

Mother Lange banquet honors black Catholics

It was an exciting and joyous evening to remember at the 14th Mother Mary Lange, O.S.P. Awards Banquet held March 19 at Martin's West in Baltimore County as well wishers including Oblate Sisters of Providence, pastors, various parishes, families and friends gathered to celebrate and honor Mother Lange, and recognize the 48 faith-filled African-American Catholics for their service.

Dr. Paula T. Langford, member of the archdiocesan board of African American Catholic Ministries, served as the mistress of ceremonies. There was continuous buzzing, applause and outbursts of joy in the banquet room as Langford took the 550 well wishers through a historical litany using descriptive African terminology to describe the parishes in Baltimore City and Howard County where the honorees for the night had labored hard in the vineyard.

The 2010 Mother Lange Award recipients were recognized in three different categories: leadership, service and youth. Dr. Langford stated that it was fitting to give the fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers their flowers while they are still alive.

When the award recipients entered the ballroom, there was continuous applause as they stretched across the front of the banquet room before taking their seats to enjoy the program. The applause continued when each recipient was called up to receive his or her individual award later in the program. Past faithfully departed Mother Mary Lange award recipients Dr. Hilbert Stanley, Paul Johnson, Irene McNamara and Ella Frances Johnson who past since the 2009 Mother Lange banquet, were remembered for their faith and hard work in their churches. They laid the foundation for those who are serving today.

Howard W. Roberts, coordinator of the Harambee Youth Outreach, gave the welcome. In addition, more than 30 Oblate Sisters of Providence in attendance were also recognized for the work they continue to provide in Catholic parishes, schools and communities. Siser Mary Alexis Fisher, superior general of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, brought greetings from the Oblate Sisters and dramatically spoke of

Mother Lange's work and her commitment to service. Father Donald A. Sterling, pastor of New All Saints, who recently celebrated 35 years of service as a priest, offered prayer and grace. Two 2010 award recipients were showcased in the program. Tracie Marie Victoria Jiggetts, floated throughout the banquet room dramatically dancing to "Your Presence Amazes Me" and mesmerizing the audience; and Evan Jamal Canty captivated the audience when he played a musical selection by Johann Sebastian Bach on his violin.

In 1996, the board of African American Catholic Ministries along with the Council of Elders, who provided consultation to Josephite Bishop John H. Ricard, began discussion of the need to affirm and celebrate the strength of leadership, service and youth participation within black Catholic parishes in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Both the board and Council of Elders unanimously agreed to name the celebration after one of Baltimore's first lady of leadership and service; Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange, co-founder of the Oblate Sisters of Providence. Simultaneous in this decision was to sponsor the celebration during Black History Month, honoring black Catholics who were creating black history of this era and to offer an appeal for everyone to lead and serve.

The first Mother Lange Banquet was held Feb. 28, 1997 at the Charlestown Retirement Center. Since this first Mother Mary Lange Banquet, the staff of the Office of African American Catholic Ministries, under the capable leadership of Therese Wilson Favors, has worked consistently and prayerfully to ensure that each banquet continues the vision of Mother Mary Lange.

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