

Morning commuters joined by early morning Massgoers

WASHINGTON – Morning commuters found themselves surrounded on subway trains by a peculiar weekday morning sight – thousands of people climbing aboard as early as 5 a.m. to attend a Mass at Nationals Park celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI.

Men in clerical collars and women in habits, families dressed in their Sunday best and teens in Catholic school uniforms crowded onto jammed Metro trains to the stadium as soon as the subway system opened. By 7 a.m., steady streams of people moved up escalators and down streets to security checkpoints outside the newly opened baseball stadium.

As people walked down Half Street to the gates, vendors selling buttons, pennants, T-shirts and photos of the pope competed for Massgoers' attention with dozens of volunteers in royal blue "pro-life" T-shirts who were handing out bumper stickers.

Behind a police barricade, a handful of hopeful people held signs reading "need tickets," waving and calling out to passers-by as they left the subway station.

Daniel Clough, a seminarian with the Oblates of Wisdom, came from St. Louis without a ticket, but with high hopes that someone might have a spare.

He pulled out miraculous medals by the handful from his pockets, giving them to the other hopeful "need tickets" sign-holders and to those who stopped to consider to whom to give their spare tickets.

Mr. Clough said he had a ticket to the Mass at Yankee Stadium April 20, but didn't realize until after he had made travel arrangements to Washington that he didn't have a way to get into the Mass here.

For about 25 minutes he cheerfully begged and cajoled those who walked up with an extra ticket or two. "I came from St. Louis," he tried, only to be countered by a couple standing next to him: "We came from Michigan!"

Before long, both Mr. Clough and the Michigan couple were handed tickets and they walked toward the security checkpoints, passing on their “need tickets” signs to others at the barricade.

Half a block down, Dede and Wayne Laugesen and their five sons, all from Monument, Colo., called people over to see the hand-tied rosaries they have made to sell. Made in colors to match the uniforms of the various branches of the military, the \$10 rosaries are intended to be worn around the neck and have a breakaway clasp for safety, Dede Laugesen explained.

Waiting in the line into the stadium for clergy and people with disabilities, Father Joseph Hybner said he came from the Diocese of Victoria, Texas, because “if the pope can come to our backyard, we can come the rest of the way.”

He joked that in Shiner, Texas, where he lives, the locally made Shiner Bock beer is the most famous export - “we have three taps on our sinks, hot, cold and Shiner Bock” - and that he had wanted to send a sample of the brew to the pope as a gift.