

Praying the Prodigals Back Home

by Mark Richards, St. Michael Catholic Community



Vernon Robertson, a Catholic Evangelist, spoke to 460 parents at the **Seminar of Hope, How to Pray for Your Sons, Daughters and Loved Ones** at St. Michael Catholic Community on January 29 and 30. The central theme of the talk was how to pray with power as we pray God's word into the lives of our loved ones. Some of the topics, key messages and scriptures covered by Vernon were:

- **How is your prayer life?** Vernon suggests we have a daily divine appointment with God. When we don't pray, we sacrifice what the Lord wants to give us for ourselves and through us for our loved ones. Make it a point to walk in forgiveness every day—unforgiveness is a cancer. We need to pray from, and with, our whole heart.
- **When good parents suffer, where is God?** Vernon asked us who was the greatest parent ever? The answer, of course, is God the Father. Yet his first two children did not turn out very well. Apart for the holy family of Mary, Joseph and Jesus, there was no perfect family - it is an illusion or myth. Vernon suggests we ask God to remove any guilt or self-condemnation we may feel about our families. With our cooperation, God can bring forth tremendous blessings and transformation from our sufferings. He walks with us in our suffering and will give us peace in our heart [Genesis – story of Adam and Eve].
- **A look at how Jesus prayed.** We looked at the prayer life of Jesus in the scriptures. We need to appreciate the intimacy of Jesus' relationship with the Father, so that we can pray like Him and also know the Father in the same intimate way. Each of us is a much beloved son or daughter of God. So pray with praise, thanksgiving and confidence to our loving Father. Be (spend time) with God before you do for God. Jesus is always looking for our faith and will honour it. Pray persistently and with another person whenever possible. We should not put a stopwatch on God—waiting for our prayers to be answered. Some of our prayers might not be answered until after our death, as was the case when Jesus prayed for Peter. More will happen from our prayer life than any other action we can take.
- **When parents came to Jesus on behalf of their children, what happened?** We examined the parent's request, the child's condition, and Jesus' response. We were asked to consider the condition of our own children, in light of the condition of the children presented to Jesus in the scriptures. We should have an expectancy that Jesus can do the same for our children [Matthew 15:21-28, Matthew 17:14-21, Luke 7:11-15].

- **Praying God's words into the lives of your loved ones.** Vernon directed us to a number of specific prayers in scripture to pray into the lives of our loved ones. As we pray these prayers, we will grow in faith as we hear ourselves pray God's word; we will increase in hope; and we will have peace in our hearts [Ephesians 1:17-19, Ephesians 3:16:21, Philippians 1:9-10, Colossian 1:9-11, Philippians 4:4-9].

Participants said that Vernon is an outstanding and very knowledgeable Spirit-led speaker. People felt his message of hope transformed their hearts and believe that in time, it will lead to a transformation in the hearts of their loved ones. Vernon's dry, tongue in cheek Scottish humour and willingness to say it "as it is" was appreciated. The participant manual is felt to be an excellent resource for use in praying more effectively for our loved ones. St. Michael Catholic Community received praise for its warm hospitality, organization and outreach.

Testimonials received from participants speak to the impact of the Seminar of Hope on lives:

- "It's a miracle... my husband didn't want to come at first and now he is spending an hour a day in the Word."
- "At 9:45 a.m. on the Saturday, I decided to entrust my children to the Lord."
- "I now realize that spiritual healing must begin first in my life and then in the lives of my loved ones."
- "I felt God telling me: I love you and will take care of you and your loved ones... trust me."
- "The seminar gave me realistic strategies for prayer, not only for my children but for my entire family... I am now more hopeful."
- "It was so practical... so well explained and deeply rooted in scripture."

If you are interested in hosting a free Seminar of Hope in your parish, please contact Vernon Robertson by phone at (604) 460-0114 or e-mail vernon@seminarofhope.org

"Without a doubt, the Holy Spirit powerfully uses the Seminar of Hope as a channel of healing and reconciliation for people from all walks of life. Vernon's "down to earth" approach to making not only the living Word, but also the Sacraments of the Church relative to moms and dads—and indeed to anyone who desires to lead a loved one closer to Christ—is refreshing and challenging."

Fr. Jerome Lavigne, St. Michael Catholic Community