

Door opens to Panama for Baltimore parishioner

While Brandon “B.J.” Pinkney hopes to improve his prayer life at 2019 World Youth Day, it’s hard to imagine him coming home with any more gratitude than what he took to Panama.

Pinkney is among the Archdiocese of Baltimore contingent at the Jan. 22-27 gathering. He knows that he wouldn’t be there without the generosity of his home parish, St. Bernardine – and fellow youth minister, St. Frances Academy alum and Baltimore City public school educator Ashley Pearson.

According to Monsignor Richard Bozzelli, their pastor, Pearson elicited the parish’s help to send her to Panama, and organized a talent show and other fundraisers to that end. Those plans changed, however, when she became pregnant with a son, Kendall, who was born Christmas Eve.

Looking to find someone to go to Panama in her place, Pearson turned to Pinkney.

Why?

“I’ve known B.J. for more than 20 years, and he has a lot of positive ways about him,” she said. “He likes to take on challenges. He’s more than willing to do whatever is necessary for the church and the community. You want to send someone you trust to represent the parish and Baltimore.”

Pearson, who has a master’s degree in education from Notre Dame of Maryland University, teaches fifth grade at Frederick Elementary School. Pinkney, who began his education at the former Father Charles Hall School in West Baltimore, is the principal of Walter P. Carter Elementary School.

“When Ashley came to me, I initially told her that I don’t have time to go (to Panama), but then things fell into place,” Pinkney said. “I’m hoping to gain a better prayer life, to receive additional direction from God in experiencing the power of prayer.”

He comes from a family with deep roots at St. Bernardine, where he was baptized. When Pearson's baby is baptized there, he'll stand as the godfather.

Monsignor Bozzelli gained an appreciation for Pinkney during a parish youth and young adult ministry day, when he was the primary speaker.

"He was dynamic, and faith-filled," Monsignor Bozzelli said. "I was very impressed with his witness."

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