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# Salonen: Christ is the antidote to racism, deacon says

Salonen shares thoughts about ending racism from Harold Burke-Sivers, a sought-out, international Catholic speaker.



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As a Lenten preparation earlier this month, the “Dynamic Deacon” Harold Burke-Sivers, a sought-out, international Catholic speaker, led a three-day mission at my parish, Sts. Anne and Joachim Church, in Fargo.



we as the Church can do about it, claiming that Christ is the antidote for overcoming this scourge.



Roxane Salonen is pictured with the “Dynamic Deacon” Harold Burke-Sivers, a sought-out, international Catholic speaker.

Contributed / Roxane B. Salonen

While not skirting over the failures of the people of God through the years, including how some American priests kept African slaves in the past, ignoring the Vatican’s admonishment of the practice, Burke-Sivers insisted the Church is still more equipped to change hearts than the world ever could be.

Too often, we get tripped up on seeing the Church only as its body, its imperfect people, who often choose wrongly, he said, and forget that its head is Christ himself;



“God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance,” he said, quoting from 1 Sam. 16:7, “The Lord looks into the heart.”

Burke-Sivers has authored a forthcoming book, set to release in October, which also explores the topic, challenging critical race theory, a complex theory, he said, that does more harm than good in fostering peace.

In a written talk he gave to Benedictine College in Sept. 2020 on the same subject, titled, “Building a Civilization of Love: A Catholic Response to Racism,” Burke-Sivers offered eight steps for how we might approach change in this area.

First, he said, we need to see past the stereotypes and seek to “see Jesus in the person standing in front of you.” We also need to stop supporting media outlets, individuals and organizations that create, encourage and perpetuate racist stereotypes, and propose violence and anarchy as solutions.

He also suggested we “appreciate the gift of cultural diversity,” encouraging parish study groups, potlucks and cross-cultural choirs to bring people together, and make a serious effort to promote conversation and dialogue among parishioners of all backgrounds.

Burke-Sivers, a former police chief, also believes that, as a society, we should reevaluate law enforcement and use-of-force practices to reform and rebuild, not defund and dismantle. Simultaneously, we need to bring God back into society, he said. “We have taken God completely out of public discourse.”

Finally, he said, we must fast and pray, particularly in silence, with an aim to “listen with the ear of your heart,” as St. Benedict put it, and appeal to Jesus’ mother, Mary, for intercession.

Burke-Sivers said we can no longer allow secular culture and ideology to displace the objective truths of Christianity in doctrine and principle. “In order to defeat racism, there must be further introspection and a deeper examination of conscience...to arrive at the root causes of disunity and divisiveness within humanity that lead to sinful acts.”