



PHOTO BY DOUGLAS KAUF

Bishop David Zubik raises the Blessed Sacrament during Benediction on Jan. 24 at the Catholic Men's Fellowship holy hour.

Ex-football player urges men to welcome God and serve his people

Bishop Zubik expresses gratitude for those at holy hour

By **CHUCK MOODY**
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Danny Abramowicz, former NFL All-Pro wide receiver, coach and broadcaster who now is involved in full-time ministry outreach to Catholic men nationally, told a gathering sponsored by the Catholic Men's Fellowship of Pittsburgh that Jesus Christ is calling them personally.

"We have to establish a personal relationship with Jesus Christ," said Abramowicz, who is the co-host of "Crossing the Goal," a cable television series on the Eternal Word Television Network. "If you don't have that, men, you won't hang in there for the long haul."

Abramowicz was the guest speaker Jan. 24 at St. Paul Seminary in Crafton following a holy hour presided by Bishop David Zubik.

"We're all looking for the 'McDonald's approach,' the 'quickie,'" Abramowicz said. "It's not a 'quickie.' It's a long haul. Each and every one of us must open that door to our God and tell him to come in. 'You're welcome in. I love you, Lord. Lord, let me be one of the workers, the laborers in your harvest, for your work, for your kingdom.' Not sit back like a bunch of wimps."

Abramowicz, who played from 1967 through 1974 for the New

Orleans Saints and San Francisco 49ers, asked the men if they had "a fire in your stomach burning for your faith?"

"If you don't have that, you better look at yourself," he said. "Examine your conscience before the Lord at the Eucharist. Go before him. 'Lord, I want to be with you. I want to serve.' What do you think he's going to tell you, 'no?' You've got to ask him. He'll tell you."

"Crossing the Goal" uses a sports show format to encourage men to get into spiritual shape. The co-hosts are Peter Herbeck, vice president of Renewal Ministries, Curtis Martin, founder of the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, and Brian Patrick, a professional broadcaster. The show provides "real solutions to the spiritual challenges men face," said Abramowicz, who lives in Steubenville, Ohio.

Men's ministry is "the most difficult, the most frustrating," Abramowicz said.

"It will wear you out," he said. "It's hard to reach men today, but it's the most important thing you have. It takes patience, purpose, perseverance and love for the long haul."

"You need to ask yourself right now, 'Am I ready to fight?' If you say 'yes,' then you've got to say 'here I am, Lord. I come to you for your will.' If you want to do this, how great this would be to hear this, when the Lord says to you, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'"

Bishop Zubik offered the men in attendance "a very sincere expression of gratitude on my part for all of you guys being here today."

"You can never underestimate the power of your presence as men of faith," the bishop said. "Of the effect that you have on each other at a gathering like this, but more importantly the influence that you have on the people with whom you work, on the families whom you love and all who see you and see me. They all are able to see in each of us, first and foremost, our belief sincerely in Jesus Christ."

During his homily, Bishop Zubik told the story of him as a boy growing up in Ambridge in 1957 when Pope John XXIII was elected pope. It was the first time in the bishop's lifetime that a pope had been elected, and it made a lasting impression on his life, he said.

"My brothers, Jesus today through each one of us, you and me, calls us to be people of dreams," Bishop Zubik said. "People who bring forth to the world not our own dreams of power and prestige and popularity, but men who are willing to stand up for and reflect the dreams that are, in fact, of Jesus Christ. I am so very proud of you because of believing in the dream that is, in fact, that of Jesus."

Bishop Zubik told the men they were called to be like Popes John XXIII and John Paul II, and Martin Luther King Jr.

"Because all three had dreams that were connected with Jesus himself," he said.

Fathers should look to Jesus

MANILA, Philippines (CNS) — The president of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum expressed concern that weakened masculinity around the world is preventing people from grasping Jesus' teaching about his Father.

"Today, the self-understanding of manhood and especially fatherhood is in crisis," said Cardinal Paul Cordes during a Jan. 23 presentation at the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas.

The Asian church news agency UCA News reported the German cardinal, who heads the council responsible for coordinating charitable efforts, spoke after officials of the pontifical university conferred on him an honorary doctorate in sacred theology.

Cardinal Cordes cited reports and surveys documenting "weakened male identity."

One of the reports said 24 million children in the United States live in a home without a father. Cardinal Cordes said that figure was 10 million in the 1960s, according to UCA News.

The report found that, compared to boys who live with their father, boys from father-

less homes are twice as likely to end up in prison, more likely to drop out or be expelled from school, and account for 63 percent of youth suicides and 90 percent of youths who run away from home.

In Europe, the cardinal said, recent trends also "work to diminish masculinity."

Cardinal Cordes offered Jesus Christ's relationship with God the Father as a model for father-son relationships. Jesus spoke with God as a child, in a simple way, intimate and familiar, he said. "Abba," which the cardinal translated as "papa" or "dear daddy" in today's understanding of language, reveals the most affectionate center of Jesus' relationship with God, said the cardinal.

However, he also noted the role of the father as the person who orients and directs the child and contributes to the child's growth in goodness even when it causes the child unpleasantness. Men who are not necessarily biological fathers perform that spiritual fathering role in developing children in ethics and values.