

Guatemalans visit sister parish in Reservoir Hill

Adela Maquin Caal left her Guatemala village for the first time in her 19 years of life in early March to visit her church's sister parish, Corpus Christi, Baltimore.

The two days of travel to reach the Reservoir Hill parish brought her a world away from her village, Sepalau, which is located in central Guatemala, she told students at Father Charles Hall Catholic School in West Baltimore March 7.

As the children heard - through an interpreter - that her village has no electricity, hot water or telephones, they sighed. But they gasped when they learned the village had no television.

Ms. Caal is part of a four-member delegation from the Guatemala faith community - San Juan Sepalau - to visit the Baltimore church that has enjoyed a 16-year partnership with her parish.

Though 41 parishioners from Corpus Christi have traveled to Sepalau on multiple pilgrimages, this is the first time members from their sister parish have been able to journey to Baltimore, said Carol Bleistine, 60, of Mayfield.

"We are so happy to be hosting them here," said Ms. Bleistine, a longtime Corpus Christi parishioner who has helped coordinate the Baltimore visits for their Guatemalan friends. "They have welcomed us so many times in their village and shared their faith."

In addition to participating in Mass with the full Corpus Christi congregation, visitors from their sister parish visited Catholic Charities' Hispanic Apostolate in Fells Point, participated in palm weaving with the Filipino community, attended potluck dinners at several parishioners' homes and rode the light rail.

Ricardo Bolon Caal, 39, a teacher in the Guatemalan village, said he has been soaking up the culture in Baltimore and the spirituality of his U.S. sister parish, and is eager to share these experiences with his students back home.

Since 1992, the Baltimore parish has helped build a school and the church building where the community now worships in Sepalau, said Sister Patti Ann Rogucki, S.F.C.C., a parishioner of Corpus Christi.

“This has been a wonderful partnership,” Sister Patti Ann said. “We’ve been inspired by their very deep faith.”