

Mid-Atlantic congress in Baltimore will bring together pastoral leaders

Organizers of the first Mid-Atlantic Congress for Pastoral Leadership planned for March 8-10, 2012, in Baltimore said the aim of the gathering will be to offer pastoral leaders “the best of Catholic pastoral practices, religious education/catechesis and theology.”

The agenda will include opportunities for skills development as well as prayer and worship celebrations and give parish and school leaders a chance to meet in peer groups for support and enrichment.

Co-sponsored by the Association of Catholic Publishers and the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the congress is being planned by a core committee made up of key leaders from the archdiocese and more than 10 Catholic publishing houses. It is meant to be an annual gathering.

Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien of Baltimore noted 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,” the archbishop said in a statement.

Planning for the congress began in October. The core committee is co-chaired by Paulist Father John Hurley, of the Baltimore Archdiocese’s Department of Evangelization, and Paul Henderson, of the communications division of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, who is representing the Association of Catholic Publishers.

The congress theme – “Witness Hope!/Sea Testigo de la Esperanza!” – points to the need for pastoral leaders to be active in bringing the Gospel message to the world.

According to an announcement on the congress, a recent survey of more than 1,600

pastoral leaders, respondents – including priests, religious, and ecclesial lay ministers – expressed great interest in attending a gathering like the congress, especially one offering new learning experiences and continued professional development.

“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,” the announcement said. “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.”

Congress planners said the event will be a way to assist Catholic parishes and schools in their work of evangelization, catechesis and prayer.

Registration information will become available in the weeks ahead with the launch of a website that is currently under construction. Congress planning can be followed on Facebook and Twitter.