

Mass supports those struggling with addictions

About 50 parishioners gathered at St. Margaret, Bel Air, for the parish's first-ever Mass of Healing and Hope on Sept. 19, which supported those who struggle with addiction.

The idea came from the Substance Abuse Ministry at St. Margaret, which has about 22 members, most of whom have had substance abuse issues in their families. The ministry, which settled on September because it's National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month, advertised the Mass in the local paper, other churches' bulletins and through AA, and it was open to all denominations.

"I personally am in recovery - 13 years," said Tom Lantieri, pastor of Harford Community Church. "I learned addiction is three-fold; it's mental, physical and spiritual, and in order for me to remain sober I need to treat all three. Whether in the Catholic, Protestant or Jewish faith, the spiritual component is important." As a pastor, he said, it was easier to urge his flock to attend the Mass instead of trying to create his own service.

Joseph V. Ryan, manager of the Harford County Department of Community Services Office of Drug Control Policy and a member of St. Margaret, said of the Mass, "We'd like to do it again during Lent. If one person gets the message, it's an accomplishment."

Deacon Jim DeCapite began his homily by sharing his own experiences as the child of an alcoholic. Worshipers listened intently.

"We are always different because of substance abuse problems," he said. "But people who suffer like this are more open to Jesus Christ ... He knows that suffering."

After the Mass, worshipers enjoyed a light reception and a chance to talk.

"I'm in recovery and my whole family is in recovery," said one man, who asked to be identified as J.K. "I have the 'ism,' but I don't have the alcohol." He was deeply moved by the Mass. "This is going to be my ministry," he said.