

# Gun turn-in day schedule for weekend before Thanksgiving

At a meeting last week about peace in the city, auxiliary Bishop Denis J. Madden asked local pastors for a recap of the situation in their neighborhoods.

“It became clear that in West Baltimore there is an escalation of gun violence,” said Monsignor Damien G. Nalepa, pastor of St. Gregory the Great Parish on North Gilmor Street.

He said this escalation makes even more acute the need for the parish’s 10th gun turn-in day, scheduled for Nov. 20, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. St. Wenceslaus Parish in East Baltimore will also host a turn-in the same day, the third time for that site.

“My greatest fear is that there is apathy – that this is becoming a common occurrence so it’s not even stirring our fear, or outrage,” Monsignor Nalepa said. “Father Peter (Lyons, pastor of St. Wenceslaus) reflected that the same thing is happening in East Baltimore.”

The program allows residents to turn in guns for a cash reward: a \$100 reward is available for each workable automatic or semi-automatic handgun or assault rifle, and a \$50 reward for any other workable gun turned in. The process is anonymous, with no questions asked. Parish staff members and volunteers log the type of gun, and verify that it is unloaded and safe. At the close of the event, the guns are turned over to local law enforcement.

“The police officers we work with say this is very helpful,” Monsignor Nalepa said, and that removing even one gun from the street makes a difference.

Monsignor Nalepa told The Catholic Review the majority of approximately 200 guns turned in during the past buy-back campaigns have come from people who have brought in guns that had been stored in their homes, often after a loved one passed away. The program has been helpful to remove these weapons so they cannot fall into the wrong hands, or be used against the homeowner.

Father Lyons, a Third Order Regular Franciscan, said that during the last turn-in at St. Wenceslaus, he asked one woman bringing in weapons if they were unloaded, and she assured him they were. But as the parish staff checked the guns, they found they were loaded, and safely unloaded them before turning them over to police officers. The woman was shocked to learn this, since her grandchildren regularly visited the home where the loaded weapons had been kept.

The gun turn-ins will be held Nov. 20 at St. Gregory, 1524 N. Gilmor St. and St. Wenceslaus, 2111 Ashland Ave., 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Support and contributions from members of the community can sustain the campaign for its continuation into 2011, according to Catholic Review associate publisher Christopher Gunty.

Contributions can be sent to: The Cathedral Foundation Inc., Attn.: Catholic Review Gun Buy-Back, P.O. Box 777, Baltimore, MD 21203.

Information is also available at [www.CatholicReview.org/guns](http://www.CatholicReview.org/guns), and donations may be made online at that site.