

Bishop Kicanas delivers message of hope at Mid-Atlantic Congress

By Elizabeth Skalski

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The first annual Mid-Atlantic Congress for Pastoral Leadership kicked off March 8 with Tucson Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas encouraging the hundreds gathered to be proud of their Catholic faith and the hope that only Jesus Christ can give.

“We are trying to work in a world that is craving hope, yet seems so far from an encounter with Jesus Christ,” said Bishop Kicanas, chairman of the board of Baltimore-based Catholic Relief Services.

The three-day conference at the Hilton Baltimore works to strengthen pastoral leaders in their ministry and in the church from across the region and will offer classes, trend sessions and nearly 100 breakout sessions. The theme is “Witness Hope!”

In an opening prayer, Cardinal Edwin F. O’Brien said that “we hope beyond the grave.”

“That hope involves us more deeply in the hopes of others here and now,” Cardinal O’Brien said.

Bishop Kicanas urged the faithful to remember that “hope isn’t just wishful thinking, hope is not frivolous, it is not mere optimism.”

“Hope is what we live on, trustworthy hope that doesn’t disappoint,” Bishop Kicanas said. “Our number one hope is Jesus Christ.”

Bishop Kicanas encouraged his audience to “remember that you are called and chosen, loved and blessed and if you hold onto that, you can never be discouraged, you can never lose hope.”

Mariella Kim, director of religious education at Holy Korean Martyrs in Gwynn Oak, said she felt encouraged hearing Bishop Kicanas speak.

“Being a leader, you need a lot of encouragement,” Kim said. “‘You are called’ is something I want to go home and text everyone about.”

Kathy Moore, pastoral associate at St. Katharine Drexel in Frederick, said she was inspired by Bishop Kicanas’ speech.

“I came (to the conference) because I am new to pastoral ministry and I was hoping to be motivated,” Moore said. “I think Bishop Kicanas’ speech was inspiring. It gave me great hope to know that I am chosen, blessed and loved.”