

Testifying and Evangelizing

Last week in the midst of the heat and crowds at the African American Heritage Festival at Camden Yards stood black Catholics spreading the good news of Jesus and sharing the inspirational message that “God is light and in Him there is no darkness or confusion at all (1 John 1:5).” Wearing T-shirts that articulated this message, some of us weaved through the crowd, others stood at the booth greeting all that came their way. Both groups were testifying about the goodness of the Lord and giving out crosses and brochures that provided information on black Catholic history, locations of Catholic churches and Catholic schools.

Throughout Camden Yards, visitors heard one of these messages ... “Everybody needs light to navigate through these times. Let’s travel in the light of Jesus. If you are searching for a church home - we’ve got plenty of ‘Jesus light’ in our Catholic churches and schools. Know that you are always welcomed.”

Others heard ... “Don’t block the flow of His light. Let Jesus shine in your life. If you are searching for a church home - we’ve got plenty of ‘Jesus light’ in our Catholic churches. Know that you are always welcomed.” Still others were greeted with ... “Miraculous things can happen in your life when you cooperate with God’s will. Let God’s light shine on you and through you. If you are searching for a church home - we’ve got plenty of ‘Jesus light’ in our Catholic churches and schools. Know that you are always welcomed.”

We began in prayer, building a circle of praise and intercession pleading that the Holy Spirit would join us in this holy enterprise. We also asked Mary, our blessed mother, to sojourn with us as we remember that she is the great evangelist. Then, great things happened - holy contacts were made with festival attendees. Additionally we witnessed the love of God expressed by those we met. People were open and joyful, anxious to share how Christ made a difference in their lives. It was almost like attending an open air Revival. Between Friday and Saturday we personally engaged about 1, 000 festival participants.

Some festival attendees inquired about Catholic Schools, and we were delighted to have Viola Gainey from the Department of Catholic Education with us. She gave out

so much information and persevered through the heat for three days of interaction.

For the past nine years, the Office of African American Catholic Ministries has sponsored a booth of outreach at the African American Heritage Festival. The office is grateful for those who joined us in this initiative. They became part of “Jesus’ All Star Team” and included ... Cassandra Boykins, Mary G. Clayton, Doris Foster, Mia Griffin, Shawn Griffin, Marie Harvin, Gloria A. Herndon, Albert McGill, Janet L. Pettaway, Sister Gloria Rubio, Howard and Maya Roberts, Deleah Ryce, Alice Smallwood, Joy Speaks, Lillie Speaks, Walter E. Stokes, Patricia Waddell, Edward Washington, Marie P. Washington, Patricia West, Betty Williams, Roslyn Williams and Doris Woodus. These inspired volunteers came from the following parishes: New All Saints, St. Ann, St. Bernardine, Blessed Sacrament, St. Cecilia, historic St. Francis Xavier , St. Gregory the Great, St. Joseph Monastery, St. Veronica and St. Wenceslaus. To God be the glory!

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