



ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS

The Hibernian Hunger Project (HHP) is a charitable function of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH). Our goal is simple, to help and feed the needy in our own communities. The HHP was the brainchild of Philadelphia County Board President Bob Gessler, who helped launch the program in October of 1999.

Dennis Kelly AOH Division 1 in Havertown, PA has been participating since just after our founding 20 years ago. Currently, our Division has 17 elementary and high schools participating. Last year was our record-breaking year with over 10,000 pounds of food collected for the hungry in our community. **Ss. Simon & Jude School** was one of the most generous schools, and arguably the most generous when considering school size. For that, we are so very grateful.

The Great Hunger that took place in Ireland from 1845 – 1849 literally changed the face of the Ireland forever. During this period over one million men, women and children died from starvation. At the same time, many Irish men, women, and children emigrated to Britain, Canada, and the United States in the hope of escaping this horrific tragedy that had befallen their native land. Though the potato blight did happen, there was plenty of food in Ireland that could have fed, and more than likely saved the million plus who died. The wealthy landowners in Ireland shipped their crops and other edible food items to England and the other parts of the world for profit.

In remembrance of this dark period in Irish History, in 2003 the Hibernian Hunger Project was established on a national level as a means to honor those who had died during the Great Hunger; to educate Irish America and beyond about the *An Gorta Mór*; to help with the hunger problem in the US; and to show the generosity of the AOH and LAOH membership.

The reason March was selected was not because it was Irish Heritage Month, but rather because traditionally it is a time when food banks and soup kitchens are low on food supplies after the winter months. Many Divisions and Boards enthusiastically responded to this call to action and resoundingly demonstrated the generosity of the AOH and LAOH. It is in this spirit that many Hibernians volunteer throughout the year at soup kitchens and food pantries. For 20 years the Hibernian Hunger Project has been the impetus for Hibernians throughout the US to provide for community outreach and to be part of the solution to combat hunger in the US, truly exemplifying the AOH motto of ***“Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity”***.

Thank you, and God bless!

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