

Father Hilgartner to work for U.S. Bishops Conference

After serving two years as chaplain and director of campus ministry at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Father Richard Hilgartner has been named the new associate director for the Secretariat for Liturgy at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C.

In his new role, the 39-year-old priest will support the work of the bishops' committee on the liturgy as it helps dioceses implement liturgy texts and directives disseminated from Rome.

Father Hilgartner holds a sacred theology licentiate in sacramental and liturgical theology at the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm in Rome. He is a former associate pastor of St. John the Evangelist in Severna Park and the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland, where he was involved in supporting music ministry. Asked if he sees any trends in the way liturgy is celebrated, Father Hilgartner said there is "a growing sense of the need for paying attention to celebrating the liturgy well and reverently."

Good liturgy involves paying attention to details, said Father Hilgartner, a singer who has studied voice.

"It has to be about an experience that draws people into the sacred," he explained. "It can't be all off the cuff."

Father Hilgartner said he was surprised and flattered by the appointment.

"It was not something I sought out," he said. "I'm really excited about the opportunity."

Father Hilgartner begins his new position Sept. 1. He will live in Washington, D.C. and assist at several parishes in Anne Arundel County.

Ordained in 1995, Father Hilgartner grew up in St. Pius X parish in Rodgers Forge.

He is an alumnus of Calvert Hall College High School in Towson and earned a bachelor's degree in business and finance from Mount St. Mary's University. He prepared for the priesthood at St. Mary's Seminary in Roland Park.

Monsignor Stuart Swetland, a priest of the Diocese of Peoria, Ill., has been named interim chaplain at Mount St. Mary's.