

Golden jubilee a “new beginning” for St. Thomas More Parish

St. Thomas More concluded its 50th anniversary with a closing liturgy and banquet Sept. 19. If you listen to parishioners and church leaders, however, things are just getting started at the parish in northeast Baltimore.

Norbertine Father Brian A. Zielinski, pastor the past five years, was very pleased with the Mass and the many events that took place during the golden jubilee. The turnout and support they received give him optimism.

“This is the first step for a new beginning for the next 50 years,” he said. “Even though our population has gone down, it’s still a viable church, a viable community. I think there’s a lot of hope here for the future.”

While the Mass encouraged parishioners to look forward to that future, it also honored the church past, as the celebrant was Bishop W. Francis Malooly, who resided at St. Thomas More for 23 years before becoming prelate of the Diocese of Wilmington in 2008.

“It’s interesting to see how people change and grow,” Bishop Malooly said. “It’s always nice to come back and celebrate with the church, especially when you know all the people.”

During his homily, Bishop Malooly asked parishioners to look back not only on all that the church had been through, but also to looking ahead, in order to envision what they want the church to become.

“There’s always been a sense of God’s presence here,” he told the congregation. “Commit to keeping your spiritual presence alive and healthy in the community.”

Steve Petrucci, a member of the parish since its founding, said the 50th anniversary carries great meaning.

“It’s been my parish for all these years and I love it,” Petrucci said. “It’s a big part of

my life – I don't know what I'd do without it."

In addition to Bishop Malooly, former pastor Father John P. Cunningham returned, remarking that it was wonderful to be back in a familiar setting around people he had not seen in a number of years. Francis Huebler, a former parishioner, visited with his wife, Bernadette, after being invited by an old friend.

"It's great to see all the old parishioners," Huebler said. "This is my first time coming back for a celebration. Having the bishop back, it was great seeing him again."

Sister of Notre Dame Kathleen Haughey, a pastoral associate, believed that everyone at the Mass received much more than nostalgia.

"The day was filled with such joy," Sister Kathleen said. "You could hear it in our singing. I think St. Thomas More must be smiling down on us. We feel very blessed here, especially now."

Father Zielinski is hopeful that the church will continue to receive those very same blessings and more. Acknowledging that many churches in the archdiocese are facing hard financial times, he said the church was blessed to have seen 50 years and would love for it to see another 50.

"We're just asking God to continue to bless us," he said, "and for our patron St. Thomas to be with us."