Father Barr to lead Towson parish

When Monsignor Richard Cramblitt, temporary administrator of Church of the Immaculate Conception in Towson, called Father Joseph F. Barr to congratulate him on his appointment as Immaculate Conception's new pastor, his first words were: "Welcome home."

Father Barr had served as an associate pastor of the Baltimore County parish in the 1980s and has many friends there.

"I really hope to build on the great ministry of (former pastors) Monsignor (John) Lyness, Monsignor (Edward) Lynch and Monsignor (F. Dennis) Tinder," said Father Barr, pastor of Holy Family in Davidsonville for more than 14 years. "They were all very people oriented – and not just in the parish, but in the community at large and ecumenically as well."

Father Barr will assume his new duties July 1. He said he is grateful to have a transition period to learn more about his new 3,200-family faith community – a parish twice the size of Holy Family.

"I'm looking forward to meeting with all the staff on an individual basis and hearing their concerns, goals and their vision for the parish's future," he said.

Father Barr grew up in the Hagerstown parish of St. Mary. He prepared for the priesthood at St. Mary Seminary's in Roland Park and the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He completed post graduate studies at Rome's Pontifical Biblical Institute and earned a master's degree in biblical studies from The Catholic University of America in Washington.

Ordained in 1978, Father Barr served as an associate pastor of St. Matthew in Northwood, Immaculate Conception in Towson and the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland. He was named pastor of Holy Family in Davidsonville in 1995 and serves as the Catholic chaplain and coordinator of all chaplains for the Anne Arundel County Police Department.

Father Barr called it "bittersweet" to leave Holy Family.

"I've loved every minute of my time there," he said. "It's going to be like going through a death to leave, but I'm honored and excited about my new assignment."