

Dynamic Deacon Harold: 'we have to build strong marriages'

By Mary Brazell, 18 September 2019



American Catholic Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers has lived up to his international nickname of the 'Dynamic Deacon'.

Deacon Harold was the guest speaker at the 2019 Faith in Marriage Seminar, hosted by the Diocese of Parramatta's Life, Marriage and Family Office on 30 August.

Read Daily

* indicates required

Email Address *

First Name

Last Name

Postcode/Zipcode

Subscribe

Follow Us

With his renowned passion, energy and love, Deacon Harold spoke to the 150-person crowd on the topic of 'Building Strong Marriages'.

View images from the Faith in Marriage Seminar [here](#) or [below](#).

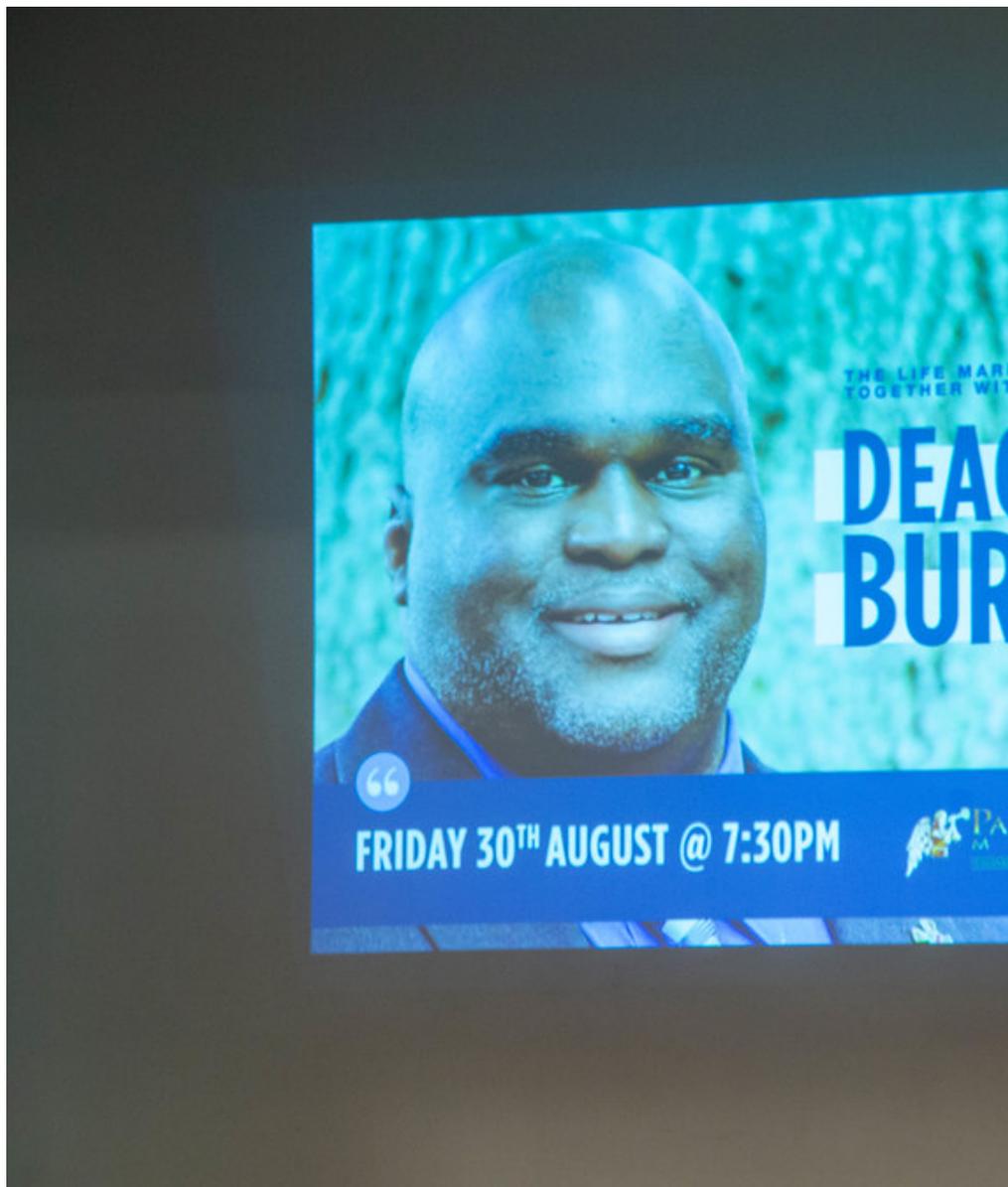


FACEBOOK TWITTER YOUTUBE

Search Our Site



- LATEST NEWS**
 - SEPTEMBER 18, 2019**
Big win for Parramatta Catholic Schools at Training Awards
 - SEPTEMBER 18, 2019**
Ministry to the Newly Married a 'hidden treasure'
 - SEPTEMBER 18, 2019**
Bishop takes drought, Indigenous concerns to Canberra
 - SEPTEMBER 18, 2019**
More lives lost and ruined
 - SEPTEMBER 18, 2019**
When parent support is too much



Travelling from the Catholic Diocese of Portland, Oregon, USA, Deacon Harold has been serving as a deacon for seven years and has a wife and four children.

“If we look at our culture today, marriage is under attack. People say they are trying to re-define marriage, no, they’re trying to un-define marriage.



“So we have to build strong marriages. Strong marriages, strong families. Strong families, strong church. Strong church, strong culture,” he said.

Deacon Harold then explained how to build strong families by referencing Genesis 1 as the first example of family.

“Right from the beginning, we see God’s plan for relationship. God creates us from nothing, out of His love for us and what’s the very first thing God does, before he speaks to us? He blessed them – they get married. God establishes a covenant relationship. When God wants to establish relations with us, he doesn’t establish a contact, he establishes a covenant.

“A covenant relationship is making a complete and total gift of yourself to someone and that someone makes a complete and total gift of themselves back to you in love that is free, and faithful. It’s a love that is everything, it’s a love that holds nothing back, because Jesus held nothing back in his love for us on the cross. He gave everything and that’s exactly what he expects from us – to hold nothing back of ourselves in love for the other.

“Covenant relationship is about giving yourself away, because it’s when you give yourself away in love that you truly find yourself in God,” he explained.



TOP 5

01 **BISHOP VINCENT**
The Pope who came to dinner

02 **CATHOLIC LIFE**
EXCLUSIVE: Australian interview with Cardinal Burke

03 **AROUND AUSTRALIA**
Bishop Vincent’s Address to the Concerned Catholic of Canberra and Goulburn

04 **BISHOP VINCENT**
Local launch of Social Justice Sunday Statement

05 **AROUND AUSTRALIA**
GALLERY: CCD Mass 2017

Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers speaks during the 2019 Faith in Marriage Seminar.

Image: Diocese of Parramatta.

Deacon Harold's theological education was woven through his seminar alongside anecdotes from his own personal life and marriage.

"In Genesis 2:15, the Lord placed the man in the garden and is giving him his purpose, his mission, his calling, his vocation – to serve, protect and defend. That's our mission men – serve, protect and defend our wives and children, our Church, if you're a priest, and this culture if you're a single man.

"Then the Lord God said in Genesis 2:18, 'it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper fit for him.' Now, helper doesn't mean maid, doesn't mean cook, doesn't mean someone to do my laundry and drive the kids to soccer, it's actually a compound word in Hebrew 'help mate' that means 'battle partner'. God wanted to create a 'battle partner' for [man] against evil, sin and death – they fight together.

"When you're in a relationship of covenant love and intimacy, you don't lose anything of the individual person that God created you to be. You don't lose yourself, you find yourself, because your spouse helps you to become more of the person that God created you to be," he said.



Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers speaks during the 2019 Faith in Marriage Seminar.

Image: Diocese of Parramatta.

Deacon Harold gave the audience some practical hints to strengthen their marriages.

“The first one I want to talk about is affection. We cannot keep taking each other for granted in marriage, it’s often the little things that make the biggest difference.

“[When it comes to sexual gratification], we have to listen and respect each other, and I would never do anything that would disrespect [my wife] in that act. In Ephesians 5, after it says ‘love your wives just as Christ loved the Church...that you might sanctify her’. To sanctify something means to make it holy. How are you making your wives holy? How are you acting holy in that marital embrace?

“Every day of my life as [my wife’s] husband and the father of her children, I want to see her the way God sees her. I want to look at her through God’s eyes.

“Conversation. Pray together. Who is the centre and heart of your married life? Is it Jesus Christ? Is it Christ crucified? Or is it the remote control or your smartphone. The other thing about conversation is that it’s not about fixing problems.

“Recreational companionship – you guys need to go on dates, date night are very important.

“Financial support. We have to value the roles that each of us plays in the marriage relationship. When you’re in a marriage relationship, what happens with your money is a decision you both have to make together.



Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers speaks during the 2019 Faith in Marriage Seminar.

Image: Diocese of Parramatta.

Finally, Deacon Harold left the audience with a message.

“Husbands, every decision you make cannot be your own. You must always place the best interest of your immediate family first above all else. Open your hearts to your wives – the greatest gift you can give to your children is to love your wife.

“Share the deepest parts of who you are with your wife. Don’t be afraid to share the gift of vulnerability with your wife. That doesn’t make you weak, it makes you strong.

“Ladies, when God decided to take love and plant that love within human beings, it took fruit in your heart in a special way. In your heart, you carry within you the very love that flows from the heart of God. You share that love in so many ways, especially in your tireless commitment to your families.

“That love must be focussed and centred in your marriage covenant with your husband. Allow him to serve you. In turn, nurture him with patience, gentleness and understanding.

“When you both do your part together in that marriage, you will remember that Jesus Christ is a fountain from which you will

receive the strength, the power and the grace that you need to help get each other to heaven.”



Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers (centre) with members of the Diocese of Parramatta Life, Marriage and Family Office Catherine Bourne (left) and Karin Abrams. Image: Diocese of Parramatta.

Karin Abrams, Coordinator – Marriage Education Support and Enrichment, Life, Family and Marriage Office thanked Deacon Harold and presented him with a memento of his trip.

“It was great to see the large number of parishioners from the Diocese who came to hear Deacon Harold speak. He gave a very enthusiastic presentation starting with the origins of marriage as found in Genesis and concluded with some practical suggestions around building strong marriages,” she told *Catholic Outlook*.

Karin explained that there was mainly positive feedback from attendees, including comments such as “very, very insightful speaker”, “loved his talk, it was so encouraging also a great reminder”, “dynamic indeed, glad we came”, “simple yet powerful re-enforcement of the love of Christ in a marriage, very funny and impacting teaching” and “this was a brilliant session, thank you Deacon Harold for coming out to Australia to see us.”

Deacon Harold concluded his Australian tour with a full-day session at Mary, Queen of the Family Parish, Blacktown, and a presentation at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Baulkham Hills South on Sunday 8 September.

View images from the Faith in Marriage Seminar [here](#) or below.



MARY BRAZELL
