

# Father Donaghy served as Ellicott City pastor, dean of seminary

Father Thomas J. Donaghy, whose ministry included 26 years as a Christian Brother and then six years as academic dean of St. Mary's Seminary in Roland Park and 11 as pastor of St. Paul Parish in Ellicott City while a priest of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, died Jan. 4 at age 89.

A funeral Mass was to be offered Jan. 9 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Morton, Pa., south of Philadelphia, not far from Sharon Hill, where Father Donaghy was born and raised. He will also be remembered at St. Paul, which he led from 1992 until his retirement from the priesthood in 2003.

Father Warren Tanghe, pastor of St. Paul, said a memorial Mass will be scheduled at the parish, at a time to be determined. Concelebrants will include Father Matthew Buening, who served as its pastor from 2009 to 2015.

"I loved Father Donaghy," said Father Buening, the chaplain of Towson University. "He helped get me into seminary. He was a mentor to me in many ways."

Father Donaghy's time at St. Paul included considerable improvements to its worship space. Restoration of the interior of its church, which dates to 1838, was completed in 1992, the year he arrived. Father Donaghy then oversaw an expansion of the worship space, which was rededicated in 2001.

"It was a very nice refurbishment," said Peter Nielsen, a parishioner who served St. Paul as maintenance manager from 1998 to 2004. "It became a more bright and airy space, and created a more welcoming atmosphere. All the pastors who followed him have remarked on its beauty.

At Christmas, Nielsen recalled Father Donaghy giving small bonuses to staff and treating them to a meal, including at Tersiguel's, a French restaurant on Main Street in Ellicott City.

"He was generous," Nielsen said. "He was cerebral, but easy to talk to. He was a

great man.”

St. Paul Church opened shortly after the construction of Ellicott City Station, a favorite of railroad buffs and a National Historical Landmark. Suffering from arthritis, he enjoyed listening and watching trains pass through the town.

“He had a directory, and knew when the trains were running through town,” Nielsen said. “The rectory sits above the train tracks. He could look out his window and see the trains.”

Father Donaghy graduated from West Catholic High School in Philadelphia, and then The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. Before his ordination to the priesthood for the archdiocese in 1979, he spent 26 years as a member of the Christian Brothers.

During that time, he taught and coached sports in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, directed summer sessions at what is now La Salle University; established a halfway house for juvenile offenders; and earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in history from the University of Pittsburgh.

In 1976, he entered St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia. After his priestly ordination, he served as associate pastor of St. Thomas More in Baltimore, 1979-80; Ss. Philip and James in Baltimore, 1980-81; and St. Ursula in Parkville, 1981-82.

From 1982 to 1988, Father Donaghy served as academic dean of St. Mary’s Seminary. Sulpician Father Thomas Hurst, president-rector of the seminary from 2007 to 2016, was on its faculty and administrative team with Father Donaghy.

“He brought a wealth of teaching and administrative experience,” Father Hurst said. “His commitment to formation for the priesthood was evident in his roles as mentor and spiritual director. (When) he was engaged in parish work, Father Donaghy continued his personal support of both individual seminarians and the seminary itself.”

From 1988 to 1991, Father Donaghy was associate pastor of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland, then spent a year as campus minister at Frostburg

University. He also served as chaplain of the Maryland State Council of the Knights of Columbus.

Father Donaghy wrote several children's books, among them, "New Catholic Children's Bible;" "The Lives of the Saints;" "My Golden Book of Mary;" and "We Go To Mass."

According to an obituary prepared by the archdiocese, he also authored books on the meaning of the creed and "Inspirational Thoughts for Every Day."

Contributions in his memory may be made to the Donaghy Fund at La Salle University.

*Email Paul McMullen at [pmcmullen@CatholicReview.org](mailto:pmcmullen@CatholicReview.org)*