

Schaefer would do anything to put Baltimore in a good light



William Donald Schaefer made the rounds in Baltimore City for the last time April 25, when a number of Baltimore pastors made it a point to be outside the Basilica on Cathedral Street, when a touring motorcade stopped for a brief blessing and prayer from Bishop Denis J. Madden (see photo below). Monsignor Ed Miller, the pastor of St. Bernardine (see photo above, courtesy of Deacon Wardell Paul Barksdale), talked of the example Schaefer set during his years as mayor, from 1971-87. “He did so many things that inspired people. He energized people. He really cared.”

Father Dick Lawrence, the longtime pastor of St. Vincent de Paul, remembers the lengths – figuratively and literally – Schaefer went to to cast the city in a good light.

“We had the (church) tower lit, but then money became an issue,” Father Lawrence said, warming to a circa 1980 anecdote. “I ran into the mayor, and he said ‘You don’t have it lit, why?’ I told him, we couldn’t afford it, ‘\$50 for each light bulb, \$50 for the guy to put in each one, \$900 for scaffolding.’ I get a call from the fire department, Battalion Chief No. 6, Ladder No. 1. ‘Father, can I borrow your tower for a training drill?’ The fire department replaced the lights, and the tower was lit again. That was Schaefer. He would do anything for his city.”

Between his stints as governor and state comptroller, Schaefer donated his time to St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Mayfield, during its “Raise the Roof” campaign, which added a third floor to its parish school. Monsignor Bill Burke recruited Schaefer to be honorary chairman of the campaign. In spring 1997, Schaefer pressed the flesh at a fundraiser on Erdman Avenue. The roof was raised, and the school is open and thriving.

