

The Dynamic Deacon on Discernment, Dating and More!

Marking Black History Month, the father of four discussed his former occupation, family life, and ‘seeing people the way God sees them.’



Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers celebrates Mass at his parish in Portland, Oregon. (photo: Courtesy photo / Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers)

Alyssa Murphy | Interviews | February 27, 2025

Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers is a familiar voice and face to many Catholics around the globe. Hosting not only his own radio show on EWTN called *Beacon of Truth*, and also out with a book tackling the important subject of racism entitled *Building a Civilization of Love: A Catholic*

Response to Racism, he took some time during this busy month of February as the nation celebrates Black History Month to discuss some thoughts on the issue.

And as Rome just marked a special event for deacons during the Jubilee of Hope, he also shares his own vocation story and some sage advice on dating.

Deacon Harold shared with the Register how he first discerned the priesthood:

“Since I was 9 years old I always enjoyed going to Mass and thought I might have a vocation to the priesthood. I went to a Benedictine high school, where I participated in their ‘Come and See’ program all four years. I went to college, worked for a year, then joined the monastery.”



Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers celebrates Mass alongside Catholic clergy.(Photo: Courtesy photo)

But all that changed after meeting a particular woman, the deacon reminisced. “I left after meeting the woman who would become my wife,” he recalled. “Still, I felt that God was calling me to serve him beyond married life, and that call was to diaconal ministry.”

‘See People the Way God Sees Them’

Marking Black History Month, Deacon Harold — as he is known — is always quick to reference a similar month that is celebrated every November, as he mentioned on EWTN Radio:

“We have Black History Month and Black Catholic History Month. And you know ... I don’t want my history relegated to a month.”

“But at the same time,” Deacon Harold continued, “I think these months are important because you have a group of people whose voices were not heard, whose voices were suppressed for decades and decades, first with slavery and then with Jim Crow and all of that. So now they’re saying, ‘We know we want our voices heard, and here’s who we are,’ you know. And I think that’s wonderful, but I think if it just stops there, and then the month is over, then you go back to business as usual, then nothing really gets accomplished. So what we have to do is use these as springboards to incorporate these into the normal conversation of not only our Catholic experience in the classroom, in our parishes, but also in the American experience as well. So I think these are great ways to raise awareness, to make them part of people’s consciousness; but then we also have to start living it, and that’s what my book is about: being able to see people the way God sees them.”

Inspired by Father Tolton

And it’s also another opportunity to discuss some of the potential Black American saints like Father Augustus Tolton, a hero of Deacon Harold’s, as the father of four told the Register:

“Father Tolton is one of my Catholic heroes, for sure! He and the other Black American Catholics on the path to sainthood never left the Church, despite enduring the cross of a lifetime of racial animosity. In the face of such intense bigotry and hatred, they remained in the Catholic Church because they were able to discern what many Catholics who leave the Church today fail to perceive and do not fully appreciate: that what the Catholic Church teaches is true, good and beautiful despite the hypocrisy and contradiction of Church members who do not live the faith they profess.”

“These courageous Catholics always acknowledged the great gift of their faith,” Deacon Harold emphasized, “and recognized that sin and weakness are not greater or more powerful than the strength of objective truth found in Catholicism. They were visionaries who saw far beyond issues of race and politics, looking inward — into the heart of the Church herself.”

Protecting Souls

Not many people know about Deacon Harold's day job before he went into full-time ministry work, including as part of EWTN's apostolate: The "Dynamic Deacon" was a cop on a college campus.

The Register asked him about his first occupation — was he the good cop or the bad cop? — and whether the experience ever works its way into his own homilies.

"My last 11 years were spent working as a police chief on a college campus, so it was a mix of both. I enjoyed the experience of helping young adults grow into their adult clothes. My area of expertise was anti-terrorism. I taught a course at the police academy called 'Contemporary Threat Assessment Methodology' and did tactical training for pod insertion teams for active-shooter scenarios. I don't bring much of that past into my preaching, but I always have my head on a swivel wherever I speak, just in case."



Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers preaches during Mass.(Photo: Courtesy photo)

And it was actually during adoration that Deacon Harold knew God was calling him to something else:

“I was in adoration, making my Holy Hour, and sometime during that Holy Hour I got an overwhelming interior sense that God was saying to me, ‘I need you to do a different type of threat assessment — for souls.’”

Ready for Sunday

Although all of his children are grown, Deacon Harold used to have his children examine the Sunday readings and speculate as to what the priest might preach about, given the readings and Sunday Gospel. “I started this when they were pre-teens as a fun way of preparing for Mass,” Deacon Harold recalled. “We would go around the dinner table and everyone got a chance to give input on the readings, particularly the Gospel. They were always thrilled when the priest, in his homily, mentioned something we discussed at dinner.”

“My children are all adults now. The two oldest are out of the house, and the twins are busy with their own lives. We don’t have family dinners anymore, so I’m hoping the kids will incorporate this practice into their own families one day.”

And, surprisingly, although the good deacon lives up to his aptly-put nickname, the Dynamic Deacon, the husband and father comes across a little differently to his family, he admitted.

“They would laugh at the thought of me being ‘dynamic,’ since I’m actually a pretty intense introvert. They would also say I have a wry sense of humor and love music.”

Dating and Marriage Advice

And when it comes to love, in general, Deacon Harold is an inspiration to many people. He has written openly about his own journey in finding his spouse in the pages of the Register, focusing on love and sacrifice and the need to pray together as a couple.

He wrote last year:

“The Lord tells us whenever two or more are gathered in his name, he is there. What better two to gather in prayer than husbands and wives, who are sharing a life together in Christ.”



Colleen and Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers.(Photo: Courtesy photo)

And as a husband, he shared some simple yet profound advice for all the young men out there hoping to meet their wife:

"Go to adoration and pray that God will put the woman in your life who will help you get to heaven. If that doesn't work, join the seminary!"

Keywords: dynamic deacon deacon harold burke-sivers beacon of truth

Alyssa Murphy Alyssa Murphy is the Register's Managing Editor of Digital Assets. Starting her career on the airwaves in San Francisco, she has worked in all facets of media. Alyssa enjoys writing and covering stories that inspire and uplift. Register readers may be familiar with her voice from EWTN radio's Morning Glory. Alyssa currently lives in New Jersey just outside Manhattan with her husband Andrew and young daughter, Annabelle.



Copyright © 2025 EWTN News, Inc. All rights reserved. EIN 27-4581132

Reproduction of material from this website without written permission, or unlicensed commercial use or monetization of National Catholic Register RSS feeds is strictly prohibited.