

Randallstown parish welcomes diversity

The long white aluminum siding rancher may look like a typical American icon, yet the mechanisms inside the parish office of Holy Family, Randallstown, are moving for a wide assortment of cultures. Ethnic mixes of parishioners include all ages of Chinese, Filipino, African, Hispanic, American and others.

Over the years the congregation has changed demographically, said parishioner Steve Roscher, as has the area of Randallstown. "We have a congregation that is white and black and brown, young and old, foreign born and American, local people from many generations and new folks just discovering the area," he said.

Eye-catching native attire often worn to Mass lends to a celebratory feeling, he thinks.

The parish as a whole, said Father Andrew S. Mohl, pastor for six years, "is very conscious of that unity. We welcome the diversity."

Instead of cultivating the differences, the 600-family parish fuses together community events and activities so that all are sponsored by the entire parish, not solely one group.

"I want all to shine, not one over another," said Father Mohl, delighted with the constancy of the ministries run by his blended flock. "I am very appreciative of faithfulness of our parishioners toward their faith, worship and mission."

He's thinking of the 300 ministers serving in these roles and on these committees: extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, ushers, cantors, choir, bereavement, altar servers, sodality, Legion of Mary, Knights of Columbus, catechists, sacristy ladies, bingo workers, parish council, school board, service committee, S.A.G.E.S., Boy/Cub Scouts, office volunteers, St. Vincent de Paul, money counters and pastoral visitors to homes, hospitals and nursing homes.

Holy Family School is physically connected to the church but the connection doesn't

stop there – the school is extremely integrated with the parish, said Father Mohl, who constantly reminds his parishioners the school is there. It will celebrate 50 years in 2011, as will the rest of the Holy Family complex.

A unique physical aspect of the parish is the original small church of 1876, begun by the Jesuits and located several miles up Liberty Road. “The old church” seats 150 people and is still utilized for weddings, funerals, anniversary and holiday Masses, monthly Knights of Columbus rosary devotions and other liturgies as needed. It was refurbished in the last decade.

The current church building seats 500 and was constructed around 1960. Visible bells adorn the top of the entrance, and a large simple gold cross publicly claims the worship happening inside. About 30 years ago it experienced a major renovation as well.

“Holy Family parish remains a friendly oasis where one can always feel ‘spiritually at home,’ ” said Mr. Roscher, who has completed his aspirancy year of the diaconate program through the archdiocese. “The friendship and support that I have always felt at Holy Family over the past 32 years was very influential in my decision to apply to the diaconate formation program.”

Father Mohl has taken many steps to ensure the church, grounds and school remain fresh in appearance, said Mr. Roscher. The improvements also have ensured more energy is conserved.

In his first assignment as pastor, the priest said he is “very busy ... and very privileged.”

His jolly face behind wire-rimmed glasses, Father Mohl admitted to the detailed craziness sometimes inside and outside the white rancher. He runs Holy Family’s parish with the aid of two priests in residence and an assisting priest, the latter a familiar face for more than 35 years – Father William A. Collins, former associate pastor, who is now on the Tribunal staff downtown.

“It’s insane!” Father Mohl said with a loud belly laugh. “Even with help, it’s insane.”