



Faith, Family, and the Choices That We Make

Contribution by Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers

Shortly after our twins were born, I spent one of my many sleepless nights thinking about how my life had changed since the day I met my wife. How I had abandoned the thought of entering religious life; how I moved across country, leaving the only home I had ever known on the East Coast of the United States; how entering into a life-long commitment of loving communion and intimacy in marriage had changed my relationship with God; and not really having an appreciation at how four young children can – all at the same time – exhaust me to the point of numbness, make me mad enough to pull out what little hair I have left, make me laugh until I cry, and fill me with so much love and joy that I can barely keep my heart in my chest.

A certain level of “fear” and “death” often accompanies this transformation. We fear because in order to be truly transfigured to Christ, we must abandon sin, which means removing all obstacles that prohibit us from loving God alone and making us vulnerable before Him. It means emptying ourselves so that God can fill us. It means exposing the weakest parts of who we are so that God can make us strong. It means becoming blind to the ways of this world so that Christ can lead us. It also means that we must die: die to our vices, our habits and idiosyncrasies, and our other inner secrets that we lie about and try to hide from God, our loved ones, and those around us. Living as a Christian adult means dying to ourselves so that we can rise to new life with Christ.

There is no question that the influence of secular thought has a profound influence on today’s culture. Many young adults are struggling to hold on to the Catholic belief in absolute truth and because they have a weak foundation in the faith, they are unable to see how their faith is connected to their life experience. Instead, our youth align themselves with a society that places itself and not Jesus Christ as the center of all reality and truth, so much so, that as adults many will become Christmas and Easter Catholics, or leave the Church altogether.

God’s Love Works Through Marriage and Family Life

Sometimes we have to look back before we can move forward. Looking back, we see that marriage and family life have their origins in that same love with which the Creator embraces each one of us made in His

image and likeness: a love that flows from the family of Persons in the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; a love that flows from the very heart of God Himself. This marriage and family relationship is so central to God’s love for us that He chose to be born and to grow up in a family, entering into human history with a mother and foster father. In a culture where privilege, wealth, and prestige meant everything, our Father in heaven showed us in the simple life of a housewife and carpenter that “the divine mystery of the Incarnation of the Word has an intimate connection with the human family” (Pope John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, 2). Through marriage and family life, God unites himself in a special way to each of us, for God Himself labored with human hands and loved with a human heart. The family is where Jesus learned the love, respect, and obedience that children must have for their parents, which was the first expression of His obedience to the will of the Father that would ultimately lead to our salvation.

All of this must be fostered in the home where a Catholic ethos are nurtured and instilled through family prayer. The home must embody a spirituality that enhances and promotes devotion and active participation in the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist.

Our Faith Frees Us to Love

As you think about what it means to be a young adult in today’s very secular world, your thoughts should not focus on how an academic degree will make you “set for life” according to the standards of the culture. Jesus warns us that we must “take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). Jesus wants us to be clear that we are not to confuse possessions with purpose, or equate the meaning of our lives with the size of our portfolio. The only bottom line that matters is the accounting that we must make before God at the end of our life, where God will not care about our net worth but rather how we had used the gift of our life to bring value to the lives of others.

As young Catholic adults, you must discover that the treasures in your life centers on the paradox of the Cross where God’s endless wealth is found in his self-giving and self-emptying love, which is the very opposite of the desire to possess everything and the hallmark of authentic freedom.

Choosing What Is True, Good, and Beautiful

Making the transition from youth to adulthood is a life-transforming experience and like young King Solomon in the Scriptures, you may feel overwhelmed by the responsibility that comes with being an adult. You will be faced with academic challenges at university or polytechnic; emotional challenges in a relationship; and spiritual challenges as you apply the faith that you have grown up with to your everyday lived experience. Your faith will be tested as you seek the path God has destined for your life. You will ask difficult questions and pursue meaningful answers, all under the watchful eye of family, friends, and Almighty God.

Our Lord Jesus, a descendent of Solomon, showed the people of Israel that genuine knowledge, true happiness, and lasting peace comes when we seek God first above all else. As a young adult, encountering authentic truth, goodness, and beauty must be your greatest desire as well. You will not find real Truth in stubbornly opposing the Church’s teaching of faith and morals. You will not find real goodness in a society that places “the self” at the center of all meaning and existence. You will not find real beauty by getting drunk

or high. You will not find what is true, good, and beautiful in using a member of the opposite sex as an object for pleasure and gratification.

Listening to God’s Voice

God’s invitation to love demands a response, and that response should not be a half-hearted, cafeteria Catholicism. Our response to the Gospel must be a free, faithful, and total commitment of ourselves in loving sacrifice and obedience to the will of God.

Truth will come when we persistently ask God for it. Truth will come when we love the Lord our God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. Truth will come when we ask God to know and to do His will – to help me be that person whom He created me to be, made in His image and likeness. In your prayers, knock, seek and ask. Converse with God just as you would with an intimate friend. Openly share with the Father of Mercy your sorrows and joys, your hopes and fears, your aspirations and dreams, for His love and His truth will never fail. When Truth does come, proclaim with great joy: “I love the Lord for He has heard the cry of my appeal; for He turned His ear to me in the day when I called Him” (Psalm 116).

Our Services

For Young Adults

The Celebration of Life Programme (COL)
 CHOICE
 Life Sparks

For Newly Weds and Couples-to-be ...

Catholic Engaged Encounter (CEE)
 Marriage Preparation Course (MPC)
 Natural Family Planning (NFP)
 Couples for Christ (CFC)
 Joyful Parenting (JP)

When you have been married for some time ...

Couple Empowerment Programme (CEP)
 Marriage Encounter (ME)
 School Family Education (SFE)

If faced with crisis or difficulties ...

Individual, Family & Marital Counselling
 Pregnancy Crisis Service (PCS)
 Retrouvaille
 Beginning Experience (BE)



Family Life Society
 Catholic Archdiocesan Education Centre
 Tel: 6488 0278 • www.familylife.sg

If you have a personal story to share on family matters or values, email to susie@familylife.sg

“THE ARMOUR OF LOVE” – A PUBLIC TALK

Event Details

Organiser: FAMILY LIFE SOCIETY with its Affiliate, WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER SINGAPORE

Date: Sunday, 23 May 2010, from 3.00 pm to 6.00 pm

Venue: DBS Auditorium, Shenton Way

Fees: \$15 per person or \$25 per couple.

Who Should Attend:

All married persons including couples who are starting out in their marriage and those with young children.

Synopsis of Keynote Talk: by Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers

What does it mean to love? True love becomes realized when husbands and wives seek and love what is true, good, and beautiful in each other. An examination of:

- the key elements of building lasting relationships
- major challenges faced by married couples today e.g. the pressure on the bread-winner to build his career and financial nest egg; when both partners are working, finding time for each other in spite of long working hours and overseas trips; fighting distractions in marriage; sharing responsibility in raising and nurturing children and looking after elderly or sick parents with little sibling support
- danger signs in communication

An exploration of:

- how to love your spouse and children even when they seem unlovable
- how to deal with recurring and enduring issues in marriage and in the family.

For more information and to register, visit: www.familylife.sg or www.marriage-encounter-sg.org