

Bishop-designate Parker touched lives in parishes

Editor's Note: Bishops-designate Adam J. Parker and Mark E. Brennan will be ordained auxiliary bishops for the Archdiocese of Baltimore Jan. 19 at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland. This is the first in a series of articles looking at their background and priestly ministry.

Linda Nelson credits Bishop-designate Adam J. Parker with pulling her out of what she describes as one of the “lowest” times of her life more than a decade ago.

The clergyman, then a newly ordained priest assigned to Nelson’s Western Maryland parish of St. Peter in Westernport, had offered gentle spiritual direction that reminded Nelson of God’s presence in her life.

“Because of him,” Nelson remembered, “I was able to rise above and see life in a new perspective. He touched my life at a time when it needed to be touched. I’ll never be able to repay him.”

Nelson was so grateful that she named her youngest son, Jonathan Parker Nelson, in the future bishop’s honor.

Although he has only been assigned to parishes for seven of his 17 years of priestly ministry, Bishop-Parker has had a profound impact. Parishioners of St. Peter in Westernport and St. Michael in Frostburg, where Bishop-elect Parker was an associate pastor from 2000 to 2005, and Church of the Ascension in Halethorpe, where he was pastor from 2005 to 2007, describe a man wholly dedicated to his priesthood and in love with ministry.



Bishop-designate Adam J. Parker poses in April 2016 after a first Communion liturgy for Jonathan Parker Nelson (center) at St. Peter in Westernport. Also shown are Jonathan Parker’s parents, Linda and Mark Nelson, and Deacon Harold Bradley. Jonathan Parker was named after Bishop-designate Parker(Courtesy Linda Nelson)

Emma McIntyre, an 86-year-old parishioner of Ascension, remembered his first day as pastor. The president of the sodality met the priest at morning Mass. Later in the day, he remembered her name – along with those of many others to whom he had been introduced.

“I was just stunned,” McIntyre said. “His memory is just amazing. He knows everyone and he really does care about the people and his ministry.”

Deacon Thomas Yannuzzi at Ascension described Bishop-designate Parker as a man of “absolute honesty.”

“I think that’s a quality that is hard to describe,” he said, “but one that’s so valuable in any human being.”



Then-Father Adam J. Parker is pictured as a young pastor at Church of the Ascension in Halethorpe. (Courtesy Ascension Parish)

People instinctively trust Bishop-designate Parker, the deacon said, adding that his friend also has a good sense of humor. Deacon Yannuzzi remembered meeting Bishop-designate Parker for the first time in the new pastor’s office. His boss told Deacon Yannuzzi he needed to evaluate whether there was a continued need for a deacon at the parish.

“Then, he just burst into laughter,” Deacon Yannuzzi recalled. “It was a good practical joke.”

Bishop-designate Parker built a “very strong” relationship with the people, the deacon said, adding that “there was a great sense of loss and sadness when he left.”

Karen Metcalfe, a lifelong parishioner of St. Peter in Westernport, said Bishop-designate Parker had a special ability to connect with young people. He participated in many youth group activities, including snowboarding, with the young people in Western Maryland. He was a gifted homilist, she said, possessing a knack for finding theological truths in the ordinariness of everyday life.



Bishop-designate Adam J. Parker and Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski participate in the 2005 installation Mass for then-Father Parker’s installation as pastor of Church of the Ascension in Halethorpe. (Courtesy Ascension Parish)

Parishioners suspected the talented priest would not remain with them long,

Metcalf said. They placed a photo of the Vatican on the last page of a scrapbook they gave him on his last day at their parish.

“We just knew he was going on to bigger and better things,” she said. “He has that godly way about him.”

Nelson, the Westernport parishioner who named her son after Bishop-designate Parker, noted that the priest baptized and gave her child first Communion. Now that he’s soon to be a bishop, she hopes he will be the one to confirm his namesake.

“It’s so easy to relate to him,” said Nelson, who is Metcalf’s younger sister. “He listens to people - truly listens. He’s going to be a great bishop.”

For more stories about Bishop-designate Parker and Bishop-designate Brennan, click [here](#).

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