

No free time in retirement



Charlestown residents are on the go!

In May of 2000, I interviewed the now deceased Father Bernard S. Bak about his role as a retired priest in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

“Retired? You mean re-hired!” quipped the then 78-year-old priest.

The clergyman’s point was that even in retirement, he was as busy as ever, celebrating Masses, visiting the sick and performing other priestly duties.

This week I had a delightful visit to Charlestown, a retirement community in Catonsville, which brought to mind the priest’s point. While chatting with a group of six Catholic Charlestown residents, I was quickly informed that the some 2,000 residents there, although mostly retired, certainly do not have “lots of free time.”

“If you ask anyone to do something, they’re going to do this,” said one woman, as she pulled a leather-bound appointment book from her bag to check her schedule.

The group of seniors informed me that at Charlestown, where the average age of residents is in the mid-80s, there are more than 380 organizations, “and everybody belongs to at least six.”

From the golf club to donating time and goods for the quarterly “treasure sale,” seniors at Charlestown are on the go. They take time to volunteer in the Care Center, engage in athletic activities and enroll in a variety of classes. They make casseroles for Our Daily Bread, support scholarships for young people, sing in the choir and volunteer in the on-campus television studio.

As Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., who resigned at age 90, said, “Men do not quit playing because they grow old; they grow old because they quit playing.”