

# Church recognizes those in the Consecrated Life

**By Kyle Taylor**

*Review correspondent*

LINTHICUM – Every organization, business, and institution is only as strong as its members. The Catholic Church is no different, as the Archdiocese of Baltimore paused to recognize those within its ranks who have committed their lives to serving God and strengthening the church.

The World Day for Consecrated Life was commemorated in churches across the country the weekend of Feb. 4-5. Started by Pope John Paul II in 1997, the day is taken to show love and appreciation for those in the consecrated religious life within the church.

So dedicated are they to their vocation, some observers feel, those religious probably would not take the time to honor themselves.

“This celebration was started to bring attention to the great work religious consecrated folk do around the world,” Cardinal-designate Edwin O’Brien said Feb. 4, when he celebrated the occasion with Mass at St. Philip Neri Church. “Some of these people are so humble that we need days like this to bring prayers their way and bring others to follow in their footsteps.”

In his message for the first World Day for Consecrated Life, Pope John Paul II stated that the day had three purposes: to thank God for the gift of consecrated life; to promote knowledge of and esteem for the consecrated life; and for consecrated persons to celebrate the marvels that God has accomplished in them.

Living the consecrated life is itself a decision worthy of praise, Cardinal-designate O'Brien said. He hoped that that message was thoroughly received by the packed church.

"It takes the grace of god and generous hearts to do what these people do," he said of consecrated persons. "We were looking for that to be captured with this service."

Helen Ellerman and a number other St. Philip Neri parishioners certainly grasped that understanding.

"It was nice to see a celebration of the religious, especially since we're dying for vocations right now in the church," Ellerman said. "Having it here made it even more special."

"The service went very well and I enjoyed meeting (Cardinal-designate O'Brien)," said Dave Lotz, another member of Saint Philip Neri. "It was very humbling to see clergy make that commitment to serving God."

Cardinal-designate O'Brien said that everyone can learn from the example provided by consecrated persons. Giving themselves to serve God and others is a measuring stick for how we can find happiness and meaning in our own lives, he believes.

"Those who live a consecrated life take great pleasure in giving," he said. "It's only in serving others that you find real fulfillment. Christ gave himself and said that this is the way to true happiness. Self-sacrifice is the only way to live."