Mass-goers pray for Cardinal Keeler's speedy recovery

As Cardinal William H. Keeler underwent surgery to remove excess fluid from his brain June 18, well wishers and fellow Catholics prayed for the 76-year-old Archbishop of Baltimore during a 12:10 p.m. Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Baltimore.

Bishop W. Francis Malooly, western vicar and vicar general, told the congregation and members of the media who assembled for the service he had celebrated Mass with the cardinal earlier that morning and said the cardinal was optimistic about the outcome of the surgery at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore.

The surgery – which archdiocesan officials confirmed began around 11:30 a.m. – was performed by Dr. Benjamin Carson, neurosurgeon, to insert a tube into Cardinal Keeler's brain and drain excess cerebrospinal fluid into his abdominal cavity.

Head trauma the cardinal received during an October car accident in Italy is believed to be the cause of the accumulation of cerebrospinal fluid in the brain ventricles, otherwise known as hydroencephalus, archdiocese spokesman Sean Caine said.

Cardinal Keeler suffered a broken ankle during the accident, but continued to walk poorly long after the bone healed, which can be a symptom of hydroencephalus, Mr. Caine said.
"We pray for the successful surgery of Cardinal Keeler," said Bishop Malooly, western vicar and vicar general. "We hope it will make it easier for him to move…, and that he continues to embrace strength and life."

Several employees of the Catholic Center in Baltimore used their lunch hour to attend the Mass to pray for the cardinal's speedy recovery.

"We really wanted to come and show our support and to give him that extra prayer," said Tracy Dernoga, who attended the Mass with her co-workers in fiscal services, Tricia Wienecke and Tyra Johnson.

"I was happy that we were able to gather and pray," said Lauri Przybysz, coordinator for family & marriage enrichment. "It's important for the community."