

Courage to be a "Man of Faith"

2017 Called to Be Holy Men's Conference

By Jayne L. Bury, Communications Coordinator, Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton

January 25, 2018: "This is my first time and I will definitely do it again." So noted a participant in his evaluation of the *2017 Called to Be Holy Men's Conference*. The event enabled presenters like a former biker to share their enthusiasm, experiences and inspiration about being men of faith in today's secular society.

Fr. Theodosy Kraychuk once led the unsavoury biker's life. Like the prodigal son, he noted in his biography, he abandoned his Catholic faith for the life of a biker on the move, with "a secularist philosophy of life, searching for happiness in the material pleasures of the world."



*Presenter Fr. Teodosy Kraychuk:
The Mystery of Confession*
-:Photo by Fr. Mike Bombak

Today he is a hieromonk (priest-monk) living a traditional Eastern monastic life at the Ukrainian Catholic Monastic Skete (monastic community) of the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-creating Cross, near Myrnam, Alberta.

"After eating my fill of emptiness," he explains, "I was awakened to the meaninglessness of life without God and, by divine grace, was led back to life in Christ and His Holy Church." Repentance brought him back to God's fold.

In his presentation, Father Theodosy emphasized the importance of repentance for sins, of confession. Today a major

crisis in our society is the loss of a sense of sin, he noted, yet God calls all humankind to repentance. Humanity needs to be like the prodigal son who, with "broken and humbled heart", confessed his sins and came home.

Providing participants with the booklet for their personal future use, Father Theodosy led conference attendees through "A Communal Service of the Sacramental Mystery of Repentance."

A Moleben on Friday, a Divine Liturgy celebrated by V. Rev. Stephen Wojcichowsky, Chancellor and Vicar General, on Saturday, and opportunities for confession throughout the weekend allowed participants to share not only in a social fellowship, but also a spiritual one of praying together and responding to God's call.

Stephen Defer, Life and Family coordinator for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton, encouraged men to live by the words in the Bible. He said that simply opening the Bible randomly usually takes him to a reading that responds to his personal need at that moment in his life.

Psalm 95, "A call to worship and obedience" is his favourite prayer, he added, because it directs the reader to all that is needed to live according to God's will.



Mike Landry Presentation
:Photo by Fr. Mike Bombak



Presenters Jamie Hodgson and Ave Spratt: Faith in the Workplace; It Takes Courage

-:Photo by Fr. Mike Bombak

In one of several breakout sessions, Jamie Hodgson and Ave Spratt spoke on "Faith in the Workplace, It Takes Courage" and Mike Landry on courageous biblical figures that today's men can emulate.

Held at the Providence Renewal Centre in Edmonton from Friday, November 17 to Saturday, November 18, 2017, the conference sessions "spoke to the hearts of men of all ages [*from their 20s to the 70s*] and encouraged them to be the man that God is calling them to be."

An alarming realization came for participants during the panel discussion: pornography is the new drug and the greatest cause of the destruction of men

in today's society. Ave Spratt and Jamie Hodgson shocked participants with an anecdote about a salesman who became visually terrifying to them personally when confronted with his addiction to, and participation in, child

pornography. His eyes lit up, projecting pure evil, as he made eye contact with them. Neither had ever experienced anything so disturbing before.

Twenty-six men took advantage of the opportunity to attend the 2017 conference, an increase from 19 in 2016.

Feedback on the conference suggested that attendees found the sessions very enlightening. They were inspired by the enthusiasm of high quality speakers, themselves husbands, fathers, community volunteers, a monk, and a youth minister who have experienced, and in some cases continue to experience, everyday life similar to that of conference participants.

Stephen Defer is a former military man, a holder of engineering and Master of Divinity degrees. Ave Spratt and Jamie Hodgson are entrepreneurs and active community volunteers and youth minister Mike Landry provides chaplaincy to the Evergreen Catholic Schools district.

The sessions were interesting and discussions meaningful. They gave participants the "opportunity to spend time away and focus on strengthening their Christian manhood."



-:Photo by Fr. Mike Bombak

The positive feedback about the 2017 conference has encouraged the Eparchy to organize another conference, scheduled for November 2nd and 3rd, 2018 at the Providence Centre.

"In today's culture, it takes courage to be a man of faith no matter what stage of life you are at."

Mark November 2nd and 3rd, 2018 in your calendar. Plan to attend the conference and answer the call to be holy.