NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Tilling and instilling

Zoe Ryan | Aug. 24, 2011 Eco Catholic

Read the full story at the *Catholic Voice* of the Omaha archdiocese about Fr. Wayne Pavela [1] and his 8 acre garden, where he harvests produce for the needy in the archdiocese.

Seeds, a garden rake and eight acres.

Those are Father Wayne Pavela's building blocks each year as he grows bushels of fresh tomatoes, sweet corn, radishes, cucumbers, broccoli, grapes and apples - and then gives it all away to the needy of the archdiocese.

"He brings us quite a bit," said Patsy Konecky, store manager of food pantry and secondhand store the Simon House in Columbus, which is affiliated with the St. Vincent de Paul Society. "He's brought me radishes and garden lettuce. He's a very generous man."

LeAnn Lindgren, manager of the Albion Senior Center in Albion about 60 miles northwest of Columbus, said Father Pavela brings sweet corn, okra, squash, zucchini, lettuce - whatever he has on hand. The produce is included in noon weekday meals the Senior Center provides at a reduced price. The free vegetables help keep the center's costs down. Produce that has not been cooked is given away at no charge.

"It helps a lot of these folks," Lindgren said. "They can cook some for their supper, helping keep their costs down, too."

Father Pavela, who is in residence at St. Francis Parish in Humphrey and serves as chaplain and theology teacher at St. Francis High School in Humphrey and Holy Family High School in Lindsay, said he and his helpers also deliver food to senior citizen centers and nursing homes, food pantries and homeless shelters in David City, St. Edward, Genoa, Norfolk, Schuyler, Shelby, Osceola, Elgin, Neligh, Madison, Winnebago and Omaha.

The produce comes from what is almost certainly the biggest garden run by a priest in the archdiocese, said Father James Kramper, who grows decorative gourds in a one-acre community garden behind the rectory at St. Peter de Alcantra Parish in Ewing, where he is pastor. "Farmers are used to 1,000 acres and so forth. But just an acre of garden is a lot, because it requires a lot of handwork," said Father Kramper, who also is pastor of St. Theresa in Clearwater and St. John the Baptist of Deloit Township in rural Holt County.

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