

# **Father James Martin's welcome message for the Mid-Atlantic Congress**

While he was in town to speak to people from the Archdiocese of Baltimore last week, Jesuit and renowned author Father James Martin took time to record a welcome message for us. He's appearing at the Mid-Atlantic Congress for Pastoral Leadership, co-sponsored by The Catholic Review.

If you're looking for information on the event, to be held at Baltimore's Convention Center March 8-10, 2012, here's the news release:

Co-sponsored by the Association of Catholic Publishers and The Archdiocese of Baltimore

The Association of Catholic Publishers and the Archdiocese of Baltimore announce the first Mid-Atlantic Congress for Pastoral Leadership (MAC) to be held Thursday afternoon March 8, 2012 through Saturday afternoon March 10 at the Hilton Hotel in the Inner Harbor area of downtown Baltimore, Maryland. The Association of Catholic Publishers (ACP) and the Archdiocese of Baltimore Department of Evangelization (AOB) welcome this opportunity to co-sponsor the first of what is planned as an annual conference for pastoral leaders.

The Congress is being planned by a Core Committee composed of a diverse team of key leaders from the archdiocese and more than 10 Catholic publishing houses. Meetings began this past October to plan the program and the logistics of the Congress. The Core Committee is co-chaired by Fr. John Hurley of the Department of Evangelization of the Archdiocese of Baltimore and Paul Henderson from USCCB Communications representing the Association of Catholic Publishers. The theme, Witness Hope! / ¡Sea Testigo de la Esperanza!, speaks to the need for pastoral leaders to be active in bringing the Gospel message to the world.

Archbishop Edwin O'Brien of Baltimore noted that this first gathering of pastoral

leaders in the Mid-Atlantic area could not come at a better time. “We believe that by working with ACP, whose members include the major Catholic catechetical and liturgical publishers, the Congress can offer the region a well formed vibrant professional learning experience for our parish and school leaders on an annual basis for years to come.” In a recent survey of more than 1,600 pastoral leaders, respondents – including priests, religious, and ecclesial lay ministers – expressed great interest in a gathering of this type, one that would offer both new learning experiences and continued professional development. Both the ACP and the Archdiocese hope that this initiative will be an annual event that will serve the needs of all the pastoral ministries in the Mid-Atlantic region and beyond. Organizers also hope that the Congress will be a model of inclusiveness, welcoming leaders of all ages, ministries, and ethnic groups to gather as Church. They hope as well that technology will play a major role in providing resources that last well beyond the conference itself -forming a network of pastoral leaders who will continue to be engaged in post-Congress activities.

This new annual Congress will strive to offer the best of Catholic pastoral practices, religious education/catechesis, and theology to parish leadership. It will offer opportunities for “skills development” as well as prayer and worship celebrations. It will give parish and school leaders opportunities to meet in peer groups for support and enrichment. The Congress planning team sees this event as an important way to assist Catholic parishes and schools in their work of evangelization, catechesis, and prayer – bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to our world today.

Finally, it is the organizers’ hope that Witness Hope!/ ¡Sea Testigo de la Esperanza! will focus very sharply and intentionally on the needs of pastoral leaders—and this will be the measure of its success.

Note: In the near future a MAC website ([MidAtlanticCongress.org](http://MidAtlanticCongress.org)) will be available to provide more details, including registration information. Also, follow the Congress on Facebook (Mid-Atlantic Congress) and Twitter (MACongress).