

Saint Nicholas

BENEFICIAL SOCIETY

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*Fostering Faith, Hope,
and Charity!*



Acta

March 2024

Anno Domini 2023 — A Year in Review

The last year has been a time of abundant blessings for the *Friends of St. Nicholas*, a term affectionately used for our members. We broadened our spiritual lives to include the sacred space of Holy Ghost Church in Bethlehem, reinforced our commitment to traditional forms of worship by supporting the Mary Immaculate Choir, and, most significantly, aided numerous individuals and families seeking prayers, guidance, and material support.

In this first issue of *Acta*, we will share insights into a few of the initiatives we have embarked upon in 2023, along with updates on their progress. While ensuring the privacy of those we have aided by keeping their identities confidential, we aim to illustrate the kind of heartfelt assistance we have been privileged to offer. Although these highlighted efforts are but a fraction of our endeavors, they exemplify the spirit of charity we strive to embody.

We invite you to join us in this mission, contributing your time, talent, or treasure, as we strive to fulfill the command of our Lord:

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”
— Matthew 22:39

2023 Financial Report

The Saint Nicholas Beneficial Society (SNBS), an apostolate of Marian Restoration (MR), an independent Pennsylvania non-profit registered with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Department of State Bureau of Corporations and Charitable Organizations. SNBS qualifies as a charitable organization under IRS Code Section 501(c)(3). Our financial situation as of December 31, 2023:

2023 SUMMARY	
BEGINNING BALANCE	\$1,807
DONATIONS	\$17,120
GIFTS TO BENEFICIARIES	(\$18,721)
BUSINESS EXPENSES	(\$130)
END OF YEAR BALANCE	\$76

The SNBS spent greater than 99% of all donations on helping those in need. Read on to learn more about how some of these gifts helped others.

Transforming Lives, One Family at a Time

In the heart of our community, where hope intertwines with action, the SNBS proves that compassion, combined with concerted effort, can indeed change lives. An on-going effort involves an inspiring journey of an individual, whose story not only tugs at the heartstrings but also exemplifies the essence of transformation and the power of fraternal support.

Several years ago, a young woman found her way to St. Stephen's, carrying the weight of a difficult past and a fervent desire to forge a new path for herself and her family. With two young children living in different states and under the care of their other parents, her dream was to reunite the family under one roof and offer them the love and stability they deserved. The road ahead was fraught with challenges: securing legal custody of her children, overcoming financial hurdles, and finding steady employment. Her resolve was both remarkable, unshakeable, and inspiring.

Possessing little but a dilapidated property north of Allentown—a gift from her grandmother—this young woman envisioned it as the foundation for the family's new life. Unfortunately, the property, having been misused as a dumping ground, was on the brink of incurring fines from local ordinances. It was at this critical juncture that the SNBS stepped in, embodying the very spirit of St. Nicholas through acts of kindness and solidarity.

The *Friends of St. Nicholas*, moved by her plight, dedicated countless hours to clearing the property. Through sweat, determination, and the generous use of construction equipment volunteered by one of our

members, the land was transformed. This significant effort not only averted potential fines but also paved the way for a trailer home to be placed on the property, marking the first concrete step towards creating a loving and stable home for the family.

As life would have it, the narrative took an unexpected turn with the news of a third child on the way. The urgency to establish a homestead became even more pressing. Despite the strides made, this young mother faces ongoing challenges with employment and financial stability, underscoring the need for continued support from our community and beyond.

The journey of our friend is a testament to the power of change, the importance of community, and the boundless potential for redemption. Inspired by their example, the individual has taken significant steps towards reforming her situation and reuniting their family. Yet, the path ahead remains arduous, and she cannot walk it alone.

This is where our collective prayers, support, and actions can have influence. We invite you to join us in praying for this individual's complete surrender to Our Lord, embracing a life filled with faith, virtue, and community support. It is our belief that such a transformation will help this family grow in Christ and vastly improve their lives.

*Ave, María, grátia plena, Dóminus tecum.
Benedicta tu in muliéribus,
et benedíctus fructus ventristui, Iesus.
Sancta María, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.*



Figure 1: Artwork created by Adobe Firefly



Figure 2 Credit: April Gamiz | abartholomew@mcall.com | The Morning Call

Supporting Sacred Chant

The role of Choir Director, a position dedicated to fostering the majestic heritage of Gregorian chant through the Choralschola and Mary Immaculate Choir, is aimed at elevating sacred liturgies to honor God. At the helm of these efforts is Mr. Eric McWhirter, whose dedication and skill in leading these ensembles are unparalleled. Mr. McWhirter devotes extensive hours each week meticulously researching, organizing, and preparing music for each Missa Canata. His leadership encompasses conducting rigorous practice sessions, providing individual coaching, imparting musical education, and directing the choirs during Mass to ensure the highest praise and glory to God.

Regarding remuneration for Choir Director positions, the median salary in Pennsylvania stands at \$45,000.

In recognition of Mr. McWhirter's significant voluntary contributions, the St. Nicholas Beneficial Society offers a modest stipend. This financial assistance is designed to help cover the expenses Mr. McWhirter incurs, including travel and the costs associated with researching and acquiring music, thereby supporting his invaluable work and expertise in enhancing our sacred liturgies.



Rallying Around a Woman in Need

In the spirit of compassion and community support that defines the SNBS, our members recently came together to extend a helping hand to a woman facing dire circumstances. This story is a poignant reminder of the challenges faced by those among us who find themselves in the grips of homelessness and the transformative power of kindness. One chilly morning, as parishioners were on their way to church, they encountered a woman who had spent the night sleeping outside a gas station. Moved by her plight, they offered immediate relief by bringing her to the warmth of the church, where she attended Holy Mass and was provided with a meal in the parish hall. This act of kindness marked the beginning of our community's efforts to assist her in navigating the hardships she was enduring.

The woman, having previously lived and worked on the West Coast, found herself on the East Coast after fleeing workplace harassment. Unfortunately, her situation worsened in New Jersey where she encountered legal troubles, eventually leading her to Pennsylvania without shelter, proper identification, or the means to support herself. The lack of ID compounded her struggles, rendering her unable to secure employment, government assistance, or even temporary lodging.

Responding with compassion and urgency as November's cold approached, SNBS members personally contributed to ensure she had food, while the Society arranged for a series of hotel stays to offer her shelter from the harsh elements. Her weakened condition had left her disoriented, a state that had previously necessitated hospital treatment for exhaustion and hunger.

In a significant turn of events, she was able to recover her personal belongings from New Jersey, including crucial items like her laptop, tablet, wallet, and most importantly, her personal photo IDs. This breakthrough offered a glimmer of hope, providing her with the tools needed to seek employment and start rebuilding her life. However, the journey ahead remained daunting as she continued to face homelessness, spending her nights seeking shelter in places as precarious as an elevator in a bus station.

Through the dedicated efforts of the Friends of St. Nicholas, she received not only material support but also guidance and companionship. The society went to great lengths, driving hundreds of miles to assist her in

Become a Friend of Saint Nicholas

navigating the complexities of her situation. In addition to securing temporary lodging, SNBS provided her with a Tracfone to ensure she could maintain communication and continue seeking help.

As she ventured to regain her footing, she embraced the opportunity to reconnect with her faith, attending divine services and participating in a Parish retreat. Efforts were made to contact her family in the deep south, although these attempts did not yield the hoped-for support.

Regrettably, over time, communication with her began to wane, and she drifted away from the support network that had rallied around her. In this moment of uncertainty, our collective hope and prayers are with her, wishing for her to find the stability and assistance needed to overcome the challenges she faces.

This story, though unfinished, underscores the essence of the SNBS's mission: to extend a hand to those in need, embodying the virtues of compassion, support, and community. As we await the possibility of her return, let us remember the impact we all can have on the lives of individuals who find themselves in moments of crisis.

On a Lighter Note — We Cut Grass Too!

Numerous volunteer groups have long been instrumental in nurturing the spirit of charity within the Parish community. Over the years, a dedicated group of parishioners, teenagers included, has taken on the responsibility of maintaining the church's grounds, ensuring that the lawn is neatly trimmed, and the property remains litter-free—a constant challenge in the city.

In the spring of 2023, it was observed that the grass on the St. Stephen of Hungary Oratory's property was beginning to grow tall. Prompted by this, *The Friends* swiftly organized and led teams, comprising teenagers among others, to tackle the maintenance tasks at hand.

As we now edge closer to the spring of 2024, we are once again reaching out to the community for volunteers. We seek assistance not just with litter collection and lawn mowing, but also with pruning trees and bushes, and generally keeping the premises in pristine condition. Our collective effort will commence in April and continue through to October, with work planned for each Saturday, weather allowing. If you would like to assist, contact info@SaintNicholasBeneficial.org.

This initiative presents a wonderful opportunity for members of our community to come together, contribute to the beautification of our sacred space, and foster a sense of belonging and pride in our shared environment.

Join Us and Help Those in Need

At the St. Nicholas Beneficial Society, we dedicate ourselves faith, hope, and charity. Through our varied initiatives — from supporting traditional worship to aiding individuals and families in need — we strive to make a real difference in the lives of hungry, homeless, injured, friendless, and hopeless.

This year, as we expand our services and outreach, we invite you to be part of our mission. Whether by volunteering your time or contributing through donations, your support is invaluable. Together, we can continue to help and uphold our commitment to charity, guided by the teachings and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ways You Can Help:

Volunteer: Offer your skills and time to support our projects and initiatives.

Become a Friend of St. Nicholas: Join our community to strengthen our mission and extend your support on an ongoing basis.

Donate: Your financial contributions enable us to sustain and expand our efforts to assist those in need.

Every act of kindness, big or small, contributes to a greater impact. Join us in our apostolate of charity, support, and worship.

Donate to the SNBS

Visit SNBS on the Web