

# 17th-Annual Catholic Family Expo opens June 27

With a stable of speakers ranging from bishops to an internationally recognized movie star, organizers of the 17th-Annual Catholic Family Expo at the Baltimore Convention Center June 27 to July 1 hope to motivate attendees to return to their parishes inspired to serve God.

Anticipating an attendance of 2,000-3,000 people, more than 100 volunteers have been coordinating for months to provide speakers who will discuss subjects that reflect every aspect of Catholicism for every age, said Miki Hill, who with her husband, Tim, established the Catholic Family Network at their Woodstock home in 1990.

Ms. Hill, a parishioner of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, Woodstock, believes that with topics on home schooling, prayer, religious vocations, parenting, youth issues, pro-life messages, conversion and end-of-life concerns, the expo will cover the gamut of Catholic life.

The expo kicks off June 27 with a writing seminar and an SAT preparation course, and the first day of seminars, hosted mainly by Catholic scholars and local speakers, opens June 28.

Saturday evening will feature a pre-release viewing of the film "Bella" and personal testimony of international film actor Eduardo Verastegui, who stars in the movie, followed by a youth rally.

The Hills' 18-year-old daughter Mary said this year's Baltimore event provides a great venue for younger Catholics to grasp an identity in their religion.

The nursing student and youth minister at St. Alphonsus Rodriguez will conduct a seminar this year at the Baltimore expo called "It's Cool to be Catholic," a discussion aimed at rousing young Catholics to become invested in their faith and the good works of their church.

She will be one of more than 50 speakers at the Baltimore expo, which has also attracted 100 vendors and exhibitors for the 2007 event.

In the last couple of years the expo has spawned similar conventions in venues around the world.

The Hills and their legions of volunteers have already helped two groups in Ireland establish Catholic Family Expos, and last spring one debuted in Charlotte, N.C., attracting more than 200 to the campus of Belmont Abbey College.

Others in Charleston, S.C. and West Palm Beach, Fla. are expected to debut in the next year and volunteers from the Catholic Family Network met with Bishop Karl Josef Romer, secretary to Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo of the Pontifical Council on the Family in Rome last year, a conference that produced plans to establish a European Catholic Family Expo.

The Archdiocese of Baltimore and other dioceses in the mid-Atlantic region have been generous in promoting the Baltimore expo, Ms. Hill said.

"All of these issues ultimately affect our happiness and the topics are not just about following the dos and don'ts of the Church," she said. "Combining our faith and reason will bring us confidence in a world that can be confusing at times."

For more information about The Catholic Family Expo 2007, visit the group's Web site at <https://www.catholicfamilyexpo.org>.