theme of this year's novena is **Humble and Faithful Disciples of Christ** with the focus for each day on a different saint and/or element of discipleship.

This year we are honored to have Bishop Robert John McClory and Deacon Aaron Poyer presiding at our 6:00 p.m. feast day Mass. Also new this year, we will be hosting a feast day procession for the first time following our 6:00 p.m. Mass.

The Capuchins invite you to pray with them the Blessed Solanus Casey Novena at any time you feel called to pray for the guidance of Blessed Solanus and hope you will join them on this very special occasion for Blessed Solanus Casey's seventh feast day since his beatification!

*For more information visit [solanuscasy.org/](http://solanuscasy.org/)*



It's time for us to run this race with eyes fixed on Jesus

The Catholic Services Appeal benefits more than 100 ministries, programs, and services and helps fund the spiritual and corporal works of mercy in the greater Detroit area. To ensure fiduciary responsibility, the Archdiocesan Lay Finance Council oversees the distribution of CSA funds to see that they reach the ministries, programs, and services for which they are intended.

**Everyone who considers St. Ambrose their home parish is asked to contribute something toward the annual CSA campaign. Past donors have been contacted to renew their past contributions and entry level donors are being asked to come into the 2024 campaign at a level of \$100.**

If possible, we would like to reach our target by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Make your return in the mail using the materials sent to you, or simply use the QR code to the right.



# All Things Considered

In 1920, there were seventeen million Catholics in the United States and they had already created approximately 6,000 schools with 1.7 million children enrolled. Riding that crest of parochial education was St. Ambrose Parish.

In 1920, we opened an elementary school, and three years later, we opened a High School. That's ambitious for a parish that was only established in 1916 and wouldn't have a permanent worship space until 1926. The fact that the parish invested in education right from the start indicates the importance that was placed on the formation of young hearts and minds for Christ.

There was, of course, an already existing public school option for Ambrosians, but that was viewed with deep suspicion as a vehicle for Protestant proselytizing. That was probably a valid assessment of the situation since the public school system in many parts of the nation was run in large measure by white, Anglo Protestant men who were often obstreperously anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic.

As a result, the Catholic Parochial School System became an alternative enterprise built on the sacrifices of teaching Religious Orders of women and men. It produced an excellence in student achievement which would hold up against any of the best secular public institutions of the day. It was especially transformative for immigrant children, – producing bright minds, proud Americans and faithful Catholics.

It's a system that would eventually begin to disintegrate in the late 1970's when American Catholics, by and large, had been mainstreamed into American life and no longer felt it important to invest in a Catholic-based school. The rapid demise of teaching sisters also hastened the disappearance of many parish-based schools.

This's my summary of the last century of the American Catholic school system. But I have a premonition that a new generation is poised and ready to re-discover neighborhood Catholic Schools again. If we can ever get over the endless debate about how public tax dollars can be used by taxpayers for an education of their choosing, then we might just see a resurgence of parish schools in this country. We're already seeing growing parental dissatisfaction with a public school monopoly in this part of the country.

We held onto our St. Ambrose High School until the defeat of Parochiaid in 1970 when, with its echoes of anti-Catholicism, its fate was sealed. Our grade school closed for a few weeks before the death of my predecessor, Fr. Ed Wojdyla. I reopened that institution in 1986 when I arrived. Against all financial odds, we somehow plodded through for another 16 years until 2002 when we transitioned our St. Ambrose School into Merit Academy – a state-funded for-profit charter school.

This past week, Merit held their "Promotion" ceremony for 65 of their Eighth Grade students. So in an extended sense, that would make them the 96<sup>th</sup> group of students to graduate from this place. *Note: modern educators eschew the use of "commencement" or "graduation" when applied to the pre-High School level. The idea being that it is more than a "promotion" to the next necessary level of learning.*

Sandra Martin, originally hired for the St. Ambrose faculty, is now the principal of Merit and she has done a phenomenal job in bringing ex-

cellence in education to the families of our neighborhood. She oversees a student body of over 700 pupils and a staff of over 50. By comparison, when St. Ambrose Grade School closed we were serving about 150 students and had a faculty of 10.

While I have regrets about the movement of our parochial school into a Charter, reason tells me that this is the next best thing that could have happened for that dynamo of learning on Alter Road. Merit is a highly rated, top performing institution that is serving the community in a way that

we could not thanks to the deep pockets of State funding and no tuition. Generous scholarships given through the Schaap Foundation see to it that many of their students are



Merit Principal Sandra Martin and the Merit "Promotion" Ceremony on June 12<sup>th</sup>

guaranteed placements in the best local parochial and private high schools.

Our Family of Parishes still maintains two excellent Catholic schools for us to opt into – St. Paul and St. Clare of Montefalco. St. Ambrose directs monthly financial assistance to both of these fine institutions – and when asked, they will register kids from here at an in-parish tuition rate.

While new ideas and organization for education tomorrow are developing, we have some of the best options available for us right now. Let's see what the future brings for our schools. The stakes are high.



Connecting People and the Church

We are promoting a program that gives you a way to support our parish: “eGiving” through ParishSOFT.

More and more parishioners of St. Ambrose are switching their donations to “eGiving” that is in line with a cultural shift away from a cash carrying society. Churches of all denominations, are steadily moving in this direction. Almost half (49%) of churchgoers give by credit card or other electronic means, while 40% give by cash. Churches that actively promoted digital giving in their messaging saw an increase in overall giving – across all age demographics.

We consider ParishSOFT to be a “win-win” program for both parishioners and our parish as it provides the critical third party security needed for this way of parish support.

Please consider using ParishSOFT, our online giving service, to support our parish. We are providing this option in addition to cash or check donations. You can still give through traditional methods, but now you can make recurring or one-time gifts online with a credit/debit card or electronic check.

This program is beneficial to you, in that you do not need to worry about having cash or checks on hand at Mass, and it benefits the Parish by reducing the time needed to process donations and run financial reports.

**How does it work?**

You can visit [giving.parishsoft.com/app/giving/stambroseppp](http://giving.parishsoft.com/app/giving/stambroseppp) and enroll securely online, text “Give” to 313-251-4494 or scan the QR code provided to the right! OR you can elect to have your specified bank or credit card account debited on a specific day that works conveniently for your family.

There is no charge to enroll. We strongly encourage you to participate in this program today, and we are grateful for your financial and prayerful support of our parish.



## Faith Formation Station

My summertime bulletin articles will feature all the catechists and students in our program. It is my honor to introduce to you our first-grade catechists from the 2023-2024 faith formation year. In first grade, students learn about our church community, the Trinity, discipleship, belonging, Baptism, and the liturgical feasts and seasons. Students review the Sign of the Cross and learn the Hail Mary, Our Father, and the Glory Be. First grade also serves as the first year of the 2-year sacramental preparation for First Reconciliation and Eucharist.



To tie together the lesson they learned in class each week, the students added a bead to a special necklace project they took home at the end of the year. The list below explains the lesson connected to each bead.

- **Puzzle piece bead** to remind us of how we are each special and can work together to learn about God.
- **Blue bead** to remind us of the Blessed Mother Mary and the color of her veil.
- **Animal bead** to remind us of St. Francis and how God asks us to care for all the creatures on Earth.
- **Blue and white round beads** to remind us to drop positivity into each other’s buckets, just like St. Damien did when he cared for the poor and sick.
- **Orange bead** to remind us of our St. Martha pumpkin and the lessons St. Martha teaches us about having faith in Jesus as the Son of God.
- **Cross** to remind us of the Trinity and the Sign of the Cross.
- **Handprint bead** to remind us to lend a helping hand.
- **Heart bead** to remind us to be thankful for God’s love and to share it with all people.
- **Three purple beads and one pink bead** to remind us of the four candles on Advent wreaths.
- **Red and green bead** to remind us of the Christmas holiday and to give back to others.
- **Star beads** to remind us of the star above the nativity and that Jesus is our light and guiding star.
- **Fish bead** to remind us that we are followers of Jesus.
- **Shiny bead** to remind us of how Jesus shines His Light for us to follow.
- **Yellow and black bead** to remind us that we belong to St. Ambrose Parish.
- **Sheep bead** to remind us that we are part of our parish, which is like a flock of sheep who follow Jesus.
- **White star bead with “7” written on them** to remind us of the seven Holy Sacraments.

*Continued on next page*

- **Peace sign bead** to remind us of the peace God asks us to share with all nations, like the peace shared during the Olympics.
- **Purple bead** to remind us of the season of Lent.
- **Fruit bead** to remind us to practice Evangelical Charity and give food to those who do not have enough to eat or a home to live in.
- **Marble white bead** to remind us of the marble white Baptismal font inside our beautiful church.
- **Yellow bead** to remind us of Easter and how Jesus rose again to Heaven.
- **Red, Yellow, and Green beads** to remind us of how to respond when others are or are not respecting our Circle of Grace.
- **Butterfly bead** to remind us that all creatures are God's gifts and deserve our respect - including insects.
- **"B" bead** to remind us of the Holy Bible which is the Word of God and one of the tools God gives us to learn about Him.
- **Flower bead** to remind us of how we are "growing" in our faith.

**Mary Grech:** Teaching first grade religious education at St. Ambrose has been a joyous and meaningful way to help our youngest parishioners grow in their faith. I enjoy learning about each student and helping them recognize the presence of God in their everyday lives, while also learning more about special Catholic traditions. I began my career as a classroom educator and now work for an education non-profit.

**Nathan Grech:** I have been a 1<sup>st</sup> grade catechist's assistant for three years and have enjoyed Miss Mary in educating the church's junior parishioners. In addition, observing the students' progress in learning about God has been a memorable and meaningful experience.

**REGISTRATION FOR 2024-2025:** Our online registration can be found on the parish website. The registration deadline is September 13, 2024. Be sure to register on time; after the deadline we cannot guarantee availability as some classes may fill.


**Kelly Woolums**



**DETROIT  
Tigers  
PARISH  
GAME DAY**

Let St. Ambrose take you out to the ball game!  
Join us at Comerica Park on Wednesday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, when the Tigers take on the Cleveland Guardians at 6:40 p.m.  
Our seats are in the new "Right Field Balcony" where fans can relax in Adirondack-style chairs while enjoying the game.  
Food and beverage options are located nearby – adding to the enjoyment of the evening.  
And we've chartered a bus for those who would like to skip the hassle of parking.  
Tickets are \$40.00 per person. Bus tickets are \$25.00 per person. The complete event package (ticket + bus) is \$60.00. The bus departs St. Ambrose parking lot at 5:30 p.m. and returns right after the game.  
Register today -  
Tickets are sure to go fast!



<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>CSA</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Box Scores</b>
Number of Families .....795		
Returns to date .....44		
Average Gift in '23 .....\$579		
AoD Quota in '24 .....\$93,186		
Property/Liability Insurance ... \$57,600		
Adjusted parish target ..... \$150,786		
Received as of 6/5/24..... \$40,595		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our CSA goal is fractionally lower this year by \$4,086, but it will be as challenging to meet as it was in 2023.</li> <li>• The insurance premium listed – roughly \$1,107 a week – is the cost of our property and liability coverage for the parish.</li> <li>• Once we meet the AoD quota, anything given to the CSA comes directly back to our parish without the usual 7% deduction.</li> <li>• Scan this QR Code with your smart phone camera to make your donation.</li> </ul>		
		

## The Beehive

is the parish weekly bulletin of the St. Ambrose Catholic Community Detroit/Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan

**Priest in Solidum:** Rev. Timothy R. Pelc  
**Pastoral Minister:** Charles Dropiewski  
**Religious Education:** Kelly Anne Woolums  
**Minister of Music:** Josh Burcroff  
**Office Manager:** Peggy O'Connor  
**Secretary:** Mary Urbanski

### Sacramental Celebrations

**Masses:** On the Lord's Day –  
 Saturday Vigil - 4:00 p.m.  
 Sunday - 8:30 & 11:15 a.m.  
**Baptism:** Arrangements for both adults and infants to be made by contacting the rectory.  
**Penance:** As announced and by appointment.  
**Marriage:** Couples should contact the rectory office a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed date to make arrangements.  
**Funeral:** Normally celebrated within one week after the deceased's passing.

### Directory

**Parish Office:** 15020 Hampton  
 Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan 48230  
**Tel:** (313) 822-2814 **Fax:** (313) 822-9838  
**Email address:** stambrose@comcast.net  
**Religious Education:** (313) 332-5633  
**Pastoral Ministry:** (313) 332-5631  
**Ark Scheduling:** (313) 822-2814  
**Parish Website:** stambrosechurch.net

# Liturgy Schedule

## Monday, June 24

*The Nativity of St. John the Baptist*

## Tuesday, June 25

*Weekday 12<sup>th</sup> week in Ordinary Time*

8:30 a.m. – Mass – John Cardinal Dearden

## Wednesday, June 26

*Weekday 12<sup>th</sup> week in Ordinary Time*

## Thursday, June 27

*St. Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop*

7:00 p.m. – Sean & Cynthia O'Connor

## Friday, June 28

*St. Irenaeus, bishop & martyr*

12:00 – Mass – Mary Ann Rice

## Saturday, June 29

*Sts. Peter & Paul, apostles*

2:00 – Wedding –

Paige Lambert & Chase Mocerri

4:00 p.m. – Mass For All People

## Sunday, June 30

*Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

8:30 a.m. - Mass – For All People

11:15 a.m. – Mass – For All People

# Scriptures for the 12<sup>th</sup> Week of Ordinary Time

## June 24

Is 49: 1-6

Ps 139: 1-3, 13-15

Lk 1: 57-66, 80

## June 25

2 Kgs 19: 9b-11, 14-21, 31-35a, 35

Ps 48: 2-4, 10-11

Mt 7: 6, 12-14

## June 26

2 Kgs 22: 8-13; 23: 1-3

Ps 119: 33-37, 40

Mt 7: 15-20

## June 27

2 Kgs 24: 8-17

Ps 79: 1b-5, 8-9

Mt 7: 21-29

## June 28

2 Kgs 25: 1-12

Ps 137: 1-6

Mt 8: 1-4

## June 29

Acts 12: 1-11

Ps 34: 2-9

2 Tm 4: 6-8, 17-18

Mt 16: 13-19

## June 30

Wis 1: 13-15; 2: 23-24

Ps 30: 2, 4-6, 11-13

2 Cor 8: 7, 9, 13-15

Mk 5: 21-24, 35b-43

# Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

## June 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>

Reference # in our Breaking Bread Hymnal or on your iPhone using the QR code.

**Entrance:** Praise My Soul the King of Heaven #577

**Responsorial:** Psalm 91: Be With Me #796

**Preparatory:** Be Thou My Vision #407

**Communion:** I Received the Living God #347

**Recessional:** God of Our Fathers #746



To participate electronically, go to: [facebook.com/stambroseparish](https://facebook.com/stambroseparish) or better yet, to YouTube at [www.youtube.com/channel/UCbymBGIQxUF6UqPct5xFg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbymBGIQxUF6UqPct5xFg)

## Your Envelope Speaks ... the Inside Story

To operate, each week our parish requires a *minimum* of..... \$10,100.00

### On Sunday, June 16, 2024

in envelopes we received ..... \$4,324.00

in the loose collection..... \$1,565.00

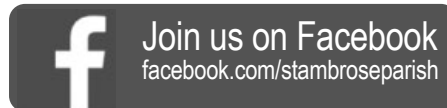
in electronic donations..... \$4,357.98

for a total of ..... \$10,246.98

Over budget for the week..... \$146.98

Number of envelopes mailed ..... 614

Number of envelopes used ..... 40



## Our Sick

Please pray for those who are seriously ill or who are hospitalized: Pat Blake, Donald Miriani, Bonnie McKenna, Matthew Elias, Mary Martin, Anna Noto Billings, Liz Linne, Donna Barnes, Frank Gregory, Alex Billiu, Jackie Walkowski, Maria Simcina, Sharif Hannan, Shirley Whelan, Albina Checki, Judy Sivanov, Matthew Brown, Lily Faith, Patty Freund, Janis Ramsey, Colette Gilewicz, Valerie Hudson, Angela Hansen, John Freund, Tiffany Saine, Nick Piccione, Ann Billiu, Tamam Tedesco, Nicole LeFevre-Wilson, Stan Prokop, Beth Skorupski, Charles Nowicki, and those suffering and hospitalized with Covid.

## Our Dead

**Eileen O'Brien, (nee Anglim)**

was an ordinary woman who lived an extraordinary life. The youngest of eight children, she was born in April of 1923 in County Limerick, Ireland. She completed Primary and Secondary Schools there with the goal of becoming a bookkeeper. At age 19, while still a student, she was recruited to work at an aviation company in England.

Eileen emigrated to Coventry in the Summer of 1943 during the height of the German blitzkrieg on that city. She and other Irish women lodged together while spending harrowing times in air-raid shelters. While her employment was intended to be in finance, she found herself working on salvaging and rebuilding Spitfires for the war effort. It was during those dark days in Coventry that Eileen met the light of her life and future husband, Jackie.

In 1948 she emigrated to the United States to be with Jackie who had already made the trip to America. They settled in Detroit where Eileen found a job as a bookkeeper in Fenster's Department Store. They were married at St. Ambrose in 1949 and took up residence on Maryland Avenue where they became actively involved in the prayer and social life of the parish. She died in February of this year – a beautiful centenarian. Eileen was predeceased by her husband. She leaves family in Ireland, Canada and here – many of whom attended her funeral mass offered at St. Ambrose on June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

# Earthworks Urban Farm *Concluded from page 2*

nity, buying up properties in the thousands with the expectation that they had found the next great urban market. Instead, these properties continued to fall into disrepair, with neighbors helpless to beautify their own neighborhoods and improve their property values. But while many developers were strategizing about how to revive urban life, Brother Rick Samyn looked out at the two acres of industrial brownfield surrounding the monastery and he didn't see empty space. He saw a farm.

## Detroit's Farming History

Detroit has a storied history when it comes to urban farming. During the economic crisis in 1893, Detroit's mayor Hazen S. Pingree became a major proponent of vacant land cultivation as a means of helping unemployed workers in the city, largely Polish and German immigrants fresh from the agricultural economy of Europe. As a railroad and dockworker strike embroiled the city and cries of "bread or blood" echoed outside his office, he came up with a way to provide "bread" for those most deeply affected by the economic crisis. He called it the "potato patch plan."

The plan was to let Detroit's poor residents garden on vacant land to grow their own food. There were plenty of skeptics, and editorial cartoons ridiculed the idea. But one year later, the critics were sheepishly silent. In its first year, nearly a thousand families raised \$14,000 from their crops on 430 acres of formerly vacant land – potatoes, yes, but also beans, squash, pumpkins, string beans, cabbage, cucumbers, corn, and beets. Within four years, the program had over 1,500 families participating, and was adopted in other cities: New York, Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis, Seattle, Duluth, and Denver. Pingree was invited to speak all over the country. At a talk he gave in Terre Haute, Indiana he said, "Until such a time where society has learned to 'do justice to all,' we must depend on the methods nearest at hand."

## Earthworks Grows

The "methods nearest at hand" for Brother Rick were the land and any willing participants. He used the land across from the monastery, where a community food bank operated out of a warehouse on a corner of one of the acres. Its owners charged him nothing. He built a few raised beds and planted some staples – tomatoes, lettuce, cucumbers.

"In the beginning it was just going to be a community garden," explains Wendy. "Then he incorporated youth and the program just grew. It became two youth programs, one for younger and one for older kids, and then we added an adult training program and a market."

A few raised beds eventually became the 1.25-acre farm it is today. The team of one friar became a staff of five and a roster of over a hundred volunteers. All the farm's produce is donated to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, which serves

approximately 150,000 meals a year to Detroit residents experiencing hunger and often homelessness or unstable housing.

Today, volunteers come from all over the world. They've had several groups from France and Germany who were inspired by the work. "For better or worse, true or not, Detroit has become a symbol worldwide of urban decline in the United States," explains Brother Gary. "And so when you see things like Earthworks begin to flourish, that captivates the imagination and then they want to come and see it themselves.

## Speramus Meliora

Detroit's motto has an interesting backstory. Inscribed on its official seal are the Latin words *Speramus meliora; resurget cineribus*, though few residents know what they mean.

The fledgling city was just 104 years old when a fire swept through in June 1805. Established by the French explorer Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac in 1701, it had survived the French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War, and all the trials of establishing a city when a local baker's tobacco ashes carried in the wind to the hay in his stable. Within minutes his barn was consumed in flames. The fire spread quickly to the neighboring homes and shops, too quickly for the efforts of the "bucket brigade" that Detroiters formed, passing buckets of water from the Detroit River. Their efforts were in vain; the fire razed the city by late afternoon. Amazingly, all six hundred residents survived, but they now faced an unthinkable reality.

They had nothing left but empty lots. Father Gabriel Richard, a pastor of *Ste. Anne de Détroite* church, organized food shipments in the immediate aftermath. One of the local judges immediately went to work drawing up plans for the reconstruction of the city. A chief justice and architect drafted an ambitious new layout for the new streets of Detroit. When some residents wanted to pack up and move downriver to Monroe, Father Gabriel urged them to stay and rebuild with the words *Speramus meliora, resurget cineribus* – "We hope for better things; it shall arise from the ashes."

At crucial points throughout the two centuries since, Detroiters have faced these same bare plots of land with little more than the seeds in their pockets and a collective desire for survival and asked themselves the questions: eat or starve, stand or despair, surrender or endure. For two centuries, they've answered those questions with the motto: "We hope for better things; it will rise from the ashes." And for the last twenty-five of those years, Earthworks has been one of those "better things."

*Excerpted from an article written by Casey Kleczek for Plough Magazine, Spring 2024. Visit [plough.com](http://plough.com)*

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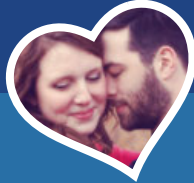
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