

Become a

# Gardening Angel

for Saints Peter & Paul church  
and Bulls Head neighborhood

You will get a **free packet** containing

- **five** peat pots with potting soil.  
(like the ones shown here)
- a special prayer blessing enclosed
- "**legacy seeds**" from the Bulls Head  
Revival Gardens.

Take the packet home **April 4th** and  
**return** the seedlings to church on  
**Sunday, May 15th.**

Join us to plant them after Mass  
• Tools & gloves provided

Feel free to bring your own flowers.

*just another way SSPP grows!*

March 2004





*SSPP*

*Growing back*

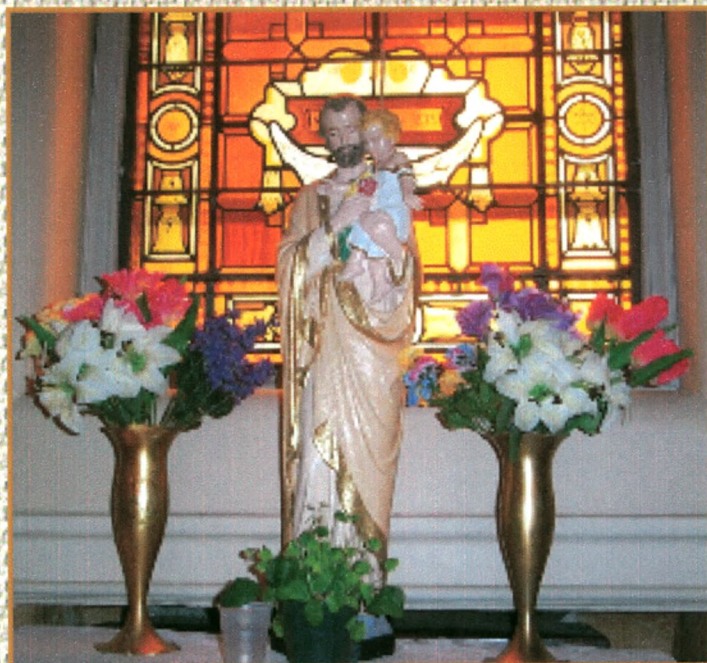
COMMUNITY GARDENS

**CHICKEN SOUP**

FOR THE  
NEIGHBORHOOD



# St. Joseph's Table 2004



GRETCHEN & DOROTHY FALCOWSKIS



JOHN WHEATLEY GORDON C.; NANCY Q.; EMIL

photos by Diane Zielinski

NANCY BARBARA HOFFMAN & MCCLINT



- To Italians, St. Joseph is the patron saint of carpenters, widows, unwed mothers, and orphans, and they gather each year on March 19 to honor him with a St. Joseph's Day altar. To the people who make devotions to him, the day means a break from the Lenten rigors, and is a day for feasting and, of course, prayers and attendance at mass.
- The Tradition of staging the St. Joseph altar was brought by the Sicilian immigrants and is specific to Sicily not found anywhere else in Italy.
- How the food-filled altars came to honor St. Joseph is subject in doubt. Some say the altar had its origin in a famine in Sicily. With so many people starving, all that the people could do was turn to their faith. They offered prayers and asked for St. Joseph's help to intercede for them so that they would have successful crops. Another version is that a group of Italians, in the days of political persecution, was put to ship and cast adrift without food. Day and night they prayed to St. Joseph, the protector of the Holy Family, to save them. When they reached landfall in Sicily, they prepared a feast for the hungry in the saint's honor.
- It doesn't matter which story you believe, it only matters that the loyal Italians continue to have their altars which are offered in thanksgiving for some favor or request that was granted. During wartime, the altar was offered for the safe return of a loved one. At other times it was offered for the healing of the sick.
- Much of the preparation of the food is done by family members or helpful volunteers for weeks or day in advance of St. Joseph's Day.
- The St. Joseph's altar is layered with food, and the food is layered with significance. The altar itself is constructed in three levels, connoting the Catholic belief in the Trinity. There are breads baked in the form of crosses, palm fronds, rosaries, and the crown of thorns, or in the shape of St. Joseph's beard or of his staff, and these breads have great importance. Every visitor is given a piece of bread to take home and keep all year to protect the family from starvation.
- The fava bean is called the lucky bean by Sicilians and dried fava beans are also distributed to those who visit the altar. It is said that if you carry a fava bean in your pocket or purse, you'll never go broke.
- Throughout the night before the feast, families prepare stuffed artichokes or fried cauliflower since no meat can be on the altar because the season of Lent is in progress. There are many cakes; some made with figs, and cookies featuring dates, raisins, honey, almonds, sesame, lemon, and anise.
- The altar is blessed by a priest, and then three people representing the Holy Family- sometimes a young boy, and old man, and a virgin of sixteen, sometimes three young children- sit down to eat the meal.
- Custom and tradition holds that all visitors to the altar, a private or public one, must be fed, and any food left over is distributed to the needy.