

Bishop Brennan shares hopes for Latino community at 38th Social Ministry Convocation

“My long-term goal,” Bishop Mark E. Brennan said, “is that the Hispanic Catholics here and around the country become a leaven in the dough of our culture. ... Hispanic immigrants bring things to the table worth having (such as) a focus on family-life. They enrich our lives.”

Six weeks after he was ordained an auxiliary for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Bishop Brennan led one of the more than a dozen workshops during the 38th annual Archdiocesan Social Ministry Convocation March 4. More than 300 attended, including some 30 Latino parishioners, all newcomers to the area, who took a seat in a classroom at The Seton Keough High School to hear the bishop address three of the many branches of social justice: abortion, racism and immigration.

Regarding the latter, Bishop Brennan reminded his audience of the church’s teaching.

“People and families have the right to live in peace and security in their own places,” he said, “but if they can’t stay for reasons such as lack of work or food or because of violence, they have a right to go to another place where they can live in peace.”



Bishop Mark E. Brennan answers questions about social justice issues facing the Hispanic Catholic community during the 38th annual Social Ministry Convocation at Seton Keough High School in Baltimore March 4. (Kit Cross/Special to the Review)

A history major at Brown University in Providence, R.I., Bishop Brennan noted that national borders change over time.

“Political borders in reality are artificial,” he told attendees. “That is not to say borders aren’t important. ... Governments have the right to protect and look out for the well-being of citizens.”

A young woman sought Bishop Brennan's insight on how to unify the many branches of social justice when she often sees divisions.

"Keep reaffirming that the foundation (of Catholic social teaching) is the respect for every human being," Bishop Brennan said. "Then you see (social justice) encompasses concern for the unborn child, the elderly and the immigrant."

A question-and-answer session is just one step in Bishop Brennan's outreach to Spanish-speaking Catholics in the archdiocese. Bishop Brennan, who says his Spanish is not perfect but good enough to defend himself, will focus on getting to know members of the community, visiting parishes with established Hispanic ministries and identifying where there is still a need.

The day began with a prayer walk followed by a keynote address from Reverend Andrew Foster Connors, senior pastor of Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church and co-chairman of Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD). He spoke on the convocation's theme, "Racism and Economic Justice."

After morning and afternoon workshops, the program concluded with a prayer service and award ceremony.

Joan and Ryan Sattler, of St. Matthew in Northwood, received The Doris Johnson Award for their long history of service and advocacy work, in particular for recent endeavors addressing discrimination and prejudice. They helped form the parish's LEAD LGBTQ ministry and a Racial Justice Circle, and most recently created the Latino Racial Justice Circle.

Both emphasize their work is a community effort.

"There would be no reason to have an award if we weren't doing this as a community of justice workers, of people who are passionate about these topics," Joan said.

"The very nature of a circle is it can't be just two (people)," Ryan added, "there's always room for another person."

The John Hook Award went to Deacon Joseph C. Krysiak, who serves the parishes of St. Anthony of Padua and Most Precious Blood in northeast Baltimore. The honor was in recognition of his 56 years of service to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Society and continual advocacy for social justice.

Thomas McCarthy received The International Peace and Justice Award. A parishioner of St. John the Evangelist in Columbia, he led an effort to collect more than 1,500 bicycles over 20 years for poor families in Africa and Latin America through the organization Bikes for the World.

“It’s a great project for a church,” McCarthy said. “Not only does it get parishioners involved in something, but it is also a place where people in the whole community can bring their bike and see the great things the church is doing and considering attending.”

The 2018 Social Ministry Convocation will be held at Mercy High School in Baltimore on Saturday, March 3.

Fifteen parishes recognized 25 of their members with the Bishop P. Francis Murphy Award for their work in service and advocacy. The honorees follow, by parish. S denotes service; A denotes advocacy.

Ascension: Betty Okonski, S. St. Ann: Social Justice Committee, A; Tim O’Rourke, S. St. Anthony of Padua: Rita Amrhein, S; Tim Taormino, A. St. Cecilia: Jacqueline Campbell and Sandra West, S; Rosemary Atanga, A. St. Dominic: School Sister of Notre Dame Catherine Manning, S; Angeles Phillips, A. St. Edward: Thomasina Saxon and Paula Cummings, S. St. Francis of Assisi: Caitlyn D. Brown, S; Marc Ferretto, A. St. Francis Xavier, Baltimore: Jessica Hurtt, A; Howard Kane, S. Holy Family, Middletown: Barbara Mosser, S. St. Ignatius, Baltimore: Terrance Cavanagh, A; Toni Moore-Duggan, S; Immaculate Conception, Baltimore: Jacqueline Martin, A. St. John the Evangelist, Columbia: Maria Diaz, John Grove and Kris Leeper-Grove, S; Mary Pat Donelan, A. St. Leo the Great: Michael Pastore, S; Tina DeFranco, A. Most Precious Blood: John Subwanone, S; Hussein Ferdinand, A. New All Saints: Gloria Barnes, S; Thelma Daley, A. St. Mark, Catonsville: Eileen Leaman; S. St. Mary, Hagerstown: Loretta Carpenter, A. St. Vincent de Paul: Jack Schmidt, S.

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