

Reboot: Frostburg State welcomes new minister, Mass on campus

✖ FROSTBURG - When Ryan Miller transferred to Frostburg State University in the fall of 2016, there was not an active Catholic Campus Ministry to welcome him.

That has changed.

With the addition of Father Godswill Agbagwa, the ministry's new leader, Miller knows Catholic Campus Ministry will be a comfort for new students.

"It's good to have that option," said Miller, an engineering major slated to graduate in fall 2019 and parishioner of Sacred Heart in La Plata, Charles County. "You can find people who share your same beliefs."

The year's first weekly campus Mass was held Oct. 14. Miller said the location, and the 6 p.m. time slot, make it more convenient for students, and provides them an opportunity to invite friends and classmates to an on-campus activity.

Bringing liturgy to students was a priority for Father Agbagwa.

"We have a spot on campus so we're going to take that advantage to bring Jesus to the young people who want it," Father Agbagwa said. "There's no better way to encounter Jesus than the Eucharist."

Father Agbagwa was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Owerri, Nigeria, in 2003, and then sent by his prelate, Archbishop Anthony J. V. Obinna, to study in the United States.

He earned a master's degree in legal and ethical studies from the University of Baltimore, a licentiate in sacred theology in the new evangelization from Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Mich., and then a doctorate in moral theology and ethics from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

Allowed to stay in the U.S., Father Agbagwa knew he wanted to minister with young

Catholics.

“Campus ministry is such a place that young people are engaged as they study to be able to lift their faith, understand their faith and grow in their faith,” he said. “Young people have a lot of questions to ask (and) if they are not provided with the opportunity of liturgy or learning or leadership, some of them get lost.”

With the influence of social media, Father Agbagwa said, younger generations are learning not only through parents and teachers.

“They have so many questions they want to ask, but no one is giving them listening ears anymore,” he said.

Using his studies as a foundation, Father Agbagwa plans to lead the college’s Catholics through a “re-evangelization,” beginning with adding liturgies and expanding to include preparation for sacraments, adoration, the rosary and teachings on the faith, morals and social justice issues.

“Our young people don’t seem to understand the position of the church, and that makes some of them afraid to engage the secular society in some of these issues,” he said. “As they graduate and go on to the larger society, they can be able to engage their society ... stand up for their faith in the public square.”

Father Agbagwa was drawn to Frostburg State’s secular campus in Allegany County, where Father Edward S. Hendricks, now the pastor of Divine Mercy Parish in Frostburg, served as a full-time campus minister, 1994-2011.

“It gives me joy if I am able to guide a young person to become better, become successful and to be able to spread that love among their peers and to the larger society,” Father Agbagwa said. “Take it or leave it, these people are going to be the leaders of our country tomorrow.”