

Posted By The Catholic Free Press
By Laura Lambert
CFP Correspondent

Friday at 4 p.m., Assumption College will celebrate the dedication of the new Tinsley Campus Ministry Center, a recent addition to the Chapel of the Holy Spirit. The celebration will begin with a brief ribbon-cutting, followed by a dedication Mass, celebrated by Bishop McManus, and the blessing of the building.

While the Assumption College community commemorated the opening of the new facility earlier this year with an open house, the faculty, staff and students are excited to share the new ministry center with the rest of the Worcester community.

Campus Minister Stephanie Sauers McCaffrey said she was excited at the prospect of meeting major donors and celebrating with the greater community.

"I'm really looking forward to it, because we, the staff, get to meet some of the major donors. I look forward to the opportunity to meet and thank them for their contribution," Ms. McCaffrey said.

She added her appreciation for the blessing of the interior of the building, which she sees as an "official prayer that the space be used for God's work."

According to Father Vo Tran Gia Dinh, many members of the Assumption community have put their "heart and soul" into the upcoming celebration as well as the long-term planning and construction of the new facility. Father Dinh, an Assumptionist and a member of the campus ministry staff, explained that every detail has been approached with the utmost care.

Father Dinh, who has an eye for color, put many hours into choosing the artwork which decorates the interior of the center.

Since a fire destroyed the original campus ministry center in 1993, the college has been looking forward to the construction of a new facility. According to Assumptionist priest and theology department head Father Roger Corriveau, discussion of a new facility began 15 years ago. However, tangible planning for the facility has been ongoing for 10 years.

Although building structures such as the Tinsley Center are typically long-term endeavors, Assumption has had to contend with various setbacks without compromising many of the valuable aspects of the new center, he explained. For example, Father Corriveau, and others who have been involved in the planning, recognized that, until recent years, the chapel has been located on the "periphery" of campus, making it less noticeable to students and visitors. "Since then," Father Corriveau said, "the walking configuration has changed, with the construction of newer buildings on campus such as IT (Information Technology), Testa (Science Center), LLC (Living Learning Center), the Village (upperclassmen apartments) and the Chapel Road. This new layout to campus has resulted in more 'foot-traffic' near the chapel and has made it more centrally located than in previous years."

Father Corriveau expects that the high visibility of the Tinsley Center will heighten student awareness of campus ministry. This has been a relevant concern for many campus ministry staff-members, whose department was housed in a refurbished townhouse apartment prior to the building of the new facility, he said.

Assumptionist Father Dennis Gallagher, vice president for mission, mentioned some of the disadvantages of keeping campus ministry locked away in student housing. Being in a townhouse "was less than ideal because it was away from the campus center. You had to know where it was," he said. "When you had an event with cooking, you had to transport the food across campus."

Ms. McCaffrey commiserated, saying that she did not miss the previous location. "Tinsley feels like a more professional space." The facility also has meeting space, offices, an inter-faith prayer room and multi-media-outfitted auditorium which has already been used for concerts and other events.

A highlight of today's celebration will be the St. John's Bible. This seven-volume edition is a synthesis of past and present. According to campus minister, James Rizza, the original Saint John's Bible was commissioned by Benedictine monks at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn. and was handmade with the help of Sir Donald Jackson, calligrapher for Queen Elizabeth

II. As was the custom prior to the invention of the printing press, the Saint John's Bible is heavily illustrated using paints as well as gold, silver and platinum detailing. Assumption now owns one of the 180 copies made and the Bible will be on permanent display in center following its unveiling.

Francesco Cesareo, president of Assumption College and key instigator in the building of the new facility, expressed joy on behalf of the college for the new prominence given to campus ministry through the Tinsley Center.

"The college is very excited about the new campus ministry center. This will give a prominent location to an important aspect of the life of the college, namely the spiritual formation of our students," he said. "This center will allow campus ministry to expand its programs and to help our students deepen their faith as they develop a deeper relationship with God. The center is a visible and concrete sign of our Catholic mission and identity that gives witness to faith formation as an integral part of an Assumption education."

The weekend's festivities will include a presentation on the Saint John's Bible on Saturday at 10 a.m. followed by guided tours of the Tinsley Campus Ministry Center and a 3 p.m. Band Concert directed by Bruce Hopkins. The Chorale Spring Concert, directed by Michelle Graveline, will take place on Sunday at 2:30. All events will begin in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit.

Honoring the Tinsley family

Assumption College's Tinsley Campus Ministry Center is named in honor of the family of John and Helen Tinsley, according to Assumptionist Father Dennis Gallagher, the college's vice president for mission, John and Helen Tinsley were a prominent couple in Worcester in the 1900s. They were survived by their daughter Molly who had severe developmental disabilities. Following the death of his wife in 1941, John Tinsley, CEO and president of Crompton and Knowles Loom Works, Worcester's largest textile loom manufacturer, became friendly with the local Assumptionists who were living in the Greendale area of Worcester, Father Gallagher said.

"He spent so much time with the Assumptionists that they called him 'Brother John,'" he said.

Although Mr. Tinsley died in 1952, the plaque in the entrance of the building explains that he set up a trust fund that continued to provide for the care of his daughter until her death in 2008, at the age of 94. Mr. Tinsley used the same fund to make donations to several colleges, including Assumption College. His donation became the seed money with which the new campus ministry center was built.

“It seemed appropriate to name the new campus ministry center after him and to use his donation for it because his association with the school came through his connections with the Assumptionists,” Father Gallagher said. “It was a good fit.”

PHOTO: The prominent location of the new campus ministry center highlights “an important aspect of the life of the college, namely the spiritual formation of our students,” President Francesco Cesareo said. Photo by Laura Lambert