

Baltimore Archdiocese priests to participate in 50-mile penitential pilgrimage

Father John “Jack” Lombardi has led dozens of lengthy walking pilgrimages in Maryland and abroad, most promoting religious liberty. In response to the clergy abuse crisis, the Hancock-based pastor will lead a 50-mile “Pilgrimage for the Priesthood, in Penance and Prayer,” originating in Emmitsburg Nov. 9 and concluding in Baltimore Nov. 11.

The pilgrimage precedes the fall meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Nov. 12-14 in Baltimore, where the clergy abuse crisis tops their agenda.

“We’re called, as Christians and Catholics, generally, to do penance,” said Father Lombardi, pastor of St. Peter in Hancock and St. Patrick in Little Orleans. “As a priest, I feel a responsibility for my brother priests, in the United States and around the world.

“As St. Peter said, ‘We make up for their sins.’ Just as we do good deeds, we perform penitential deeds to make up for others’ sins.”

The pilgrimage will begin Nov. 9 with 8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph in Emmitsburg, and conclude Nov. 11 with 4:30 p.m. Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore, where Father James Boric, rector of the Basilica, will be among the concelebrants.

The Baltimore Basilica was the starting point for Father Lombardi’s most notable pilgrimage. “Feet for Francis” was a 100-mile trek to Philadelphia in September 2015, in conjunction with the Archdiocese of Baltimore, to see Pope Francis on his most recent visit to the U.S. A fundraising aspect brought in approximately \$12,000 in scholarships to Catholic schools in the city.

According to Father Lombardi, the priests who have committed to walk a portion of the pilgrimage, which will cover approximately 17 miles a day, include Father

Matthew Buening, chaplain of Towson University, Peter Rubeling, a second-year Theology student at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg and parishioner of St. Peter in Libertytown who is spending a pastoral year at St. Mark in Fallston, will also participate, along with his mother, Stephanie. Her sons include Father Michael Rubeling, an associate pastor of St. John the Evangelist in Severna Park, and Timothy, who has entered formation with the Capuchin Franciscans.

Pilgrims will spend the night of Nov. 9 at St. Bartholomew Parish in Manchester, and Nov. 10 at Church of the Nativity in Timonium. Father Michael Roach, pastor of St. Bartholomew, will concelebrate 8 a.m. Mass Nov. 10 with Father Lombardi in Manchester.

"This is a great idea that Father Jack has, it harkens back to the tradition of penance," Father Roach said. "Our people are (at a loss) as to what do. To see a priest do it, is just marvelous."

This is the latest in the season Father Lombardi has ever undertaken a pilgrimage, although he did run into inclement autumn weather in October 2017, when he led a 50-mile walk from Hancock to Winchester, Va.

Laypersons who have been properly screened and trained by the archdiocese are invited to join the pilgrimage, which is in need of other volunteers and donations of food and water. For more information, email stpeterhancock@outlook.com or telephone 301-678-6339.

Also see:

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Email Paul McMullen at pmcmullen@CatholicReview.org