



# Our Third Annual International Lunch

## A Feast of Faith, Culture, and Community

By John Mealin



If you ever needed proof that joy can multiply faster than a potluck table can stretch, Holy Redeemer's Third Annual International Lunch Fiesta provided it in abundance.

Just a few short years ago, the world was navigating lockdowns, distancing, and uncertainty. When the World Health Organization finally declared the end of Covid (the global health emergency) in 2023, our parish — like so many others — was still rediscovering its rhythm.

It was around that time that Fr. Sam, our Pastor, offered a simple but powerful idea: What if we brought people together again through food, culture, and fellowship?

From that spark, the International Lunch was born.

### A Tradition Rooted in Gratitude

From the very beginning, our Knights of Columbus Council 10888 stepped forward with generosity and enthusiasm, helping make the event possible. Many parishioners also contributed financially, ensuring that the lunch could remain free and welcoming to all. Their kindness has been the quiet engine behind this growing tradition, and we are deeply grateful.

And then there are the cooks — our parish's own "international chefs." They bring flavours from every corner of the world, each dish prepared with love, pride, and a desire to share a piece of their heritage.

To list every contributor would be impossible (and risky — we'd surely miss someone!), so instead we let the photos speak for themselves.

Every smiling face, every colourful plate, every moment of laughter tells the story better than any list ever could.



### A Record-Breaking Celebration

This year, the weather tried its best to discourage us. Snow, cold, and the kind of winter morning that makes you think twice before leaving the house. But as 11 a.m. Mass was about to start, something remarkable happened: the parking lot filled. Then it overflowed. Then it kept overflowing.

More than 200 people — our largest turnout yet — poured into the parish hall after Mass, filling both upper and lower levels.

Our "Time Travelers" children's ministry was astonished by the number of kids who joined them. The hall buzzed with energy, conversation, and the unmistakable sound of a community reconnecting.

And the food? Let's just say our chefs outdid themselves. Tables stretched end to end with dishes from South America, Canada, Europe, Africa, India, Burma (Myanmar), and beyond. Every plate was a passport. Every bite was a celebration.



### **A Modern Echo of an Ancient Story**

As we watched the trays empty and the smiles grow, it was hard not to think of the Gospel story of the loaves and fishes. Andrew wondered how so little could feed so many — and yet, through God's grace, it did.

Our lunch wasn't quite a miracle on that scale, but it came close. Despite the record attendance, there was more than enough for everyone. In fact, the only thing more plentiful than the food was the joy.

### **"When's the Next One?"**

If there was a phrase heard more often than "Mmm, try this," it was this one. People didn't just enjoy the lunch — they loved it. They lingered. They laughed. They connected with old friends and made new ones. They celebrated the beautiful diversity of our parish family.

And they asked — loudly and often — when we'll do it again.

### **A Community Worth Celebrating**

This event is a reminder of who we are at Holy Redeemer: a parish that welcomes, celebrates, and lifts one another up. A parish that finds strength in diversity and joy in togetherness. A parish that knows food tastes better when shared, and life feels fuller when lived in community.

### **Thank You!**

To everyone who cooked, donated, served, cleaned, organized, attended, or simply prayed for the success of the day — thank you. You made this celebration unforgettable!

We hope the photos that follow capture even a fraction of the warmth, colour, and happiness that filled our hall.

And if you weren't able to join us this time, don't worry... something tells us the next one will be even bigger.

After all, as Fr. Sam says, joy has a way of multiplying!









