

At lock-in, teens prepare for annual pilgrimage ushering in Holy Week



Hundreds of young Catholics marked the start of Holy Week by joining Archbishop William E. Lori in the annual Youth and Young Adult Pilgrimage carrying a large wooden cross through the streets of Baltimore on Saturday, April 12th. (Tom McCarthy Jr. | CR Staff)

By Elizabeth Lowe

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Fourteen teens slept for about four hours in sleeping bags on the floor in the parish hall of Immaculate Conception in West Baltimore before participating in the 21st annual Archdiocesan Youth and Young Adult Pilgrimage April 12.

The teens were among 17 youths from Immaculate Conception, St. Cecilia (also in West Baltimore) and other area churches who attended a “lock-in” April 11-12. This was the second year Immaculate Conception and St. Cecilia organized a lock-in prior to the pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage, held annually on the Saturday before Palm Sunday in Baltimore City, began in 1994 by Cardinal William H. Keeler. It is intended to commemorate Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem at the beginning of Holy Week. This year’s theme was “Glory.”

About 750 youths from 57 parishes and schools participated, according to D. Scott Miller, archdiocesan director of the Department of Evangelization’s Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, which sponsored the pilgrimage.

To view a slideshow from the event, please navigate the arrows below. See a photo you’re interested in purchasing? Click here to view photos in the Catholic Review Smugmug gallery.

Chrys Atanga, a St. Cecilia parishioner, attended the lock-in and pilgrimage. He liked the spiritual and social components of the events.

“When you get both, you have the best of both worlds,” said Atanga, 15, a sophomore at Mount St. Joseph High School in Irvington.

The pilgrimage made Atanga think about what Jesus must have endured on his walk to Calvary.

“We need to think about how blessed we are,” he said.

Antionette Taylor, a parishioner of Immaculate Conception who helped organize the lock-in, said the events broaden the youths' horizons.

"They find out they have more in common than not," she said. "It puts us in with the wider group of youth. It's bigger than just our church."

At the lock-in, activities included gender-specific discussions, a movie followed by a discussion and the sacrament of reconciliation. They also learned about eucharistic adoration and what to expect at the pilgrimage.

"What we learned was getting us prepared for (the pilgrimage)," said AJ McCho, a parishioner of St. Cecilia, who bubbled with excitement.



Young people from St. Cecilia Church in Baltimore participate in the annual pilgrimage ushering in Holy Week on the streets of Baltimore April 12. (Tom McCarthy Jr. | CR Staff)

The pilgrimage began with a rally in Wyman Park in northern Baltimore City, south of the Johns Hopkins University campus. McCho was among the youths who participated in the sacrament of reconciliation.

"I felt like a lot of weight was lifted off my shoulders," McCho, 16, said after going to confession.

Following the rally, McCho and his fellow pilgrims proceeded across the street to Ss. Philip and James Church and University Parish for eucharistic adoration.

During adoration, Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori talked about knowing Jesus "not in a distant way, but as a friend."

"Come to know him, experience his love," the archbishop said, "and everything changes. Fall in love with Jesus and every problem you have will not seem so unsolvable."

Sandra Morgan, a youth minister at St. Cecilia, said she could tell that the lock-in prepared the teens for the pilgrimage. She observed them engaged in "serious meditation" during adoration.

"They sang the songs, they prayed the prayers," Morgan said.

The tradition of carrying a 10-foot wooden cross continued following adoration. Archbishop Lori walked with the youths for several blocks up North Charles Street on the warm, sunny spring afternoon.

"It is always such a joy to see the glory of our Lord radiate from the faces of our beautiful young people," said Margaret Brogden, archdiocesan coordinator of youth ministry formation.

The three-mile journey took the pilgrims to the campuses of Loyola University Maryland and Notre Dame of Maryland University, both in Baltimore, for Stations of

the Cross and a concert by Jackie François, a speaker, singer/songwriter and worship leader. The group left Notre Dame and completed the walk at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland.

The pilgrims attended the vigil Mass of the Passion of the Lord at the cathedral during the parish's 5 p.m. liturgy.

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