

# Catechists find ties that bind at annual Institute

Hope has become a buzzword in 2008.

The Archdiocese of Baltimore sent a clarion call, however, that it is not a passing phrase at its annual Institute for catechists.

In a joint effort between the archdiocese's Divisions of Evangelization and Catechesis and Youth and Young Adults, the Oct. 11 Institute at Archbishop Spalding High School in Severn brought together more than 600 parish and school religious educators.

"It's a chance for everyone to come together and say, 'I need to make sure I'm still on top of my game when it comes to being an evangelizer and a catechist,' " said Mark Pacione, director of Youth and Young Adult ministry.

English and Spanish track keynote speakers Bishop Richard J. Malone of Portland, Maine and Jose Amaya, coordinator for Hispanic catechesis in the Archdiocese of Washington, addressed the theme of "Christ, the Face of Hope."

"We need to be heralds of hope in what is so often a hope-starved world," Bishop Malone told attendees. "For many years, you folks in this Premier See have been taking with great seriousness the insistence of (Pope) Paul VI that evangelization is the church's essential mission."

He later added the church needs "to touch people's lives and then, through them, touch the world with the good news of Jesus Christ."

Institute workshops covered a gamut of topics, including catechizing children, spirituality, evangelizing, Rite of Christian Initiation and family enrichment.

"Sometimes you can feel alone when you're doing this particular ministry in your parish," said Carol Augustine, director of the office of Evangelization and Catechesis. "When you come to a day like today, you begin to see these ministers all

over the archdiocese and you pick up enthusiasm from other people.”

The archdiocese honored more than 50 catechists in an afternoon ceremony for their various hours of service. Although he was not able to attend, Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien sent a video message of congratulations.

“The formation that you have experienced is a good teaching moment as you try to form others in the likeness of Christ,” Archbishop O’Brien said.

Terry Platania, director of religious education at St. Bernadette in Severn, attends the Institute every year, but said the experience is always refreshing.

“It’s good exposure,” Ms. Platania said. “You really get a lot of support coming to this. You see everybody working for the same thing. It’s renewing.”

Patty Dieterich, administrator of religious education at St. Joseph in Odenton, said the message of hope resonates during a time of war and economic tumult.

“At times when there are difficulties in the world, there’s always a way of God showing us and bringing us a message,” Ms. Dieterich said. “He must have known something was coming and that we were going to need it at this time.”