

The evening began with students and staff gathering for a meal and conversation, hosted by the wonderful staff from Marrickville Casimir. The presentation of the evening for the Divine Mercy commenced with an interactive opportunity to know more about the Eastern European country where the Divine Mercy originated. Poland has played a crucial part in the history and landscape of modern day Europe, and students received a real deepening of their awareness of the Polish culture and traditions. Milad Khalil gave a very informative presentation on the Divine Mercy Chaplet as revealed to St. Faustina of Poland and the overwhelming influence it had with the pontificate of Pope St John Paul II. Students and staff certainly were amazed at the powerful connections and significance of such a devotion in the Church.

Fr Kevin Tuitu'u gave a moving blessing of the Divine Chaplet packs provided for all students and staff attending. The gathering was guided through a very reverent and humbling experience of the Divine Chaplet by Vanessa Penitani, Milad Khalil and students from Marrickville.

A very grateful thank you to Mr. Daniel McInerney (Principal) and Mrs Joanne McGrath (Religious Education Coordinator) for allowing the evening to take place, and to all the staff that assisted with this special event. Thanks to our Youth Ministry Coordinators from the individual schools present who organised and supported the participation of their students.

Deacon Harold Talks

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Students across

Sydney Catholic schools were recently privileged to experience an empowering presentation by the 'Dynamic Deacon'. Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers serves at the Immaculate Heart Catholic Church Portland Oregon, and is currently travelling the world to passionately spread his deep knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

Students filed into the hall with the routine and normalities that are expected when hearing guest speakers, but as Deacon Harold took to the stage it quickly became apparent that this was not a standard presentation. Deacon Harold's deep passion for Jesus and the Church was clear from the onset. The Deacon is a man who is extremely proud to proclaim his faith and love of God, and he does so in an engaging way.

In answering questions openly, and in keeping with Church teaching, Deacon Harold showed the audience that he speaks from his heart, and with truth. Whilst the Deacon's humour kept listeners wanting to hear more, it was the solemn and deeply reverent reflections that had the audience hooked.



Deacon Harold is widely known to address topics that other speakers may be reluctant to address, and he does so with great gusto. He answered questions on sustainability, relationships, helping others in need, evangelisation of youth, Mass attendance and the lived experience of faith.

In explaining the issue of teenagers being reluctant to go to Mass, Deacon Harold began by addressing the more recent fascination many teenagers have with Vampires and Zombies.

"These fictional creatures are both dead, yet alive. Vampires crave blood, Zombies crave flesh. You are craving flesh and blood but because you may not know what's happening in Mass, because you may not truly understand Jesus is giving you real flesh and blood that will lead you to life eternal, you are trying to find 'flesh and blood' in creatures that are dead, that can't give you anything. When for free, because Jesus already paid the price, you can receive the true bread that came down from heaven. That's not fantasy, not reality television. This is the really real. So if you don't understand how Mass connects with your life, then how can you receive Jesus Christ completely and fully? We have to make those connections"

Popular culture was not the only strong link the Deacon had with the audience. He was also able to express heartfelt emotions and love in recounting his experiences of being a Deacon, ministering to his community. These confronting reflections enabled him to show the students why they need to not only have a strong faith in Jesus Christ, but to show that faith in all aspects of their lived experience.

Deacon Harold has meaningfully connected with students and teachers in Sydney Catholic Schools, encouraging them to deeply connect with their faith and to live that faith in all aspects of their lives. In his words and his example he is a shining example to the world of how to truly live as a Catholic, proudly professing faith in Jesus Christ.

