Archbishop O’Brien deepens connection with parishes

As Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien continues touring the parishes of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, he’s getting to know the different communities.

“You get a feel of the spirituality,” he said. “The neighborhoods are different; the traditions are different … it all blends to give a picture of the strength of the faith.”

He’s been pleasantly surprised by “the involvement of so many apostolic groups and their involvement in the wider community. The social gospel comes naturally to our Catholics here,” he said, adding that when parishioners leave Mass “they do go to serve the Lord, and that is what the dismissal of the Mass is all about.”

On Dec. 13, the archbishop visited churches in the Dundalk, Essex and Overlea areas.

He began the day as the chief celebrant at Mass at St. Luke, Edgemere, where he was warmly welcomed by Monsignor Joseph S. Lizor Jr., who served as an Army chaplain for 22 years. At the conclusion of the Mass, parishioners applauded after Monsignor Lizor said how proud he was to have Archbishop O’Brien, who served as a chaplain in Vietnam, present.

In his homily, Archbishop O’Brien noted how John the Baptist epitomized a de-possessive love. “When I want nothing for myself and everything for you, that is pure love,” he said. John the Baptist turned the attention away from himself and toward Jesus.

“When Jesus recommended John, he is recommending those virtues to us,” Archbishop O’Brien said. “Only if we decrease in our own self-importance will God take place in our lives, his proper place, and that can only be done through Jesus Christ.”

He also noted that Dec. 13 is the feast of St. Lucy, who is associated with light. This feast is traditionally celebrated on the shortest, darkest day of the year.

“What is it within us that gives us light – that guides us?” he asked. “Do we have interior light? Is Christ still alive in our lives … or are we so blinded by the lights around us, the distractions around us, that we have a hard time finding Christ?”

The archbishop also urged parishioners to pray for vocations. “Our young people are very generous; I saw that in the military – they’re willing to give their lives.”

Archbishop O’Brien said, “A lot of people work very hard day after day, and we can’t give them all that much recognition, and we certainly can’t pay them big salaries; they do it because of their strong faith, and I want to encourage them.”

It’s working.
“I think it’s awesome. I feel honored that he came here,” said Mary Oshiro, joking that the Edgemere parish “was in the middle of nowhere.”

Donna Lukas and her daughter, Erica Zacharko, 11, went to listen to the archbishop.

“I think it was cool that he came to our church,” Ms. Lukas said, adding that she enjoyed hearing a New York accent because she was from Empire State. “Even though we are a small parish we really are a very active parish.”

After breakfast at St. Luke, Archbishop O’Brien visited Our Lady of Hope, Dundalk, where he chatted with a group of schoolchildren. Then it was on to Our Lady of La Vang, a Vietnamese parish in Dundalk; St. Rita, Dundalk; Sacred Heart of Mary, Dundalk; St. Clare, Essex; Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Essex; Our Lady, Queen of Peace, Middle River; St. Clement Mary Hofbauer, Rosedale; Church of the Annunciation, Rosedale; and he concluded with a visit and lunch at St. Michael, Overlea.