

Defending the faith: It's not brain surgery

By Jessica Langdon
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KANSAS CITY, Kan. — By day, Dr. Paul Camarata undertakes the most critical of operations as a leading neurosurgeon in the Kansas City area.

But around the clock, the parishioner of Church of the Nativity in Leawood is also committed to another vital mission: defending, explaining and sharing his Catholic faith.

He looks forward to delving deeper into its riches at the Envoy Institute's Catholic Apologetics Academy coming May 1-4 at Savior Pastoral Center in Kansas City, Kan.

"Apologetics" is a funny word, he said, because it doesn't really have anything to do with what it probably sounds like to many people. It's not about being sorry.

Instead, the word comes from the Greek "apologia," meaning to speak in defense of something.

"It's really speaking in defense of the faith," said Camarata. "We're being called more and more to defend the faith in the workplace, with our friends."

So, to him, his practice of neurosurgery goes hand in hand with Catholic apologetics — and that can be the case regardless of someone's profession.

Camarata, always active in his faith, felt drawn to study it more deeply after the death of Pope John Paul II, whom he and his wife greatly admired.

Eventually, he began podcasting, creating the widely popular "Saint-Cast."

He felt himself particularly connected to saints who were — like him — physicians.

He was particularly touched by the account Archbishop Charles Chaput, now with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, but previously archbishop of Denver, gave of the martyr Franz Jagerstatter a few years ago.

"The gist of the story was you can't live a double life," said Camarata, explaining the story of the young man who had become a devout Catholic and ultimately decided he could not reconcile joining the German army with his faith.

"You can't go to church on Sunday and keep your faith there and go to work during the week and keep your faith silent and not let it impact your work or influence your work," said Camarata. "And this is what Franz Jagerstatter finally decided, and was killed for it in Nazi Germany."

And as he delved deeper into his own faith, Camarata found that issue



PHOTO COURTESY OF PATRICK MADRID

Peter Kreeft, professor of philosophy at Boston College and the author of more than 70 books, including "Handbook of Catholic Apologetics," speaks at the Envoy Institute's Catholic Apologetics Academy last year at Benedictine University in Mesa, Ariz.

hitting ever closer to home.

Questions come up for Catholics, believes Camarata, whether they're at work, among friends, or maybe talking to an adult son or daughter who has moved away from the faith.

That's why he's helped bring the academy to the Kansas City area, where participants will hear from leading Catholic apologists like Patrick Madrid, president of the Envoy Institute, Dr. Peter Kreeft, and Kenneth Hensley.

In explaining apologetics, Madrid pointed to Chapter 3, Verses 15-16, of the First Letter of Peter, which urges Christians to "always be

ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for the hope that is in you, but do it with gentleness and respect."

"How you communicate the message to people is almost as important as the information that you're giving them," agreed Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann, who encourages local Catholics to attend the academy.

He spoke with Madrid on his podcast, "The Shepherd's Voice."

"More and more, we're living in a culture that really poses a lot of challenging questions, I think, to Catholics and people of faith in general,"

said the archbishop.

He believes it's important for Catholics to know their faith for themselves, but also to share the faith with others through answers to questions.

"I think it's a tremendous opportunity," he said of the apologetics academy, "because . . . even though people may not be doing formal evangelization, we all have people in our families or in our networks that we talk [with] about faith [that] sometimes don't understand what we believe as Catholics."

The academy is certainly suited to priests, deacons and seminarians, said Madrid, but the vast majority of people who attend the sessions are laypeople.

It's for anyone who wants to take his or her knowledge of the faith to a deeper level, he said.

Apologetics isn't about being on the defensive or wagging fingers, but rather changing the dynamic, spotting fallacies and engaging people in discussions by asking them questions.

"They're very charitable in their dealings with people of other faiths and explaining their Catholicism to them and why they do the things they do," said Camarata.

Camarata is especially pleased that the setting of the Kansas City area event will allow for Masses and other spiritual opportunities.

"A weekend like this will be an incredible start to being able to answer a lot of questions," said Camarata. "It will lead you to delve further and read more."

Catholic Apologetics Academy

When: May 1-4; begins at 6 p.m. on May 1 and ends at noon on May 4.

Where: Savior Pastoral Center, Kansas City, Kan.

Tuition: \$355

For more details or to register, visit the website at: www.catholicapologeticsacademy.com. Find the event information under "Events & Registration."

FAQS

Patrick Madrid, president of the Envoy Institute, addressed several questions he is frequently asked about the academy.

- Is this going to be over my head?

"The answer is no — no matter what your background is, no matter what you do for a living or how old you are," said Madrid. The workshop starts with the basics and builds up.

"We've never, ever, ever had anybody say, 'This was over my head,'" he said.

- Will it really be worth my time?

"What value should we put on the call Jesus gives us to preach and teach the faith, to share our faith with others?" said Madrid. "You'll get more than your money's worth if that's important to you to be an effective apostle for Jesus."

- Is it going to be boring?

"I guarantee people are going to be exhilarated — riveted — by the faculty," said Madrid. He considers Dr. Peter Kreeft today's C.S. Lewis.

Madrid said he often hears the phrase "life-changing" in the comments people give after an academy ends. "They're going to laugh, they're going to learn," he said. "It's not all work and no play."



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