



SANDY CHURCHILL

■ Bishop John Dooher blesses the newly created meditation garden at St. Ann's Church in West Bridgewater as the Rev. Edward McDonagh looks on in 2011.

The Rev. Edward McDonagh celebrates 50th anniversary in the priesthood

Retired priest returned home to West Bridgewater recently for a special Mass and sold-out dinner

By Sandra L. Churchill
ENTERPRISE CORRESPONDENT

WEST BRIDGEWATER — For St. Ann's parishioner Martin Heavey, the Rev. Edward McDonagh, former pastor, continues to leave his imprint on the small church community.

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“Though he was a quiet man, he made those who felt they weren't welcome somewhere else, feel welcome here,” said Heavey, of the priest who served St. Ann's for 20 years before retiring last year to move to Nevada near family members.

McDonagh celebrated his 50th anniversary in the priesthood by returning home to West Bridgewater recently for a special Mass and sold-out dinner celebra-

tion at T.J. Smith's Victorian House in East Bridgewater.

“I traveled 1,100 miles to celebrate 50 years of priesthood with Father,” said former St. Ann's parishioner Pat Sweatt, who moved to Chicago last year.

“He truly is a remarkable man and priest, and I'm honored to have had him in my life,” said Sweatt.

Prior to his role as St. Ann's pastor, McDonagh served as a hospital chaplain.

“The highlight of my years at St. Ann's was to witness the strength of the faith of the people, especially in the middle of the sex abuse crisis,” said McDonagh, who was accused of sex abuse himself and then exonerated after being removed from the parish for nine months.

“Many people in other parishes left the church, but the people of St. Ann's continued to pray and do good works, continuing the mission of Jesus to love each other as he loves us,” said McDonagh.

St. Ann's parishioner Pat Everett remembered McDonagh's weekly rosary vigil at the church, and how he welcomed newly baptized infants by carrying them up

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the aisle for all church members to see. Parishioner Joe Utka recalled McDonagh's Memorial Day invocations at the town park.

“Father McDonagh ministered to us during our most joyous occasions, and he was there for us when we wanted forgiveness and absolution from God,” said Everett.

As a traveling priest in Nevada, McDonagh said, he uses his spare time on his “bucket list” by singing in a barbershop chorus and learning Spanish.