

# Summer trip stops at shrines, sees baseball legend

Father Matthew Buening, associate pastor of Immaculate Conception in Towson, just happened to be wearing his Cal Ripken Jr. jersey on the day it was announced the baseball star would be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, and Father Buening felt it was a sign.

Father Buening and Wendt Touring have created a Catholic Shrines and Cal Ripken Jr. pilgrimage for four days and three nights July 26-29.

"We wanted to do a pilgrimage to the shrines and it just so happened that Cal Ripken will be inducted when we will be up there," said Father Buening. "It's a mix of fun and faith, secular and sacred. People think faith-based trips should be boring, but I'm open to having a lot of fun."

After 6:30 a.m. Mass at Immaculate Conception, the bus full of eager parishioners will head to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y. Day two includes a morning visit to the National Shrine of the North American Martyrs and later in the afternoon the group will visit the National Shrine of the Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. The following day the pilgrims will journey to Stockbridge Massachusetts for the National Shrine of Divine Mercy.

Father Buening said he has always been very interested in these shrines.

"I am really looking forward to visiting and learning about all of the shrines, but especially the National Shrine of the North American Martyrs," said Melba Burnett, who has been a parishioner of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Highlandtown, for 58 years. "My original and still main reason for going is to visit the National Shrines of New York and then there is the great opportunity to see the induction of Cal, which I don't think any die-hard, red-blooded baseball fan would turn down if offered with this package deal."

The last day of the pilgrimage before heading back to Baltimore will be a visit to the Cal Ripken Jr. Hall of Fame induction. Father Buening said that Cal Ripken's

faithfulness to his team, his hard work, perseverance and loyalty are things that everyone can look up to and strive for.

“It was the little things he did that showed us that he could win big battles,” said Father Buening.