

Two Nuns and a Truck Create a Miracle Garden

Sisters Jeremias Stinson and Grace Ellen Urban, members of the Sisters of St. Francis of Sylvania, Ohio, are growing vegetables outdoors year-round in northwest Ohio.

Their work benefits the Helping Hands of St. Louis, a parish food kitchen in East Toledo. However, Sister Jeremias notes: "Hunger is not seasonal, theological or denominational. It affects the whole human family. We wanted to be able to provide fresh vegetables year-round for the hungry people who come there."

Their 20-by-48-foot "polyhouse" is a greenhouse covered with two layers of 4-mil plastic. It feels like summer year-round because the soil, water and air remain at a constant 70 degrees.

Trenches 16 inches below the surface hold 1-inch PVC piping in one closed loop. A solar grid heats water to 70 degrees. That water circulates through the pipes to warm the soil; other heated water irrigates the plants from above.

The team added insulation panels 2 feet below the surface, as well as an electric hot-water heater to supplement solar panels on cloudy days.

Now in its third growing season, the polyhouse remains the only U.S. site recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for successfully growing food in a four-season climate. Polyhouse crops include tomatoes, cabbage, lettuce, broccoli, cucumbers, beets, spinach, parsley and carrots. In 2011, the sisters har-

vested 408 pounds of tomatoes from only 18 plants!

As impressive as the science, engineering and technology are, the real motivation behind the polyhouse is the desire to feed, honor and dignify the poor. The Sylvania Franciscans' mission calls for the sisters to "embrace the poor and marginalized."

Offering fresh vegetables to the daily meal program at St. Louis accomplishes that in a small way. "One woman in the food line looked in awe at the tomatoes we were delivering," says Sister Jeremias. "She touched one and asked if she could have it for herself, as if it were a golden nugget."

The polyhouse has attracted attention from several local faith groups that feed the poor. The sisters have welcomed Zen Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Protestants to observe the polyhouse and to learn new garden initiatives. The sisters have also networked with local educators and commercial farmers interested in converting some fields to this technology.

Sisters Jeremias and Grace Ellen are called "two nuns and a truck" for their frequent deliveries. "We are sisters to all," says Sister Jeremias. "As Franciscans, we try to show reverence to everyone and to use the soil at our feet and fingertips to meet the needs of hungry people."

—Judith Ann Zielinski, OSF

Visit <http://sistersosf.org> for more information.



Grace Ellen Urban (left) and Jeremias Stinson, OSF



St. Anthony of Padua

Perhaps the most popular "Follower of St. Francis" who ever lived was St. Anthony (1195-1231), the patron of this magazine. He joined the Franciscans while Francis was still alive. A famous preacher and Doctor of the Church, Anthony became better known as a wonder-worker and finder of lost objects.

Every Tuesday a Mass is offered for petitioners and benefactors of the Franciscans in the St. Anthony Shrine Chapel, 5000 Colerain Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45223. Novenas are also held there weekly.

Send Your Petition

You may join those seeking the intercession of St. Anthony. Write out your petition and label it: **My petition to St. Anthony**. Mail it to the address below. Petitions are taken to the Shrine each week.

St. Anthony Bread

If you wish to thank God for his blessings and St. Anthony's intercession, you may send an offering called *St. Anthony Bread*. Your alms will be used to help the poor, Franciscan ministries, and Franciscan candidates and students. Make checks or money orders payable to Franciscan Media. Public thanksgivings need your initials and city.

Thanksgivings for Objects Found

Birthstone earrings: **J.J.**, Billerica; vintage medicine pill box: **M.W.**, Wichita; camera: **M.C.**, Glenelg; first rosary: **R.V.**, Coopersburg; notebook: **V.P.**, Altamonte Springs; wedding ring: **E.N.**, Deer Park; hearing aid: **H.B.**, Superior; glasses and purse: **W.S.**, Louisville; credit card: **J.M.**, N. Royalton; driver's license: **J.W.**, Evanston.

Thanksgivings for Favors Received

Grandson's new job: **K.C.**, Kent; son's successful studies and friend's new job: **I.V.**, Houston; repair of an old car: **I.C.**, Sun City.

General thanksgivings: 19 letters.

Address all communications to: St. Anthony Bread/St. Anthony Messenger, 28 W. Liberty St., Cincinnati, OH 45202-6498. To receive a novena leaflet, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope.