

The Lamp

July/August 2019



“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”

Ps.119: 105

In the last issue of *The Lamp*, we highlighted one of the Center’s most precious assets, our volunteers. It was great to share their comments and experiences. Along with God’s amazing grace, they are truly the reason we have seen such growth in the first five months of our operations!

As we begin our sixth month, we’d like to pause and provide our friends with a snapshot of the homelessness and need we face in the Northern Virginia area. And, we give you some idea of how your time, treasure and prayers have helped us to meet, in a small way, the need we find. We continue to find new needs and ways to address those needs. It seems like a long journey so far, but we know we’ve only taken the first few steps.

The need is great, and in so many ways, much of the need is not even identified by local and state governments. Perhaps the greatest need we find is the hunger for a personal, warm contact with those we seek to serve. Our core mission (found on page 4 of this newsletter) is to “love and serve”. Easing the hunger for loving contact is at the core of our mission, and is so beautifully summed up by Saint Teresa of Calcutta, **“Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.”**

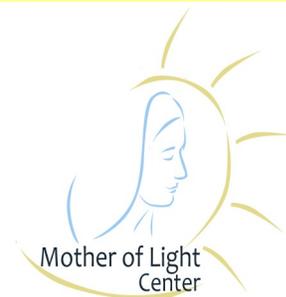
One of the ladies that we help described it this way: “When I come to Mother of Light Center, I feel like it’s home, and Matilde is like a mother to me, caring for me and making sure I have what I need and what I like.”

We can (and do) measure our progress and success in quantities of food distributed, clothing passed out, and the numbers of people we assist. But, really, there is no better measurement than someone that feels loved and cared for.

Our invitation to you is simple. If you’d like to be part of this outreach to those in need, you are welcome. Your time, your support, and most of all, your prayers are so needed and so gratefully accepted.

Inside this issue of *The Lamp*:

- MOLC activity
- Recommended reading from our spiritual director
- Message from the Chair



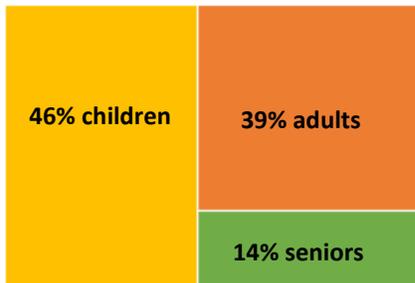
The Lamp is the name of the Mother of Light Center (MOLC) newsletter. The name, linked to the word of God, brings light on our paths. It represents life, hospitality, and guidance for the mission, and our hope for our guests and ourselves (volunteers, benefactors, friends) as we embrace “no us and them — only us”.

Food Insecurity in Northern VA

As part of an ongoing effort to identify the needs of the Northern Virginia area, the Capitol Region Food Bank surveyed clients that use the food banks. The results of the survey conducted in December 2018 through January 2019, show the widespread need throughout our region. The graphics shown here represent Virginia-based clients only.

As an example, Fairfax County has approximately 58,000 food insecure citizens, of whom over 23,000 are children.

FOOD INSECURE
POPULATION BY AGE



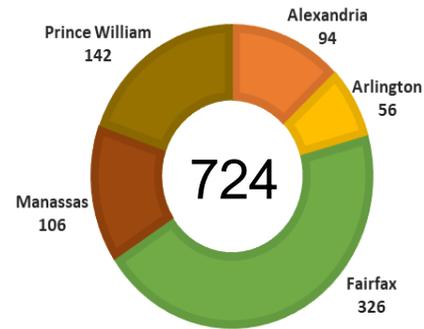
How do we help?

As of the date of publication, we deliver food to **50 families**. Close to 1,500 pounds of food was delivered in the past two months! Some families need delivery twice a month, while others receive pantry and household items once a month.

2nd Friday of the month: At Shirlington Pavilion in Alexandria, day laborers (and some homeless men) are fed a homecooked lunch and given comfort bags.

Additional sites for day laborer distribution that are visited on a rotating basis are in Annandale, Falls Church, and Arlington. Bag lunches, snacks, and comfort bags are distributed. We find homeless persons in these groups, as well. We also are often referred to families that need food, clothing, or other support.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY GEOGRAPHY



Top ranking additional services requested by clients were **English classes (29%)**, **transportation assistance (26%)**, **legal services (17%)** and **day care (17%)**.

We are so fortunate to have volunteers that are providing English lessons to single mothers to help them in finding employment. We also have assembled a network of pro-bono attorneys to provide immigration and other legal services.

St. Anne's Mothers Group

This group was formed to address the specific needs of single, poor women with children. Inaugurated on May 4, the mothers are given a chance to meet and discuss items of particular concern to them. The mothers and children also receive lunch and food pantry items and toiletries to take home.

It's hoped that one of the benefits will be the establishment of a support network and many friendships. Some of the fruits so far have been English lessons, job interview preparations, and most blessedly, the interest in having the unbaptized children fully welcomed into the Church through baptism!

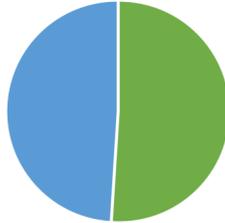
An offshoot of the St. Anne's Mothers Group is the **Youth Baking Camp**. This pilot program will take place August 5-9 at St. Rita's Pastoral Center. Attendees are the children of the ladies in the Mothers Group. The camp will provide the children with baking skills, fellowship, and spiritual enrichment. Lunch will be served, as well!

We are looking for materials for the Youth Baking Camp. We need electric hand mixers, large mixing bowls, baking sheets, spatulas and measuring cups. Or sponsor a camper for the week for just \$40! If you have any of these items to donate, or wish to sponsor a camper, please contact us at www.motheroflightcenter@gmail.com

Homelessness in Northern VA

The most complete picture of homelessness in Northern Virginia comes from Fairfax County, the area's largest jurisdiction. In the larger DC metro area, Fairfax County has the second largest number of people who are homeless. Only Washington, DC has more people without homes.

- People in families accounted for 49% of homeless persons
- 30% of all persons who are homeless are children under the age of 18.
- 80% of all adults in homeless families are female.
- 57% of adults in families that were homeless were employed.



- Single individuals accounted for 51% of homeless persons.
- 6% of single adults who are homeless were reported as veterans.
- 74% of single adults who are homeless are male.
- 23% of single adults who are homeless are employed.

How do we help?

1st Saturday of the month: At Bailey's Community Shelter, food is prepared and served to the homeless from the area. Clothing is distributed, along with comfort bags containing water, socks, snacks, toiletries, and other items as available. 70 pounds of food and supplies were distributed in May and June.

3rd Tuesday of the month: Meade Memorial Episcopal provides lunch to the area homeless. Since opening, we have distributed clothing, blankets, comfort bags, snacks and other items as needed. 68 pounds of supplies were distributed in the past two visits.

Walking outreach to the homeless in Crystal City, Alexandria, and Arlington is done on a rotating basis, depending on where we find the need. Bag lunches, comfort bags, water, and snacks are distributed.

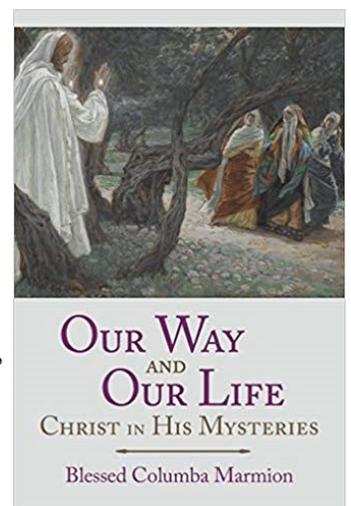
Recommended Reading

An introduction to the wisdom of a profound and holy man, Blessed Columba Marmion. This volume is a shorter edition of *Christ in His Mysteries*, Dom Columba Marmion's profound reflection on the Mysteries of Christ's life as presented in the Gospels and the Liturgical Year. In Blessed Marmion's words, the mysteries that Jesus lived were lived for us. In them He shows Himself as our model and wills to make Himself one with our souls as Head of the Mystical Body of which we are members.

Blessed Columba Marmion (April 1, 1858 - January 30, 1923) was an Irish monk, and the third abbot of Maredsous Abbey. Beatified by Pope John Paul II on September 3, 2000, Marmion was one of the most popular and influential Catholic writers of the 20th century. His books are considered spiritual classics.

Reverend Father Matthew Zuberbueler
Spiritual Director, Mother of Light Center
Pastor, St. Anthony Catholic Church

<https://www.amazon.com/Our-Way-Life-Christ-Mysteries/dp/1887593039>



Message from the Chair

Dear Friends:

We are so blessed! It's been a remarkable five months interacting with our poor and food insecure family base that has become our "network of homes". Additionally, we reach out to sheltered and unsheltered homeless men and women and day laborers.

Every volunteer is part of the larger picture of what is going on at MOLC; whether making financial or material donations, sorting food and clothes for distribution, preparing a newborn package for a very poor mom who had her baby just hours ago, taking a bed to someone sleeping on the floor, preparing food to serve at Bailey's Community Shelter, packaging provisions for home delivery, distributing and praying with families who receive the food, and so much more.

Our focus is to accompany the persons we encounter. It is at the heart of our celebration. Jesus is our greatest example. He never hesitated to stop and spend time with society's outcasts. He ate with them. He visited them. He healed them. He entered into the chaos of their lives—and of our lives— even unto death.

We are reminded in Acts 11:12: "*The Spirit told me to accompany them without hesitation.*" **Accompany** means an ongoing personalized approach and recognizing the dignity in every person we serve. Through this individualized interaction and cooperation, we try to see the realities our brothers and sisters face and understand how best to serve them. We focus our efforts in accompanying not only in a

practical manner, but also in a spiritual way. To accompany is to be a companion to those we serve. It is a practical and effective action: be present, listen actively, show interest, build trust, offer protection, recognize they are created by God, meet our brothers and sisters wherever they are in their chaotic lives, and give them the hope and support that Christ calls us to share. "*For He will give His angels [special] charge over you to [accompany] and defend and preserve you in all your ways.*" Psalm 91:11

As Pope Francis says, "those who accompany must practice prudence, understanding, patience and docility to the Spirit." – Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 171. Little by little by the grace of God, as we share the love of Christ, acquiring a "constellation of virtues" will be a vital part of our spiritual growth.

Lastly, in his book *The Name of God Is Mercy*, Pope Francis writes, "Every time I go through the gates into a prison to celebrate Mass or for a visit, I always think: why them and not me? I should be here. I deserve to be here. Their fall could have been mine. I do not feel superior to the people who stand before me. And so, I repeat and pray: why him and not me?"

Please remember to keep the Mother of Light Center in your prayers. Assuring all our friends and supporters of a daily place in ours.

God bless and keep you always,

Matilde Alvarado,
Mother of Light Center Chair

MOLC Board Members

Rev. Fr. Matthew Zuberbueler
Deacon Gerard Marie Anthony
Matilde Alvarado
Evangeline Ganuelas
Elizabeth Carrier
Lawrence Holmes, Jr.
Robin T. Huddleston
Leslie Murphy
Marcella Hadeed

CORE MISSION

With a coordinated approach, the assistance of volunteers and others in the community, Mother of Light Center is dedicated to love and serve men and women who are poor, needy, and homeless. We provide spiritual support, encouragement and information they need by establishing relationships. We help them identify their talents and potentials, redirect their lives, find jobs and permanent housing, and most importantly, discover how much God loves them.

Mother of Light Center, P.O. Box 1482, Falls Church, VA 22041

Contact us at: motheroflightcenter@gmail.com

For more information visit: www.motheroflightcenter.com

MOLC is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt, not-for-profit, charitable organization, registered in the Commonwealth of Virginia. A financial statement is available upon written request from the VA Office of Charitable and Regulatory Programs.