

American Deacon Conducts 'Combat Training' For Married Couples

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SINGAPORE – “Marriage is like a roller coaster with its ups and downs,” said Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers (photo) in his booming voice to his audience of mainly married couples. Everyone nodded in agreement. “But we cannot get out halfway!” came his punch line. Laughter followed this sober truth.

Deacon Harold was the keynote speaker at the public talk themed “Life is a battlefield. Conquer it with The Armour of Love” held May 23 at the Singapore Management University auditorium. The talk was organised by Family Life Society and Worldwide Marriage Encounter, Singapore. Two panel discussions on “Couple Relationship and Parenting Today” followed.

A straw poll done just before the talk indicated that participants were interested in learning more about communicating with their spouse and balancing work and family life.

Deacon Harold spoke about meeting a married couple’s emotional needs through affection, conversation and listening, and having recreational companionship.

“Have fun together – do things by yourselves as a couple without the kids and recreate that of courtship again,” quipped Deacon Harold to the young and senior couples present.

Speaking as a father of four children, Deacon Harold emphasised the importance of honesty and openness in relationship, and the role of the husband and father in the family.

To parents he advised: “The best gift you can give to your children is to love your spouse.” He reminded all spouses to be living examples of God’s testimony and love for their children to emulate.

Many in the audience described the talk as refreshing and motivating. A father of four took away this learning point: “Men, press the ‘save’ or ‘pause’ button when your wife or children want to talk to you. It’s important to give them your full attention no matter what programme you are watching.”

Some participants tagged along with the deacon to evening talks he gave at five parishes and at the Singapore Pastoral Institute as part of Celebrate Marriage 2010, organised by Worldwide Marriage Encounter, Singapore.

His talks focused on raising and educating children and teenagers in the Catholic faith, disciplining children, using parents’ love for each other as examples for their children, outlining the differences between father and mother roles, and emphasising the love for the Eucharist to young people. Throughout, he constantly urged parents to teach their children to fall in love deeply with Jesus and to be living examples of faith at home, the domestic church.

In his talks, Deacon Harold often drew examples from his own married life and views of the Church. He also discussed issues faced by young people today such as teen dating, premarital sex, abortion and embryonic stem cell research. He emphasised the Eucharistic adoration as key in major decision-making in one’s life.

Deacon Harold is a permanent deacon, ordained in November 2002 to the congregation of Portland, Oregon. He spends more than half his week on radio shows in the U.S., the Eternal Word Television Network and speaking in family life conferences around the world.

By Alan Yong



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