



Archdiocese of Baltimore's 44th annual Social Ministry Convocation February 25, 2023, at Mercy High School in Baltimore. (Kevin J. Parks)

Social Ministry Convocation returns to in-person event



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Rev. Dr. Marlon Tilghman, pastor of Ames United Methodist Church in Bel Air, was the keynote speaker for the Archdiocese of Baltimore's 44th annual Social Ministry convocation. (Kevin J. Parks)

After two years of COVID-related online-only meeting, the Archdiocese of Baltimore's annual Social Ministry Convocation returned to an in-person gathering at Mercy High School Feb. 25, with 275 attendees.

In his keynote address, the Rev. Marlon Tilghman, pastor of Ames United Methodist Church in Bel Air, asked audience members to consider why they do social justice work.

Citing author Jane F. McAlevey's three approaches to justice – advocacy, mobilizing and organizing – Tilghman said the first two don't include the people affected by demands for change. Advocacy usually involves lawyers, pollsters and researchers who don't challenge the elite powers. In mobilizing, the same activists tend to show up time and again to fight for justice, but don't include those affected by the changes they seek.

Only organizers include people whose lives are affected, he said.

"They are consulted on every decision and they serve in leadership roles during the campaign for their justice," said Tilghman, urging members of the audience to be like the organizers. "Don't do for others what they can do for themselves."



Bishop Bruce A, Lewandowski, CSsR, listens to a member of the Hispanic community attending the Archdiocese of Baltimore's 44th annual social ministry convocation. (Kevin J. Parks)

He found inspiration in a video of stand-up comic Michael Jr. In the video, shown at the convocation, Michael challenges a man to sing "Amazing Grace," which he performs beautifully. When Michael asks the man to sing it again, this time imagining himself as if his uncle just got out of jail and that he had been shot in the back as a child, the man belts out a soulful rendition that brings a crowd of people to their feet.

Michael Jr. noted that the first time the man was asked to sing, he knew what to do. But the second time, he knew why he was doing it.

Tilghman emphasized the importance of "knowing why."

“It’s your time to dream big and dream together,” he said, echoing the day’s theme.

During a Social Ministry Fair at the Social Ministry Convocation, workshops on topics as varied as Catholic Charities, parish Green Teams, anti-racism and young Catholics were presented. Two workshops were offered in Spanish.

Monsignor Bozzelli was pleased at the turnout at this year’s event.

“I think people were anxious to come back,” he said. “Rev. Tilghman gave the perfect talk. That’s what they needed to hear.”

Bon Secours Sister Rose Marie Jasinski called the event “energizing.”



James Conway, parishioner at St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church in Baltimore, talks on accountability is the new evangelization during a workshop at the Archdiocese of Baltimore’s 44th annual social ministry convocation. (Kevin J. Parks)

“Being in person is always better,” said Flo Valentine, a parishioner of St. Cecilia in Baltimore.

Jerry Buettner, a St. Francis of Assisi in Baltimore parishioner, agreed. A longtime attendee, he was glad to see so many people he knew.

“It would’ve been better to see people I didn’t recognize,” he said, adding he wished more young people were in attendance.

Some 20 organizations participated in the Social Ministry Fair. Bobbie Jenkins of Hon’s Honey brought her organization’s honey and bath products “to share what we are doing.” Hon’s Honey employs women survivors of trauma at its Curtis Bay headquarters

Glyn Bailey, CCHD board chairman, was honored with proclamations and a papal blessing on the occasion of his 100th birthday, which he will mark March 7.

Bailey and his wife, Jeanne, joined the first CCHD committee. Bailey, then a member of St. Mark in Catonsville, chaired the committee from 1972 to 1988, then spent 11 years working for the Diocese of Charleston's CCHD office. Back in Baltimore in 1999, he returned to the chairmanship. A daily communicant at Immaculate Conception in Towson, Bailey praised the hard work of the whole group.



Monsignor Richard J. Bozzelli, center, diocesan director for the Baltimore Catholic Campaign for Human Development, talks with participants attending the Archdiocese of Baltimore's 44th annual social ministry convocation. (Kevin J. Parks)

"I'm not doing it alone by any means," he said.

Mary Slicher, of Project PLASE, said CCHD grants helped get her housing organization on its feet.

"We would not be here if not for that," she said.

Slicher, co-founder and, since 1987 executive director of Project PLASE (People Lacking Ample Shelter and Employment), received the Doris Johnson Award.

Also honored during this year was Ann Brontzman, of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Essex, who has mobilized volunteers for the annual Thanksgiving dinner for people in need for the past 37 years. She received the John Hook Award.

The P. Francis Murphy Social Ministry Recognition Award was presented to Dale Frazier, St. Bernardine, Baltimore; Jackie Powe Joyce, St. Bernardine; Teresita Siozon, Shrine of the Sacred Heart, Mount Washington; Dolores McKee, St. Pius X, Rodgers Forge; Peggy Cronyn, Peggy Meyer and Skip Sanders, all of St. Vincent de Paul, Baltimore; Judy Plitt, St. Patrick, Havre de Grace; Alan Deiparine, Shrine of the Sacred Heart; Margie Forbes, St. Joan of Arc; Nancy Schmidt, St. Joan of Arc.; Jennifer Merkel, St. Patrick, Havre de Grace; and Stephanie Graham, Immaculate Conception, Baltimore.

To view more photographs from the Social Ministry Convocation, click below:













