

# Pilgrimage helps usher in Holy Week

The reverence that exuded from St. Casimir, Canton, was invigorating as some 1,135 pilgrims sang and praised the Lord before parading down the streets of Baltimore in the 14th annual Youth and Young Adult Pilgrimage, the largest in archdiocesan history, on March 31.

"Today the community of Baltimore will see Christ in the faces of you as you walk the city," said Cardinal William H. Keeler to the pilgrims before eucharistic adoration. "Our pilgrimage today begins and ends with the Eucharist. It's food for our every journey."

Cardinal Keeler encouraged the youth in the Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry-sponsored pilgrimage to be witnesses to the Gospel and consider their own vocations with an open heart. Jordan Taylor, a parishioner of St. Francis Xavier, Baltimore, stood before the multitude of youths and gave testimony to his love for Christ.

"There are no words to explain how important it is to be with the people we love," said Jordan. "Jesus loves us in a way we cannot even imagine."

Eight members of the Archdiocesan Youth Advisory Council led the procession, carrying a large, mahogany cross down the streets of Canton into Fells Point, through the Inner Harbor, toward the Holocaust Memorial and War Memorial before completing the journey at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Baltimore.

The first stop on the pilgrims' journey was Holy Rosary, Fells Point, where they were greeted by the pastor, Father Richard Philiposki, S.Ch. Comedian Bob Perron spoke to the youths about how they must have a personal relationship with Jesus.

"When we separate ourselves from the Eucharist we slowly die like roses that have been cut away from the branch," said Mr. Perron. "You cannot repay love; you can only pass it on."

Bishop W. Francis Malooly, western vicar; Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski, eastern vicar; and Bishop Denis J. Madden, urban vicar, stood before the crowd and blessed the sea of pale, wooden crosses held high by the pilgrims.

As the youths left the church, carrying their blessed crosses, the bells at Holy Rosary rang out to announce to the community the continuation of the pilgrimage. Melissa Clark, a parishioner of St. Katharine Drexel in Frederick, eagerly walked through the streets of Baltimore, anticipating their arrival at the basilica.

"There is a lot of prayer involved on this journey," said the freshman at St. John's Catholic Prep, Frederick. "I realize now just how many people are involved in this pilgrimage."

Kirk Gaddy, a parishioner of St. Francis Xavier and a seventh-grader at Mother Mary Lange Catholic School, Baltimore, said the pilgrimage is "different" from anything he has done before.

"This shows the power of the youth," he said. "It shows that we are the future."

Fredy Pereld, a parishioner of St. Clement, Lansdowne, said he really enjoyed being at Holy Rosary because the church and the music reminded him of the churches in his country of Mexico.

"It is a great time to do this with Holy Week coming up," said Fredy, whose group planned to get together after the pilgrimage to discuss ways to get more people involved. "This is important because we need other people to see what we are all about."

After arriving at the War Memorial the pilgrims viewed faith statements from people in the Catholic community and in the community of Baltimore, including school children, pastors, Ben Carson, Cal Ripken Jr. and the auxiliary bishops. The youths were then asked to write their own faith statements which were placed in a basket to be re-distributed after Mass.

Before the final few miles of their journey the pilgrims said the rosary and prepared to walk in prayerful silence.

David Gorgol, a member of AYAC, was very excited to be an escort to the bishops.

“The pilgrimage is a great way to spread the word of God,” said the junior from Bishop Walsh School, Cumberland.

As the sun started to set, Cardinal Keeler, the bishops and priests who had participated in the pilgrimage came to the entrance of the basilica to see the youths and young adults scattered throughout the courtyard and spilling onto the sidewalk. Cardinal Keeler blessed the palms carried by the pilgrims and invited everyone in for Palm Sunday Mass, keeping his promise of ending with the Eucharist.