

Social Ministry Convocation promotes justice and mercy

The four-word theme of the 39th annual Social Ministry Convocation summarized the mission of its attendees: Justice and Mercy: Now!

The convocation, held March 3 at Mercy High School in Baltimore, led its participants to fulfill Catholic social teaching through prayer and education. Workshops, many in both English and Spanish, offered insight to topics such as finding common ground among life issues, immigration, life after incarceration and understanding racial bias.

Dana Davenport, the assistant director of parish social ministry for Catholic Charities of Baltimore, led a workshop, "Navigating Politics Today." She noted that this year - 2018 - holds significance as the 50th anniversary of Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*; the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr; and the Poor People's Campaign.

"(Politics) affects all of us. We have to learn how to navigate it," Davenport said. "I just can't sit there as a person of faith and not do something about it."

Her workshop was very well-received. In a question-and-answer session that followed, Davenport offered advice on voting as a Catholic; she encouraged participants to know their faith and facts.

The convocation allows leaders of parishes and anyone interested in social justice to find information and resources in a central location. Throughout the day, there were opportunities to visit the Social Ministry Fair set up in the halls.

"The best kept secret of the Catholic Church is social justice," said Gisele Ferretto, a parishioner of St. Joseph in Fullerton and a volunteer with the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD).

CCHD is the domestic anti-poverty program of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Ferretto said CCHD and the convocation provide resources to move toward solving the root causes of social injustice, rather than just offering acts of charity, such as donating food or clothing.

“Another way to feed the poor is to end poverty,” Ferretto said, adding that solutions must be a joint effort between those within the community and those offering assistance.

The keynote address was given by Deacon Curtis Turner, principal of St. Frances Academy in Baltimore. The majority of his students live below the poverty line.

“Don’t expect to get thanked,” he said, as he offered advice on and spoke to the difficulties of working in social justice. “It hurts not to be thanked, but we should do it anyway.”

“One of the biggest lies the devil tells us is that we are alone,” Deacon Turner said. “You are not the first to feel that way, and you are not alone.”

Monsignor William Burke, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi in Baltimore and the longstanding leader of the convocation, welcomed participants. Archbishop William E. Lori followed with prayer and discussion of his newest pastoral letter, “The Enduring Power of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Principles of Nonviolence.”

The day ended with Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus Denis J. Madden leading a prayer service and presenting awards to social justice advocates from Baltimore City to Frederick County.

Honorees

Twenty-eight men and women from 16 parishes were recognized at the convocation, for their service (S), or their advocacy (A).

St. Anthony of Padua, Baltimore: Michael Ward, S; Rose Kurtz, A.

St. Cecilia, Baltimore: Erline Brown, S

St. Dominic, Baltimore: Sister Marie Seton Walsh, S.

St. Francis of Assisi, Baltimore: Barry and Patricia Brownlee, S, Michael Faherty, A.

St. Francis of Assisi-St. Mary, Petersville: Robert “Bob” Quin, S.

Holy Family Catholic Community, Middletown: Lauren Dutrow, A.

Immaculate Conception, Baltimore: Janis Logan, A; Margaret Jones, S.

St. Isaac Jogues, Carney: Dr. Barbara McLean, S.

St. John the Evangelist, Columbia: Howard and Mary Beth Last, S; Amy Lamke, A.

St. John the Evangelist, Frederick: Pauline Manalo, S; Leslie Mansfield, A.

St. John the Evangelist, Hydes: Anthony and Mary Pat Marzullo, S; Nancy Burke, A.

Most Precious Blood, Baltimore: Ann Collins, S.

New All Saints, Baltimore: Mildred Proctor, S; Sherita Thomas, A.

Our Lady of the Fields, Millersville: John and Joan Hoppa, S; Minerva Rivera, A.

St. Veronica, Cherry Hill: Susan Locklear, S.

St. Vincent de Paul, Baltimore: Mary Catherine Bunting, S; Giuliana “Jules” Valencia-Banks, A.

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