

# South Carroll County parish celebrates 150 years

ELDERSBURG — There was standing room only in the church on the Eldersburg campus of St. Joseph in Sykesville when the parish began its 150th anniversary jubilee with a Mass celebrated by Archbishop William E. Lori April 15.

“In this anniversary year, we look to the past with gratitude, and in this year, we look to the future with hope,” the archbishop said in his **homily**. “I am sure this year ahead will be very, very fruitful for this parish.”

On the previous evening, the parish began 150 hours of eucharistic adoration, which will go until the start of the vigil Mass April 21. Adoration, Mass and an open house were the start of a yearlong celebration to honor the parish’s history and look to its future.

“The community has been generous to the parish,” said Marianist Father Neville O’Donohue, pastor, adding that such generosity allows the parish to sustain quality programs, staff and outreach. “The parish has benefitted hugely from pastoral planning and the pastoral planning process that the archdiocese recommended.”

Father O’Donohue said the parish has focused more intently on evangelization and on six mission criteria: liturgy, welcoming/belonging, encountering/converting, accompanying/spiritual growth, sending/disciple-making and mission support, especially focusing on the four middle criteria.

“They have moved us to being more bold in evangelization,” Father O’Donohue said.

The community has been active in expanding adult faith formation, and hopes to carry the growth to youth ministry.

Father O’Donohue said the parish is not just “creating for ourselves, but (for) our neighbors as well.”

“We hope we’re growing in our confidence to dialogue (with) South Carroll and

further,” he said. “We’re confidently going into the future.”

That mission is presented in the theme for the jubilee year: “Remember (the past), Celebrate (the present), Dream (the future).”

Planning for the celebration began two years ago at a pastoral council meeting. Megan Channing, a member of the council and parishioner for approximately 20 years, showed great excitement for the event, and was chosen as its chair.

“We decided to be very ambitious and have a year of events,” Channing said, adding that the committee wanted the events to combine faith, community, fun and history.

The committee also wanted to use the year as an opportunity to welcome back former members.

“Over time, sometimes people drift away,” said Carole Gauthier, a member of the committee, who had this experience. “All it takes is someone to reach out to us.”

Before the Mass, parishioners who had recently received one of the sacraments were honored. Among them was Jerod Kingston, who was confirmed at the Easter Vigil after time away from the church.

“I’ve been looking for a place to call home again,” said Kingston, a native of western Pennsylvania who currently resides in Owings Mills. “The moment I came here, it felt like home.”

Kingston is already getting involved – he is part of the new radio ministry, which will launch a 24/7 radio station in May as part of the jubilee year.

According to Danny Gallagher, the leader of the new ministry, the radio station speaks to “the whole idea of being disciples of Jesus and finding different ways to evangelize” and “taking new directions with evangelization.”

Danny and his mother, Pat, have been parishioners of St. Joseph since 1965, when their family moved to the area.

“We loved going to Mass and it helped us with our religion,” said Pat, who was recognized as a “steadfast parishioner” with a special nametag during the Mass and

open house. "It helped us to be strong and to have more faith."

"We really met a lot of people in the parish, and that helped us find our place in Carroll County," Danny said.

During an open house following the April 15 Mass, each parish household received a special bottle of TABASCO Original Hot Sauce. The hot sauce company, whose regional company manager is a St. Joseph parishioner, and the parish are both celebrating 150 years. The parish also presented a specially packaged bottle of the hot sauce to Archbishop William E. Lori.

The cornerstone for the original St. Joseph Church, which is in the heart of downtown Sykesville, was laid in 1868, and was established by Archbishop Martin Spalding. The area originally was populated by Protestant merchants and farmers, but saw an increase in Catholic immigrant workers in the mid-19th century, according to St. Joseph parishioner and historian Michael Murphy.

In the mid-1960s, the parish built a new church in neighboring Eldersburg, which was little more than farmland at the time of its construction. By 1998, when a new church was built on the same property, the area had developed and grown significantly.

Today, the original church is still used for special occasions, private prayer and devotions.

The celebration of St. Joseph will continue through May 2019 with a variety of events, some that include past events that are being resurrected for the jubilee.

### **Calendar of Events:**

May 5: Spring Craft Fair

May 15: Launch of WSJF 92.7 FM

June 17: Celebrating Fathers with SJCC in Downtown Sykesville

Aug. 11: Chicken BBQ Dinner

Sept. 17-19: An Evangelistic Mission with Father Cedric Pisegna

Oct. 20: SJCC Homecoming

Oct. 21: Ministry Fair

Nov. 10: Commemoration of the Dead

November 2018: Capital Campaign

Dec. 8: Breakfast with St. Nicholas

Dec. 14: Festival of Lessons and Carols

Jan. 18-25, 2019: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Feb. 9, 2019: Valentine's Day Flowers for Nursing Homes

Feb.20, 2019: WINGS Speaker

March 20-22, 2019: Parish Mission Retreat

April 28, 2019: Easter Eggstravaganza

May 4, 2019: 150th Jubilee Gala at Turf Valley Resort

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