

Second collection to fund Black and Native American Missions

When the second collection basket is passed to parishioners around the Archdiocese of Baltimore June 2 and 3, their donations will be given to evangelization programs nationwide in the black, Native American, Eskimo and Aleut communities.

The Black and Native American Missions collection has been conducted throughout the United States since 1884, with proceeds distributed as grants to dioceses supporting and strengthening evangelization programs that would otherwise be in danger of disappearing, according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The idea is to bring existing Catholics in those groups back to the faith and to encourage others to examine the dogma and consider converting to Catholicism, said Therese Wilson Favors, director of the office of African American Ministries for the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

“This is why we are able to have such a strong evangelization effort in this office,” Ms. Favors said. “About 75 percent of our money comes from the Black and Native American Missions.”

The annual budget for the office of African American Ministries is about \$170,000, about 25 percent of which also comes from the Cardinal’s Lenten Appeal and other archdiocese funding, she said.

Of the many functions supported by the office of African American Ministries is Operation Faith Lift, an evangelization effort to increase congregation populations in the predominately black Catholic parishes in Baltimore.

During the last two weekends in May, parishioners from three city churches – St. Wenceslaus, St. Cecilia and Immaculate Conception – went door-to-door inviting neighbors to “A Birthday Party of the Church” in celebration of Pentecost, Ms. Favors said.

As president of the National Black and Native American Missions Collection, Cardinal William H. Keeler has been very supportive of the efforts made by the office of African American Ministries, she said.

Last year, the parishes in the archdiocese collected about \$368,000 for the National Black and Native American Missions, said John Matera, comptroller for the division of fiscal services of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

“I hope we surpass that figure this year,” Ms. Favors said. “The more generous we can be, the more significant our evangelization efforts can be, not just in this archdiocese, but around the nation.”