



Saint Viator Speakers Urge Parents to Model Service

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The panelists discuss how they were called to their vocations. From left to right: the Rev. Scott Donahue, Mary Beth Beiersdorf and Illinois State Sen. Matt Murphy.

Those in the audience at Saint Viator's 50th anniversary Speaker Series will never look at their feet in the same way again.

Monsignor Kenneth Velo delivered an inspiring keynote address last week at the final installment of the speaker series that addressed "Awakening the Servant in Our Young Men and Women."

In it, he urged audience members to look at their feet, as he drew upon the Biblical story of Jesus humbling himself to wash the feet of his disciples.

"Everyone has feet," he said. "Wash their feet."

In his 30-minute speech, he focused on modeling compassion in the home rather than to give specific directions on how to ignite service in young people.

"We can only teach by example," Velo said. "If we want to enliven the spirit in us and awaken the spirit in others, example is the only way."

Velo urged parents be intentional about the topic of service in their dinner-table conversations and to promote generosity, forgiveness, kindness, courage, and simply being present for others.

"I can honestly say that my happiest days, after 38 years as a priest, were when I forgot about myself and thought about serving others," Velo said.

A panel of speakers joined Velo, including Will and Mary Beth Beiersdorf, founders of SALUTE, Inc. which supports military families across the country; the Rev. Scott Donahue, president and CEO of Mercy Home for Boys & Girls; Illinois State Sen. Matt Murphy; and Sean Sanford, president of Center for FaithJustice in New Jersey.

Both Donahue and Murphy are Saint Viator graduates. They talked about the role their education played in their life's work, and how compassion and service have guided them.

"It was my early years at Saint Viator and my life experiences that led me to the priesthood and to Mercy Home," Donahue said. "It has really shaped me."

The Rev. Corey Brost, C.S.V., vice president for mission effectiveness at Saint Viator, welcomed guests to the presentation, calling the panelists, "difference-makers."

"There is no more important topic than the one we discuss tonight," Brost said. "Our students have remarkable gifts, and those that suffer need to have those gifts shared."

John Aiello, a Saint Viator graduate and founder of SAVO, moderated the discussion. He was part of the committee that designed the speakers series as a way to engage people in the community to think deeply about issues facing students.

"For the last 50 years, Saint Viator has been an important influence in the Northwest suburbs," Aiello said. "It now positions itself as leading the way into the future and encouraging conversation about what is truly important."