

Mother Lange Awards, for 21st time, honor's God's 'best work'

WOODLAWN - "God does his best work with human hands."

Opening the 21st annual Mother Mary Lange, O.S.P. awards banquet Feb. 9, master of ceremonies Kirk Gaddy succinctly described the 37 honorees in attendance at Martin's West.

Sponsored by the Archdiocese of Baltimore's Office of Black Catholic Ministries and held during Black History Month, the event honors those perpetuating the spirit and good works of Mother Lange, who in the late 1820s helped found both St. Frances Academy, the oldest continuously operating black Catholic school in the U.S., and the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first religious order of women of African descent.

The honorees have contributed to the fabric of their parishes and Baltimore in the areas of leadership, service and youth.

The young and not-so-young in attendance included women, such as Michel Franklin and Frances Spears, whose ministries at St. Gregory the Great include more than two decades together in the choir; and, from St. Bernardine, Daniel Gonzalez, a senior at Mount St. Joseph High School in Irvington who serves as vice president of the parish pastoral council.

His peers include, New All Saints, the Underwood twins, Darren and Devin, who are in the seventh grade at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School in Ellicott City, and Jewel

Murrill, who, through St. Cecilia Parish's Disciples of God youth ministry, collects items for the residents of My Sister's Place Women's Center.

Gaddy is a parishioner of Historic St. Francis Xavier. Its service recipient was Mary Burton Watties, a manager for a local supermarket and grandmother of 13 who's taught Sunday school for 20 years. The leadership award from St. Ambrose in Park Heights, meanwhile, went to Trudy Gordon, a native of Trinidad and Tobago who's been instrumental in the parish's International Ministry.

A performance was offered by the Liturgical Dance Ministry Group from St. Bernardine, under the direction of Lori Gonzalez.

Remarks were offered by Sister of Notre Dame de Namur Gwynette Proctor, director of the Office of Black Catholic Ministries, and one of her cousins, Sister Rita Michelle Proctor, the 20th superior general of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, a line that began with Mother Lange.

"This is a woman," Sister Rita Michelle reminded the more than 450 in attendance, "who faced the challenges of her time."

Bishop Denis J. Madden, in his welcoming remarks, spoke directly to the many Oblate Sisters of Providence in attendance.

"I can't thank you enough for your fidelity and patience," he said, "despite the hardships you endured."

Mother Lange Award recipients

Thirty-seven men, women and children received awards for Leadership (L), Service

(S) and Youth (Y). They are listed below, by parish.

St. Ambrose, Park Heights: Trudy Gordon, L; Gloria Jiggetts, S; Janet L. Butts, Y.

St. Ann: Cynthia Johnson, L; Janet Butts, S.

St. Bernardine: JoAnn Thomas, L; Jacqueline Powe-Joyce, S; Daniel Gonzalez, Y.

Blessed Sacrament: Janet L. Pettaway, L; Christopher Harris, Y; Crystal Harris, Y.

St. Cecilia; Raft Woodus, L; Sandra Morgan, S; Jewel Murrill, Y.

St. Edward: Dr. Calvin Woodland, L; Tamathea Dodson, S; Demteris Downing, Jr., Y.

Historic St. Francis Xavier: Avis Butler, L; Celestia Drake, S; Mary Burton Watties, S; Varia Alston, Y; Kai Massey, Y.

St. Gregory the Great: Michel Franklin, L; Frances Spears, S; Jonathan Kane, Jr., Y.

Immaculate Conception: Myoshi Smith, L; Toemore Knight, S.

St. Mary of the Assumption, Govans: Dr. Rosetta Gainey, L; Kenneth Church, S.

New All Saints, Liberty Heights: Joann Logan, L; Gwendolyn Shipley, S; Darren Underwood, Y; Devin Underwood, Y.

St. Peter Claver and St. Pius V: Helena Johnson, L; Gilbert McClendon, S;

St. Wenceslaus: Dwayne Coleman, L; Mary Westry Harrison-Harris, S; Steven Fung, Y.

Email Paul McMullen at pmcmullen@CatholicReview.org