

A FATHER'S EPIPHANY



Priest pleased with new parish

Father Robert Trujillo began serving at Epiphany Catholic Church this month.

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Coming from a small, three-stoplight town of Williston to a congregation of over 700 families, Father Robert Trujillo

transitions from one church to another during the busiest time of the year as he becomes the new pastor of Epiphany Catholic Church.

"It's somewhat unusual to become a pastor after

three and a half years of being ordained, and now being the pastor of a significantly sized parish and school," Trujillo said.

Trujillo took the place of Father Michael Pendergraft at the beginning of March after trans-

TRUJILLO continued on 4D



JASON MATTHEW WALKER/Lake City Reporter

Father Robert Trujillo has been named pastor of Epiphany Catholic Church in Lake City. Epiphany, which also has a school, is the only Catholic church in Columbia County.

TRUJILLO

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ferring here.

Pendergraft had worked at Epiphany for the last nine years before transferring to a church in Fleming Island, where Father Donal Sullivan retired after over 20 years of service to the church.

Growth of responsibility

Trujillo previously worked with Pendergraft at Epiphany as the parochial vicar for two and a half years. A parochial vicar is also known as an assistant priest, he said. From 2010 to July of 2012, Trujillo assisted Pendergraft with visiting hospitals and individuals who were homebound, celebrating masses and hearing confessions.

"But the administrative part belonged to the pastor," he said. "Now, I'm responsible for the administration of the parish and the school, along with principal of the school."

Epiphany Catholic School has around 80 students enrolled for this school year, he said.

"One of my priorities is to promote the school in the community," he said. "We see the school as a means to evangelize. We want to educate but at the same time, form these kids academically and morally with Christian values."

While Trujillo was a pastor at Holy Family Catholic Church in Williston,

he said he was responsible for a congregation of about 300 registered families.

Getting a late start

Epiphany belongs to the St. Augustine Catholic Diocese that oversees 60 parishes and mission churches throughout 17 counties in North Florida, he said. While there are a multitude of churches in Columbia County, Epiphany stands alone as the only Catholic church in the county.

While many enter seminary as a young adult out of college, Trujillo didn't enter seminary until his 30s, which is considered a late vocation, he said.

Trujillo started off his career as a computer programmer and moved to Florida in 1999 from New Jersey, where he was from originally.

"I wasn't really expecting to be a priest, but I had a reversion back to the Catholic faith," he said. "I was born and raised Catholic, but I had fallen away from the faith, and it wasn't until I was a young adult that I came back to the faith."

After moving to Florida, Trujillo

became involved with the campus ministries at Flagler College in St. Augustine and decided to enter the seminary in 2001, he said. After having a four-year college degree, entering the seminary is an additional six years until one is considered ordained.

Right in time for Easter

As Holy Week begins today, Trujillo said transitioning during the busiest time of the year in the Catholic season was a challenge.

As he begins to invest his time in the Epiphany, Trujillo said he wanted prioritize promoting the school in the community, becoming more involved with Epiphany's

youth program and attracting Catholics who might have distanced themselves from the church.

"In high school, I pretty much fell away from my faith," he said. "So when I had that conversion, I was 27 or 28 years old, and I couldn't think of anything more important than sharing the faith with others. Especially to fallen-away Catholics and young people."

'I couldn't think of anything more important than sharing the faith with others, especially to fallen-away Catholics and young people!'

— Father Robert Trujillo of Epiphany Catholic Church