

# Changing colors, flavors of Fells Point and Highlandtown

**By Sister Pat Rogucki of Sister for Christian Community**

Let us rejoice this Easter Season as we celebrate the suffering, dying and rising of Christ amid blooming flowers and sisters and brothers from different lands. In Fells Point, Highlandtown, Greektown and beyond, one can savor the flavors, enjoy the colors, and participate in rich religious traditions.

There had been a downturn about two decades ago, but our Hispanic neighbors from the south now occupy homes and run effective businesses. On a blustery winter Sunday, after Mass at Sacred Heart of Jesus/Sagrado Corazon de Jesus, there is someone to sell me hot corn tamales and “atol” (a hot corn drink) to energize me for family visits and other errands.

On Ash Wednesday, as I pulled away from the Anchor Library on Eastern Avenue, families were processing toward the church for the evening Mass. I headed for San Patricio (St. Patrick), just opened following repairs to the damaged tower. The procession continued as parishioners parked cars, fed meters and hurried to the church. Children were carried or wheeled in to participate in the service, though unaware of the depths of its meaning.

The adults were a different story. From the back, I scanned the huge crowd, at first not knowing a single one, yet knowing everyone, after 22 summers in El Salvador and elsewhere in Central America. They had come from dire poverty, ravages of war and the violence of gangs. They know too well the pain of separation from loved

ones, too old or too young for the perilous journey north just to survive. The roots of their faith are deep and traditions are not easily abandoned. From the smiling faces milling around, the people seemed happy to be back in their “home” of worship.

On the following Sunday, I arrived five minutes late for the 8:30 a.m. Mass. My only option was a seat in the last pew. This was quite a faith statement. Parents who can mobilize infants, toddlers and youngsters, all washed, combed and neatly dressed for worship at that hour, are candidates for canonization.

Our Hispanic sisters and brothers are a young, vibrant growing faith community – our future leaders, teachers, health care providers and other contributors to society. They have enthusiastic groups of youths who are interested in living their faith, doing works of justice to bring about peace in the world. All are welcome to share in their lively music and perhaps longer-than-usual worship service. They are not in a hurry to leave as church activities are an important part of their day. That is how it is in Latin America. The language might be different, but the Spirit is the same as we are one Body in Christ.

I had the privilege of continuing my Lenten journey in Central America. As I made the three-hour Way of the Cross on Good Friday, I was sure there were similar celebrations in the Baltimore Hispanic Community. That is the faith they come from and that is part of the faith they bring to us.