

Eastern Shore parishes welcome vacationing Catholics

Summer in Maryland means long drives to the Eastern Shore with the sunroof open and the windows down. Thousands of Marylanders migrate to the beach every summer for vacation, but what kind of effect do they have on the Eastern Shore parishes?

According to Bishop Michael Saltarelli, who has been bishop of the Diocese of Wilmington, Del., for almost 12 years, there has been an increase of parishioners from the Archdiocese of Baltimore and surrounding states to the Eastern Shore. The increase in beachgoers means packed churches and added Masses for many of the parishes in Ocean City, Bethany Beach and Rehoboth Beach.

“When they talk about the faith being lost, you can’t tell it by the Catholics that come to the Eastern Shore,” said Bishop Saltarelli. “They are a wonderful inspiration to me and our priests.”

In order to accommodate all of the vacationing Catholics, parishes in the southern and northern parts of the Eastern Shore bring in more priests to help with the added weekend Masses. In fact, one parish and its mission parish have 18 Masses during the weekends in the summer, said the bishop.

“We love them,” the bishop said about Baltimore area parishioners with a chuckle. “Our pastors love them, too.”

Bishop Saltarelli said the Catholics who visit the parishes while at the shore are very generous, which helps when the parishes are not as bustling during winter months. However, the bishop mentioned that “more people are making the Eastern Shore their home” and therefore the parishes are a little fuller during the off season.

The parishes of Holy Savior and St. Mary Star of the Sea in southern Ocean City have a special mission set up for the foreign students who have come from Russia, Albania, Poland and other eastern European countries to work on the Eastern Shore. The mission makes sure the students have clothing, blankets, bikes and other helpful

items to make their life at the beach more comfortable. The group also looks out for the well being of the young adults, making sure they are treated equally and fairly by their employers.

The parishes on the Eastern Shore are doing so well that there is a new church being built outside of Bethany Beach called Our Lady of Guadeloupe, said Bishop Saltarelli proudly.

The Diocese of Wilmington Web site, www.cdow.org, has a Vacation Mass Guide with all Mass times for the parishes in the Delaware and Maryland beach resort areas and the Chesapeake Bay vacation areas.