

NEWS RELEASE

April 28, 2008

MARIA, ST. MATTHEW'S "MIRACLE WORKER" TO UNDERGO CANCER TREATMENT

Maria Luisa Leal, Director of Community Services at St. Matthew Lutheran Church of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, located at 2108 W. 21st. St., Chicago, Illinois, will start a cancer treatment on April 30, 2008, at the Chicago University of Illinois Hospital.

St. Matthew is 10 minutes from Chicago's downtown by train, has Sunday worship services in English and Spanish with a magnificent Gothic architecture with at one time, the second best organ in Chicago. The surrounding community remains with about 85 per cent Mexican population with a mixture of African American, Polish immigrants and other ethnic groups.

Nineteen years ago, as a response to an increase of homeless, unemployed and low income persons who faced hunger, Maria Luisa Leal a member of St. Matthew and long time Pilsen resident, organized together with other families "El Comedor Popular" soup kitchen at St. Matthew, raising funds through rummage sales, Mexican food catering services, fund raising dinners and donations from friends. About 300 hot meals are served every week including children who attend catechism classes and Sunday School classes at St. Matthew.

ST. MATTHEW'S FAITH MISSION. Maria an American citizen mother of four boys and a grandmother of seven children gave a new meaning to St. Matthew's faith mission, by making Christ's love and compassion in His miracle of the bread and fish to feed five thousand persons, more tangible amongst the poor and hungry in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood by having volunteers who were low income themselves become participants of a new mission of hope and survival. Thus they became "the poor serving the poor" without the benefit of wages.

MARIA THE "MIRACLE WORKER". Maria who has worked as a volunteer and later as the only staff person, as Director of Community Services by feeding thousands through the years with a small budget, has become the "Miracle worker", loved and respected by members of the community. When St. Matthew's soup kitchen run out of food, Maria somehow has been able to manage not to "send them away hungry". We ask for your prayers asking God for a miracle of healing for Maria as she undergoes cancer treatment. In the meantime St. Matthew's journey of faith by sharing God's Word and feeding the hungry continues.

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