

Preparation Rites share stories, excitement of journeys

Cradle Catholics preparing for Easter might not be familiar with one Holy Week celebration: the Preparation Rites on Saturday morning for those who will be received into the church that evening.

It's almost an "open mike" event, where those who will receive sacraments at the Easter Vigil, and the Catholic community that supports them, gather to share stories of their faith journeys. The bishop touches their ears and their lips, symbolizing they hear God's call and proclaim the gospel with their lives.

Some 700 candidates and catechumens – candidates are Christians baptized in other denominations and catechumens have never been baptized – were received into full communion with the Catholic Church this past Easter.

Some 400 of them met at three sites in the archdiocese on March 22: St. Bernadette, Severn; St. Ann, Hagerstown; and New All Saints, Baltimore; the bishop for each vicariate presided over his respective geographic area. Others shared their stories individually at their parishes.

Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski, eastern vicar, who was at St. Bernadette, said he always finds the preparation rites exciting because of the shared journeys.

"It's just wonderful to see so many candidates and catechumens and those who support them," he said. "They represent so many parishes and so many different journeys and so many different calls by the Lord, and it all leads up to the Easter Vigil."

Those sacraments at the Easter Vigil, he said, "bring Christ's life to those received into the church and by the graces they receive they'll bring new life to the church.

"Personally, it's so edifying to me to realize the journey they have come to – the new life and excitement they bring to the church," he said.

Bishop W. Francis Malooly, western vicar, led preparation rites for the western vicariate at St. Ann, Hagerstown. He called the service “very enjoyable” and “inspiring.”

Bishop Malooly said he was struck by the large number of people who said they were drawn to the Catholic Church by the example of others.

“The beauty of our church is that the faith is passed from one generation to the next,” said Bishop Malooly. “A day like Saturday is a good reminder to all of us that we have a golden opportunity to help other people to share in our faith.”

Bishop Malooly noted that many of the people received into the church are so on fire for their faith they tend to become actively involved in their parishes – especially in the area of working with others interested in joining the church, he said.

“It’s such a blessing for the archdiocese and the church at large to welcome new members,” he said.