

Because of your support for the Annual Appeal

In its early days, hospital chaplaincy in our Archdiocese was simply a matter of parish priests devoting time to hospitals within their parish boundaries. However, as the need grew and the number of parish priests decreased, this practice soon became unfeasible.

In helping to cover their salaries, your Appeal gifts are making it possible for five priests in our Archdiocese to provide compassionate care through their chaplaincy ministries at area hospitals: Father Thomas Malia for Mercy Medical Center; Father Samuel Uzoukwu for University of Maryland Medical Center; Father Patrick Besel for Johns Hopkins Hospital; Father Jon Kightlinger for Howard County hospitals; and Father William Spacek, for Anne Arundel County hospitals.

We caught up with Father Spacek, who has been serving as a chaplain for nearly two decades, to learn about this ministry that brings people closer to Jesus and Jesus closer to them when they may be at their most vulnerable and need him most.

The work is not easy.

Between the hospitals where he serves (in addition to providing weekend Mass support when he can), Father Spacek ministers to as many as 100 patients and their families a day, helping them prepare for some difficult decisions ahead.

“I listen to patients’ stories of pain, suffering, anguish and loneliness,” Father Spacek said. “A cancer survivor myself, I think I bring a perspective that makes it a little easier for me to enter into the arena of compassion.”

One of Father Spacek’s guiding principles when consulting with families of the sick is to gently ask them if they are making a choice *for* or *to* their loved one. In other words, are they operating from a place of love for their family members or from, understandably, a place of not wanting to let them go?

“It’s a balancing act,” he said, “reminding a parent or child to think about what they

(the patient) wanted. Sometimes a loved one will ask 'What about the possibility of a miracle?' I remind them that the miracle is that God is calling their parent or child home, shepherding them into eternal life."