

St. Andrew by the Bay welcomes 'Homeless Jesus' statue for Christmas

ANNAPOLIS - The pilgrim statue of the "Homeless Jesus" found his last shelter of 2017 at St. Andrew by the Bay in Annapolis Dec. 1.

A lightweight, resin replica of the statue, which was created by Canadian sculptor Timothy Schmalz, has traveled around the Archdiocese of Baltimore since February, and it will remain at St. Andrew's until Jan. 2.

The work depicts a full-size barefoot Jesus sleeping on a park bench, covered with a blanket down to his ankles. His head almost completely hooded, showing only his crown of thorns, and naked pierced feet displaying his sacred wounds.

The statue was strategically placed immediately inside the church sanctuary, in between the two main entrance doors, making it impossible to ignore.

The parishioners' reaction to the art work was immediate.

"It was here over the weekend, so the feedback was overwhelmingly positive," said Father Jeff Dausen, pastor of St. Andrew by the Bay. "They were moved by the statue. Several said they were almost moved to tears by it."

Father Dausen said that young children were particularly fascinated by the artwork.

"When their parents would point out the wounds in the feet of the statue, and the children realized it was Jesus, there was almost this audible gasp," he noted.

Father Dausen hopes that the statue will bring more awareness among his parishioners to their support of the Winter Relief Emergency Shelter Program, an Arundel House of Hope outreach that will have St. Andrew by the Bay provide overnight shelter Dec. 26-Jan. 2 for approximately 35 men who are homeless.

An ecumenical program based in Glen Burnie, the Winter Relief Program involves 72

churches in Anne Arundel County to provide food, clothing, shelter and comfort during the winter months to to men and women who are homeless.

“It takes hundreds of parishioners to make the Winter Shelter happen,” Father Dauses said. “During the whole month of December, we have sign-ups. And that’s going on while the statue is being displayed. So it’s really fitting.”

Parishioner Marge Tsitouris is the head volunteer coordinator for the Winter Relief Program at St. Andrew by the Bay. A retired social worker, Tsitouris said it takes close to 170 volunteers to host the guests for a week at the parish.

“It’s just so wonderful to have that statue here now, especially when we are doing the sign ups,” she said. “I’ve always felt all kinds of people, particularly those that don’t have enough, are not treated with respect. And the one thing I try to do with all the volunteers, as well, is to try to be as respectful with the guys (guests) as you can.”

In addition to shelter, guests at St. Andrew by the Bay will enjoy all home-cooked meals, transportation and a variety of activities, such as bingo, entertainment and free haircuts. Volunteers will also do laundry for them.

“They (guests) have an opportunity to relax, if only for a week, which is something they can’t do when they are out in the streets,” Tsitouris said.

Father Dauses said the Homeless Jesus statue helps brings the Gospel to life.

“We hear that Gospel all the time, ‘Whatever you did for the least, you did it for me,’” he said. “But when you see that, it puts a flesh and blood image on it. And it makes it just really incarnate.”

There are plans for a bronze version of the statue to be on permanent display in early 2018 at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Baltimore. The parish is known for its outreach to the homeless.

A lighter weight, temporary version of “The Homeless Jesus” has been hosted by 28

parishes and schools in the Archdiocese of Baltimore this year.

March 1-9: Baltimore Basilica

March 10-17: Notre Dame Preparatory School

March 17-24: Resurrection/St. Paul School, Ellicott City

March 24-31: St. Francis Xavier, Hunt Valley

March 31-April 7: Church of the Resurrection, Ellicott City

April 7-21: Immaculate Heart of Mary, Baynesville

April 21-28: Mount St. Mary's University, Emmitsburg

April 28-May 5: St. John Regional Catholic School, Frederick

May 5-12: St. Peter, Libertytown

May 12-19: St. Michael, Poplar Springs

May 19-26: St. Francis of Assisi, Fulton

May 26-June 9: St. Michael the Archangel, Overlea

June 9-23, New All Saints, Liberty Heights

June 23-30: St. Jude Shrine, Baltimore

June 30-July 14: St. Francis de Sales, Abingdon

July 14-28: St. Mark, Fallston

July 28-Aug. 11: St. Luke, Edgemere

Aug. 11-18: Sacred Heart of Mary, Graceland Park

Aug. 18-Sept. 8: St. Anthony, Emmitsburg

Sept. 8-29: St. Augustine/Ascension

Sept. 29-October 13: The Catholic High School of Baltimore

Oct. 13-27: Our Lady of Victory, Arbutus

Oct. 27-Nov. 3: St. Leo the Great, Little Italy

Nov. 3-10: Loyola Blakefield School, Towson

Nov. 10-17: Immaculate Conception, Towson

Nov. 17-24: St. John the Evangelist, Columbia

Nov. 24-Dec. 1: St. Louis, Clarksville

Dec. 1-Jan. 2: St. Andrew by the Bay, Annapolis

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