

Parishioners give Filipino teachers a home away from home

The dinner table at the home of St. Mary, Annapolis, parishioners Lita and Ed Millan is usually full on Friday nights as the couple routinely hosts six to 10 Filipino teachers.

It's a tradition that has gone on in the couple's Annapolis home for the past two years, and they consider the educators and fellow Filipinos to be members of their own family.

"We have two sons of our own, but they are now in their 30s and they don't live at home anymore," Ms. Millan said. "But the teachers who come to our home each week are now like our adopted daughters. We see it as a big, blended family, and my sons feel like they now have sisters."

The Millans became acquainted with the Filipino teachers - who have been recruited to teach in Baltimore-area schools - during a 2005 special Mass at St. Joseph, Fullerton.

"One of the teachers asked us after church where we lived and when we told them we lived in Annapolis, they said they were interested in visiting our city," Ms. Millan said. "They didn't have a car at the time and we told them we would pick them up. That was it. We all just hit it off."

The teachers range in age from 28 to 48 and all teach in Baltimore City middle and high schools.

"They are so far away from their families," Ms. Millan said. "So, we're their family here. Family is something we all need."

Father Alphonsus Olive, C.S.s.R., a resident priest at St. Mary, Annapolis, calls these weekly dinners a wonderful outreach ministry to welcome new Catholics from a foreign land to the region.

"They are such a great couple," said Father Olive, a St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands native who attends the Friday dinners from time to time. "They have a history of opening their home to people new to the area."

This includes midshipmen from the U.S. Naval Academy and foreign nurses, he said. "They exemplify the kind of Catholic values we should all be teaching. Making all feel like they have a home, even when their home is far away."