

Catholics mark Respect Life Sunday Oct. 7

Catholics throughout the Archdiocese of Baltimore will take a very public stand in support of the sanctity of life Oct. 7, Respect Life Sunday, when they gather for prayer in churches and along Maryland roadsides.

The central archdiocesan event will be observed at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland, where Bishop William C. Newman, retired eastern vicar, will celebrate the 11 a.m. Respect Life Mass.

During the Mass, Bishop Newman will present the archdiocesan Culture of Life Medal of Honor to Sheila Wharam, a parishioner of St. Joseph in Cockeysville who has been active educating people about abortion, euthanasia and other prolife issues. Ms. Wharam is an active member of the archdiocesan respect life committee who has testified on numerous life-related bills in Annapolis.

Local parishes throughout the archdiocese will also celebrate local Masses in support of the sanctity of life, while others are encouraging parishioners to participate in eucharistic adoration that day.

For the 20th consecutive year, “respect life chains” will be formed on streets throughout the state, with participants holding signs opposing abortion and encouraging support for women who have had abortions. Life chains will be organized in Baltimore, Cumberland, Eldersburg, Emmitsburg, Frederick, Glen Burnie, Hancock, Jarrettsville, Taneytown, Towson and Westminster.

Catholics in the Archdiocese of Baltimore are also joining an ecumenical movement called “40 Days for Life” that began Sept. 26 and is focused on intensive prayer,

fasting and education on abortion.

The theme for Respect Life Sunday is “The Infant in My Womb Leaped for Joy,” and is taken from the passage in the Gospel of Luke that refers to the visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth.

Linda Brenegan, archdiocesan respect life program director, said the prolife events will help educate people about important life issues. Parishes have been encouraged to distribute eight pamphlets on abortion, assisted reproductive technology, caring for aging loved ones, contraception, respect for people with mental illness and other topics, she said.

Ms. Brenegan said the prolife movement has made great strides in recent years, especially when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a ban on partial birth abortion. “Some of the language in there recognized the unborn child,” she said. “That was a huge step forward. It recognized the harm that was done to women by abortion.”

Ms. Brenegan said proliferers are younger than ever and very enthusiastic. “The young people are more open to the message of life,” she said. “They’ve lived through a generation when friends and siblings have been aborted.”

The archdiocesan respect life office is cosponsoring a day of discussions and workshops on Nov. 3 at Trinity School in Ellicott City called “Maryland Unites for Life Conference,” Ms. Brenegan said. Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien will celebrate an opening liturgy.

For more information about where the life chains will be held, visit www.lifechain.net.