

Young Catholic Adults Find Theology On Tap At Sentosa

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Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers (left) listens to the concerns of two Catholics working with young adults in Singapore. Photo by Daniel Tay

SINGAPORE – A sunny Saturday morning at Sentosa attracted some 30 young adults for a “Theology on Tap” session at Samunar Restaurant, along Palawan Beach.

The Jul 18 session was organised by Praise@Work, a cross-parish Catholic charismatic prayer group for young working adults.

Despite the attraction of sun-kissed young men and women playing beach volleyball within sight from the restaurant, all eyes were on the stocky Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers, the keynote speaker from the Christ@Work Conference organised by

Praise@Work in 2005. This was his second time in Singapore.

At one point of the morning, Deacon Harold’s booming voice drew the attention of a couple of topless Caucasian men passing by. They stopped for a few minutes to listen, but declined an invitation to join the audience.

The talk cum networking session began with an hour-long introduction as each Catholic, mostly aged between 20 and 40 years, briefly shared their background, what they thought the Church was doing right, and how the Church needed to improve in reaching out to Catholics of this age group.

Deacon Harold explained that “Theology on Tap” was the U.S. church’s response to the crisis they faced where cradle Catholics left the Church after college and after formal catechism ended, a problem that the Singapore church is currently facing.

“Theology on Tap” involves bringing the faith to the young adults where they are – in pubs and bars – and helping them to reconnect the faith they know as head knowledge with the lives they live in the world and in Church.

Speaking to young adults has been a problem for the Church for a long time because for too long, “we have learned our faith as a subject in secondary school”, said Deacon Harold. “If we just learn the facts and figures of the faith, we have no connection with the life we live out everyday,” he said.

“The faith is a dynamic, passionate, life-giving relationship with God... What we have to do is [to] make the connection between the head and the heart, between the knowledge in the head and the faith in life,” he said.

To this end, he encouraged young adults to spend an hour each week in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, away from the noise that distracts us from God. “You can’t listen to the Word of God with an iPod in your ear,” he said.

“When you’re not afraid to live your faith in the world, that’s where you’re going to make the biggest difference in the world,” he urged, “but you have to know your faith” – not just the ‘what’, but also ‘why’, and what connection it has with us.

The first thing young people have to do in the pursuit of real happiness is “to desire Jesus more than anything else in your life”.

“When your hopes and desires are in communion with the will of God, then we can be free to be the person God wants us to be” which leads to true joy and happiness, he said.

Deacon Harold was in Singapore for one week and gave talks at the parishes of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Holy Spirit, St. Francis Xavier and St. Bernadette. He is the founder and director of Aurem Cordis, a Christian

evangelisation and apologetics organisation.

St. Teresa parishioner Jane Loo said that there should be more of such sessions to increase awareness of young adult groups in the diocese, as converts like herself can “easily lapse in the faith” if they do not join church ministries after getting baptised.

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