

Mass at Transfiguration will soon be held in 1 parish

In an effort to cut expenses and unify the parish congregation, Transfiguration Catholic Community plans to begin celebrating Masses in only one of its three West Baltimore churches by August.

Transfiguration pastor Father Mark Carter, O.F.M. Cap., and the parish council are trying to determine which church will be used for Mass and what functions will be served in the other two church buildings.

Currently, Mass is celebrated at all three churches in the parish - St. Jerome, St. Martin and St. Peter the Apostle.

"We've been one parish for many years, but have congregations at all three of the churches," said Father Carter, who has served as Transfiguration's pastor for two years. "Besides the economic benefits that will come from celebrating Mass at one church, we will also be uniting our congregations and unifying our identity."

Holding Mass in just one of the three churches has been under consideration for the past few years and Father Carter said he and the parish council agreed the time was right to make the transition.

Though Jermaine Towns has primarily attended Mass at St. Martin since 1989 and will miss worshiping in that building if another church in the parish is chosen for services, he understands the need for the change.

"I think most of us are resigned to the fact that in order for us to survive and become stronger, there is a need to make the hard choices," said Mr. Towns, a Catonsville-area resident. "I'm attached to St. Martin's, but I realize we have to go beyond the building and grow as a faith community."

Logistically, it's difficult to operate religious services in three separate buildings and it has become an economic strain, said Margaret Brogden, a parishioner who also runs the parish's youth ministry.

“It’s going to be hard for some of these families to say goodbye to the church where they have worshipped for many years,” said Ms. Brogden, who wouldn’t say which church she would prefer becomes the home for religious services. “But, I think it’s time for us to truly become one community. Not just on paper. I think worshiping in one site will help us do that.”

Father Carter said he hopes a concrete plan will be developed by the beginning of August determining which church will be the parish’s place of worship and what services the other buildings will offer.

There are currently no plans to sell the other buildings, but to find efficient uses for them within the Transfiguration parish, said Bishop Denis J. Madden, urban vicar.