

Youths show the way on ‘Feet for Francis’ shoe drive



Sara Goldscher/CR graphic

By Paul McMullen

pmcmullen@CatholicReview.org

Twitter: @ReviewMcMullen

From a pair of upperclassmen at Archbishop Curley High School in Baltimore to eighth-graders in Frederick and Severna Park, the next generation of Catholic leaders is showing the way on the “Feet for Francis” shoe drive.

That is the charitable aspect of a walking pilgrimage Father John J. Lombardi will lead Sept. 20-27 from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore to Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia, where Pope Francis’ first visit to the U.S. will crescendo with a public Mass that could attract as many as 1 million.

The pilgrimage is sponsored by the Archdiocese of Baltimore and Catholic Review Media, and all Catholic institutions are invited to join the donation of new and gently worn shoes being organized by Funds2Orgs.

Funds2Orgs will collect and ship the shoes to one of its 26 partner nations, where micro-enterprises sell the shoes for a profit. Based on the total weight of the shoes collected in the archdiocese, it will receive a check from Funds2Org, to be used for charitable works here.

Archbishop Curley High was one of the first to register for the shoe drive, which Conventual Franciscan Father Matthew Foley has placed in the hands of senior Tommy Levin, a peer minister at his home parish, Our Lady of the Chesapeake in

Pasadena, and Joe Massa, a junior from St. Pius X in Rodgers Forge.

“Both are members of our FLEX Team (Franciscan Leaders Encountering Christ), our peer ministry program,” said Father Foley, Curley’s campus minister. “They both jumped at the idea when I said I needed volunteers to help improve the lives of the poor in the developing world.”

Archbishop Curley High had already filled one of the Sept. 27 busses heading to the papal Mass in Philadelphia, a same-day pilgrimage also being sponsored by the archdiocese and Catholic Review Media.

“The Holy Father’s example, words and teachings really resonate with our Franciscan spirit at Curley,” Father Foley said. “We will bring 40 students and 10 faculty chaperones. The faculty slots were filled within 30 minutes of my email requesting help.”

St. John Regional Catholic School (SJ RCS) in Frederick, meanwhile, has 16 members of its chapter of the National Junior Honor Society helping to coordinate its location as a site for the shoe drive, which will conclude in early October.

SJ RCS will serve as a central drop for the shoe drive, as principal Karen Smith said it will send promotional flyers to its regional parishes: St. Ignatius, Ijamsville; Holy Family Catholic Community, Middletown; St. Joseph on Carrollton Manor, Buckeystown; St. Peter, Libertytown; St. John the Evangelist, Frederick; St. Katharine Drexel, Frederick; St. Timothy, Walkersville; and St. Francis/St. Mary, Brunswick.

St. John the Evangelist School in Severna Park, meanwhile, will promote the shoe drive in its parish bulletin Labor Day weekend.

“Our eighth-grade teachers asked if we could do ‘Feet for Francis’ as our first service project of the year,” said Casey Buckstaff, principal.

She aims to have a small contingent from the school participate in the first day of the walking pilgrimage. While many in the region will lay back Sept. 20 to watch the Ravens or Redskins on TV, Buckstaff plans to join Father Lombardi’s group as they make their way from the Baltimore Basilica to St. Ursula in Parkville.

“I love my football too,” she said, “but this is a once in a lifetime opportunity, not only to celebrate the visit of Pope Francis, but to come together with Catholic people and celebrate who we are together in our Baltimore community.

“With all the good news Pope Francis has brought to our world, I certainly can walk some miles in support of him and of our Catholic church.”

To join the shoe drive, visit funds2orgs.com/feetforfrancis

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