



Associated Press

The Rev. Laurence Talty spends some time in the chapel at the new Bismarck Roman

Catholic Diocese retirement home, Emmaus Place. Talty is director of Emmaus Place.

Priest retirement home isn't fancy

By Gloria Feickert
Bismarck Tribune

BISMARCK — When word came out two years ago that a new \$650,000 retirement home was being built for retired priests in the Bismarck Roman Catholic Diocese, some eyebrows raised.

When the description included words like exercise room, sauna, jacuzzi, game room and sun room, eyebrows went even higher. The final blow was it was only going to house eight retired priests.

"This is not a nursing home; it's a retirement home," emphasizes the Rev. Laurence Talty, director of Emmaus Place.

"When other people retire, they probably have two cars, a boat and a cabin in the woods or lakeside. Bishop (John) Kinney insisted this should be a nice retirement place for priests," Talty says.

The Most Rev. John Kenney is bishop of the Bismarck diocese.

"Priests have given their life to the priesthood . . . their whole life to the people. The people in the diocese really came through with the money for the fund drive for this place. They still are. It will be ongoing," Talty says.

"They appreciated the years the priests have served, and now they are doing something for the priests. The people also have a place they can be proud of," he says.

Each priest furnishes his own apartment and pays \$550 a month rent, which is well covered by a pension from the diocese, Talty says. Rent pays for a living room, bedroom, kitchenette, bath, patio and garage. It also covers meals, laundry and maid service.

"Getting old is a problem in the priesthood. We're living too long," says the 69-year-old Talty, an Irishman with an easy smile. Priests can retire at age 70 and must retire at 75, he says.

At least five priests in the diocese are to retire next year. Where will they go?

"We didn't expect this place to fill up so fast, but we've turned no one away," Talty says.

Priests come and go as they like, hunting or fishing. They are not under any obligation to do so, but several do parish work on weekends.

"It's kind of nice getting back into a parish. All the beautiful ceremonies for Holy Week, and here we have none of it," Talty says.

There is, however, a small chapel off the large living room in the complex.

Talty, a priest for 42 years, founded and directed Camp Dominic Savio north of Pick City, N.D., on Lake Sakakawea for 40 years.

"It was a difficult change in my lifetime after being with children all those years and then coming here to be with priests of retirement age. It was hard to take. Sometimes it's too quiet here," he says.

The Rev. Frances McKanna, 71, came to Emmaus Place in December from Minot. He says the retirement home is not a luxurious, posh place.

"It's comfortable, quiet, restful and priestly. It's very warm. We get along fine, and we care about the next person," McKanna says.

"Here are eight men from different training and jobs, having one thing in common — our priesthood. It is a living exemplification of the greatest fraternity on the face of the earth," he says.