

Social Ministry Convocation draws 400

As he prayed with and addressed the more than 400 participants in the 28th annual Social Ministry Convocation March 3 at The Seton Keough High School, Baltimore, Cardinal William H. Keeler, spoke first and foremost about peace.

"We certainly are praying for peace in our parishes, and this past week our church leaders in Baltimore joined together in praying for peace," said the cardinal. "Bishop Madden (Bishop Denis J. Madden, urban vicar) spoke with great eloquence about the situation he knows very well in the Middle East, and it's a situation that can only get better when peace comes."

The cardinal also addressed the issues of immigration, fair treatment of children in Catholic schools and capital punishment during the convocation, which had the theme "The Prophetic Church: Marching toward practical solutions," and featured workshops, speakers and a social ministry fair.

"A prophet can best be described as an intermediary - one who has a foot in both camps, one who speaks on behalf of God to the people and one who speaks to the people on behalf of God," said keynote speaker Gina Hens-Piazza, professor of biblical studies and core doctoral faculty member at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley in California. "Just as fostering a faith life is so important for prophetic ministry, we must also cultivate a community life."

In addressing Spanish speakers, Leo Achondo, national manager of the Justice for Immigrants campaign of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, gave a historical perspective on immigration in the U.S. and spoke about how people have a right to leave their country to sustain their family, how refugees have to be helped and how the human rights of every person have to be respected, among other points.

Veteran convocation participant and Corpus Christi, Baltimore, parishioner Joe Hart believes that there is a "perennial hunger of God's people, which is not quenched.

"It's about a lifetime of recognizing the haves and have-nots and bringing

equilibrium to the struggle,” said Mr. Hart, director of spiritual support at the Greater Baltimore Medical Center. “This day is an opportunity to be challenged, affirmed and inspired.”

Bishop Madden, Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski, eastern vicar, and Bishop W. Francis Malooly, western vicar, attended the event to support social ministers and to present awards for advocacy and service. St. Mary of the Assumption, Govans, parishioner Helene Perry received the John Hook Award for her service and leadership in her parish and the community.

Arthur Jasmin, a parishioner of St. Gabriel, Woodlawn, was honored for his 15 years of service to Catholic Charities’ Our Daily Bread.

“I really enjoy going down there and meeting the guests and serving the food,” said Mr. Jasmin, a first-time participant in the Social Ministry Convocation.

Monsignor William F. Burke, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi in Baltimore and head of the local Catholic Campaign for Human Development, which is one of the sponsors of the convocation, is one of the main organizers of the event. The convocation is also sponsored by Catholic Charities, the office of Hispanic Ministry, the office of African American Ministry, Pax Christi of Baltimore, St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore and Beyond the Boundaries.