

Father Vasquez named St. Lawrence pastor

The tiny church overflows with parishioners.

That'd be a good problem to have for many parishes, but it can make for a tight squeeze during Masses at St. Lawrence Martyr, Jessup, said Father Juan Rubio Vazquez, who was appointed pastor of the church effective Jan. 1.

The church, just a mile outside Fort Meade, stands to grow considerably with a population boom expected with federal military base realignment, said Father Vazquez, 40.

Accommodating the coming growth in the parish will be his biggest immediate challenge, said Father Vazquez, a Trinitarian priest who is an associate pastor of the church.

"This is a very old church so it's been this size since when this area was all farmers 100 years ago," Father Vazquez said. "The building fits only 150 people, while the community is growing very fast."

The parish, with 350 to 400 families, has two Masses Saturdays and three on Sundays.

Trinitarians, who, Father Vazquez said, are called not only to preach but to "witness a way of life" reflecting the Gospel, have staffed the parish since the late 1970s.

That includes works of charity to help the poor and outreach to prisoners at the Maryland Correctional Institution and the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women.

Father Vazquez said that the church looks forward to bringing together people in the community and welcoming new parishioners,

One of nine children, Father Vazquez grew up in Michoacan, Mexico, and emigrated to Texas when he was 19.

He studied at Washington Theological and was ordained in 1999 at Holy Trinity Monastery in Pikesville. He also has served a year as a priest at St. Bridgette on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, then at Our Lady of Sorrows in Victoria, Texas.

After that, he served four years as associate pastor of St. Lawrence Martyr, then returned to Texas for a one-year stint as pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows before coming back to St. Lawrence.