

Young and Young Adult Pilgrimage slated for March 15

Martha Collinson quietly instructs a worker with developmental disabilities on how to glue two pieces of wood together.

The production manager for Providence Center Inc. patiently shows him how to spread the glue several times, and when the pieces are securely clamped, she moves on to the sanding room. There workers are sanding wood inlaid in patterns that form a cross.

About 40 workers with developmental disabilities are fashioning 1,300 crosses from poplar, mahogany and oak at the Earthtones woodshop in Millersville. The workshop is part of the Providence Center Inc., which provides opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities.

The crosses will be distributed to the youths who participate in the annual archdiocesan Youth and Young Adult Pilgrimage on March 15, the Saturday before Palm Sunday.

Bill O’Berry, a past president of the Holy Name Society at Our Lady of the Fields, Millersville, and a member of the Annapolis Woodworkers Guild, made wooden crosses in past years for the pilgrimage, and he designed this year’s cross. But this year, he felt that making more than a thousand in his garage woodshop was just too much.

“I was very pleased to find this group that would do it, especially for a good cause,” he said. The workers at Earthtones receive an hourly wage and learn basic employment skills, such as how to follow directions and to report to work on time.

One man carefully feels the cross to see if it's smooth enough, and then gently sands it a bit more. In another room, workers are oiling the final version.

Prayerful youths and young adults will receive the crosses as they fill the streets of Baltimore for the pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage begins with registration at St. Casimir, Canton, followed by a rally at O'Donnell Street Park next to St. Casimir. The youth and their chaperones will have eucharistic adoration in the church, and then they'll walk to Holy Rosary Church for a concert by Steve Angrisano, a singer and songwriter. Then the pilgrims will walk to War Memorial Plaza where they'll pray the rosary in English and Spanish, and eat a light meal. Then they'll proceed to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Baltimore, for a blessing of the palms and evening Mass.

Last year, more than 1,200 youths and young adults walked the walk. Those wishing to participate this year should register with their youth or campus minister. The cost is \$12 per person. Campus and youth ministers must register groups for the event by March 3; after March 3 there is no guarantee of room for additional groups.

A complete registration packet is available online at www.archbalt.org.