

Cooking priest to Catholics in business: Make faith ‘appetizing’

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HUNT VALLEY - Noting that the Catholic Church is the “original food network,” cooking priest Father Leo Patalinghug reminded Catholic business leaders, “We are the Body of Christ. We are what we eat.”

Father Patalinghug, a Baltimore priest who has appeared on the Food Network, was speaking to - and cooking for - the fourth annual dinner for the Catholic Business Network of Baltimore April 16. As he prepared Penne alla Vodka for about eight people, he talked to more than 200 attendees about how faith and business go together, all while the banquet kitchen staff at Martin’s Valley Mansion prepared the same dish for the whole room.

Chopping parsley, adding garlic and spices and generous amounts of vodka, which he burned off with a flourish, he said his job, as those in business, is to go out into the world and be the leaven. As he easily diced an onion, he noted that it didn’t fall apart because he kept the root together.

“By the end of the night,” he said, “I want you to be like that - a root vegetable.”

He encouraged them not to force their faith on people, “but make it look appetizing.”

Father Patalinghug founded Grace Before Meals, an apostolate to strengthen families and communities around the dinner table. He wrote the Culinary Confessions restaurant review column for the Catholic Review.

The Baltimore business group, barely five years old, which meets monthly “to strengthen faith and business,” presented a check for \$15,000 to the Archdiocese of Baltimore for a scholarship endowment fund. Over the four years since the dinner was established, CBNB has put more than \$42,000 into the endowment. That fund now produces a scholarship a year for a Catholic school student.

“Soon it will be producing two scholarships a year,” said Mark FitzPatrick, outgoing CBNB president.

He passed the gavel to Diane Beliveau, who will be the group's first female president.

The group honored Tyler Tate, president of Lewis Contractors, which has worked on several key projects around the archdiocese, including two renovations of the historic Baltimore Basilica: the major restoration in the mid-2000s and a more recent restoration after the August 2011 earthquake.

Tate is the third generation of his family in construction, with a history going back to World War II.

"I am very honored and very humbled by this award," Tate said.

"One thing about construction and about business in general is you can't do it alone. You need a good team," he said, as he recognized his wife, Glyncora, and members of Lewis Contractors present. "Business is a community."

He recalled that one day he told Cardinal Edwin F. O'Brien, archbishop emeritus of Baltimore, about his son, Johnny, who would build towers of blocks as high as he could until they fell.

Tate recalled the cardinal reflected, "He's productive in his own little way." What was Johnny doing? A tiny act of creation.

Tate asked the business people, "Where are we doing tiny acts of creation?"

"It's easy for a builder to see. For us (constructing buildings) is a satisfying thing that brings us joy. I hope what you do brings you joy," the honoree said.

"One of the best gifts we have received from God is to be able to participate in his creation in our own little way," Tate said.

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