

# St. Bernardine performance celebrates black history

The focus of the Feb. 2 performance of “The Rumble In My Voice” at St. Bernardine, Baltimore, may be on National Black History Month, but organizers also hope it will welcome community members into the church.

“We want to encourage people to come into the house of the Lord,” said Denise Stanley, a member of the St. Bernardine Women’s Day Committee, the group sponsoring the noon performance at the West Baltimore parish. “That should always be our ultimate goal.”

The committee hopes the dramatic presentations on 13 key black women in the civil rights movement will educate people about the significance of the era in American history, Ms. Stanley said.

“Certainly the performance is an excellent way to celebrate black history month, depicting the integral role of women in the movement,” said Therese Wilson Favors, director of the office of African American Ministries of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. “The performance undoubtedly will invite others into the St. Bernardine Catholic community and in doing so, affords an opportunity to witness our faith through history – an indirect avenue of evangelization.”

Traditionally black history month celebrations have focused on the accomplishments and tragedies of male civil rights figures like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X.

But the women’s day committee decided it wanted to focus on key female players, and when the group’s president, Yvette Belt, discovered the Baltimore traveling theater group Kuumba Ensemble was performing “The Rumble In My Voice,” she quickly contacted director Rosalyn Gaines about staging a show at St. Bernardine.

The audience will see portrayals of Fannie Lou Hamer, Daisy Bates, Annie Pearl Avery, Shirley Chisholm, Coretta Scott King, Unita Blackwell, Septima Clark, Rosa Parks,

Diane Nash, Gloria Richardson, Ella Baker, Marion King and Annette Ponder.

"The Lord prepared these women well for battle and they stepped up to the front line with a rumble in their spirit and freedom songs in their souls," the promotional material reads for the show. "'The Rumble In My Voice' reveals how some ordinary women gave much, so that we as a people could have so much more."

The production interweaves freedom songs, empowerment dances and dramatic interpretations to paint the picture of America in turmoil during the 1960s, said Ms. Stanley, a West Baltimore resident who has been a parishioner of St. Bernardine for more than 25 years.

The committee hopes to attract all citizens to the performance, but is most eager for children to see the show, she said.

"We don't want historical black women to get lost in the shuffle," Ms. Stanley said. "We want to let (the public) know, we are important, and there are a lot of women who did a lot of positive things and we don't want them to forget that. These women also serve as positive role models."

Tickets to the show are \$15 per adult, \$10 for children ages 6 to 15 and free for those age 5 and under. Refreshments will be served immediately following the performance in Harcum Hall.