

St. Brigid in Canton closes, pastorate considers new uses for building

Bishop Denis J. Madden celebrated the final Mass Feb. 2 at St. Brigid in Canton, a faith community that pre-dated the Civil War.

“Declining numbers led to the final liturgy,” said Conventual Franciscan Father Dennis Grumsey, who became pastor of St. Brigid in spring 2017, when it was combined with St. Casimir in Canton and St. Elizabeth of Hungary in Highlandtown in the pilot phase of the Archdiocese of Baltimore’s pastorate plan.

Three-tenths of a mile and O’Donnell Square separate St. Brigid and St. Casimir. One weekend in January, attendance for St. Brigid’s 4 p.m. Saturday vigil, its only liturgy, was 40 adults.

A pastoral planning team from the pastorate and Father Grumsey recommended that Masses no longer be held at St. Brigid, which was accepted by Archbishop William E. Lori.

“We invited people who had moved out of the area, and had about 100 to 120 for the final Mass,” Father Grumsey said in early February. “There was a reception afterward. It was a nice celebration.

“The worship site is closed. We invite people to join us at St. Casimir or St. Elizabeth.”

St. Brigid opened in 1854, as a mission to St. Patrick in Fells Point. Its initial worshippers included immigrants from Ireland, and its first resident pastor was newly ordained Father James Gibbons, who would go on to become the ninth archbishop of Baltimore.

Under Father Joseph Bochenek, pastor from 1988 until his retirement in 2017, its signature fundraiser had been volunteers serving as “hospitality ministers” at the

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St. Brigid's former school closed in 1980. Father Grumsey said that the pastorate is soliciting suggestions for the former church, which was built in 1967.

According to Father Grumsey, St. Casimir Catholic School, which serves students in pre-K through eighth grade, is at capacity with approximately 220 students. He said that one of the suggestions made for the vacant St. Brigid Church is to repurpose it for a pre-K school.

Father Grumsey said that St. Casimir has 750 registered families and St. Elizabeth 250. Children from St. Elizabeth already go to St. Casimir for religious education, and Father Grumsey said that "sharing resources makes sense."

The pastorate staff includes Conventual Franciscan Father Andrew Santamauro.

"Creating one parish council for the pastorate is something we want to move on right away, over the next two months," Father Grumsey said. "It's important that St. Brigid be a part of it."

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