

Thurmont parishioners provide 'joyful witness' at Colorfest

✖ THURMONT - Everyone made way for Father J. Collin Poston as he walked through the bustling Colorfest crowd, led by his prancing Pomeranian, Otto. They stumbled upon a booth offering dog treats, and Otto's delight was evident.

On the second full weekend in October, the town of Thurmont transforms to welcome autumn visitors. The 55th annual Catoctin Colorfest, one of the largest outdoor craft shows in the East, drew an estimated 100,000 Oct. 13-14.

Every year, Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Thurmont staffs a large pavilion at the center of activity, where parishioners serve their famous crab cakes, sausages and more.

"It is a great form of evangelization first and foremost because of our presence," said Father Poston, pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Anthony Shrine in Emmitsburg. "It makes ourselves known to the community."

Father Poston said it is "a joyful witness" when the parishioners serve food and make conversation with festival-goers.

"We hope to evangelize a little bit," said Penny Jurchak, chairwoman of the parish's stand. "(Attendees) will know us by our hearts. They will know by our actions that we are Christians."

Signs in the pavilion advertised a 6 p.m. Saturday Mass at the church, just to the north of Main Street.

"We hope that people here will come and join us," said Jurchak, a parishioner since 1980.

Vendors - ranging from broom makers to bakers - not only filled Thurmont Park, but lined streets and crowded parking lots of local businesses. The throng included faithful from parishes in Frederick County, throughout the Archdiocese of Baltimore

and beyond.

John Dowling, a parishioner of Our Lady of Mount Carmel for 50 years, had two booths in different areas for his business, Old Field Woodworking, where he was sold meticulously crafted vegetable holders, stepstools, tables and more.

“All we ask is for beautiful weather,” said Dowling, whose prayer was answered with two crisp autumn days. “It’s our biggest (sales) outlet.”

Joan Taylor has been a vendor at Colorfest since 2005, when she and her husband, Frank, first opened their business, Cedar Ridge Soaps.

“We get to see the same people year after year,” Taylor said. “We even know what scents they like.”

Their favorite part of the festival is seeing Father Poston, who was their pastor when he was ministering at St. Mary in Hagerstown, and attending the Saturday evening Mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

The Mass time was selected so vendors, such as the Taylors, could attend. All other regularly scheduled weekend Mass times are during festival hours, Father Poston said, and he knows Catholics participating in Colorfest are grateful for the opportunity.

“It’s impossible to go to Mass otherwise,” Taylor said.

Carol Robertson, a parishioner of Our Lady of Mount Carmel who has been active in planning Colorfest for 30 years and president for 10, considers the festival her way of giving back to her community. Colorfest proceeds are donated to area organizations. Local businesses benefit as well from the visitors it brings.

“Aside from being a fundraiser,” Robertson said, “it’s a sense of community.”