

King's Men coming to Greensburg, SVC

BY MARYANN GOGNIAT
EIDEMILLER

For The Bulletin

The King's Men are coming to the Latrobe area this weekend to share their message that men are called to grow in spirit and virtue and to put their faith into action.

First stop is on Friday night at the campus ministry lounge at St. Vincent College where co-founders Mark Houck and Damián Wargo will speak to students about what it means to be a man of faith, to live in strength and to strive for holiness. On Saturday morning, they will present a program, "Men: The Backbone of the Church," to the Greensburg chapter of the Catholic Men's Fellowship, which meets weekly at Panera's, on Route 30 near Greensburg.

On Saturday afternoon, they will lead a peaceful demonstration at the adult book store on Route 30 in Unity Township.

"There is a challenge for young men to live a moral life, and society has not challenged men to be leaders, protectors and providers for their wives and families," said the Rev. Boniface Hicks, OSB, of St. Vincent Seminary, who arranged the program at the college, and who is familiar with King's Men, named for Christ the King.

The group was founded as Real Men four years ago after Houck and Wargo heard noted Catholic theologian Christopher West teach on Pope John Paul II's "Theology of the Body," a document that celebrates the sacredness of the human body.

"We said that we didn't just want to hear about this and feel good that this was the truth," Wargo said. "We wanted to try to

live it."

In doing so, he added, they realized that there was "a real crisis in masculinity."

One of their goals was to fight against pornography, and when they became The King's Men in August 2006, their activism took on the name of the No More Porn Tour.

Houck, who has a background in teaching and counseling, is the full-time president. Wargo, director of operations, is a native of Altoona and studied at Duquesne University, in Pittsburgh. He teaches at a Catholic high school for young men in Philadelphia.

The King's Men was founded and is most active in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and has expanded membership to surrounding areas and states. Houck and Wargo present programs on the East Coast and beyond.

The members form a fellowship of prayer and support in their faith journeys and share accountability for their actions. Among the challenges they face, the founders said, is a society that does not value the importance of the masculine role, a deficit that they blame on "a culture of fatherlessness."

"Masculinity really needs to be bestowed upon a man from his father, and if not his father, from some other man," Wargo said. "But many fathers are absent physically and even absent emotionally and spiritually. That's just the start of it. If you would ask them what their calling is to be a man, few of them would answer that it is to be a leader, protector and provider, yet all men have it in them to be that."

One of the fallout, he said, is that in a culture when "the innocent are being exploited, a lot of men are sitting on their hands and doing nothing about it."

Pornography is one of the group's major concerns and fighting it is one of their 12 Core Values, one of which states: "We believe that pornography hurts families, destroys marriages and victimizes women and children, whom, we as men, must defend, protect and serve."

According to Wargo, pornography is a \$99-billion industry worldwide, made most easily accessible through the Internet.

"Women certainly collaborate in (making) pornography, but I think any woman would be happy to follow a man who would say, 'I don't want to abuse you and use you for your body alone,'" he said. "But sadly, there is so much pressure put on girls to represent themselves as sex objects that they come to think of this as normal. There is culpability on both sides, but men need to be the ones

to stand up and say 'No, I am not going to use a woman. I am a man of integrity, not a man who will abuse a woman.'"

Houck notes that it's difficult to grow up without being exposed to pornography, and the story of the addict is usually the same.

"Maybe they never knew the true meaning of sex, or were curious and just started to look at the father's *Playboy* magazine or found a swimsuit issue," he said. "It's a very powerful thing and makes you want more. It's usually progressive and moves onto videos and the Internet, then to acting out by going to strip clubs. There's always something new. The pornographers know very clearly what they are doing, so it really sucks in a lot of men, breaks up a lot of relationships and does a lot of damage to a man. It can be hard to love when they are looking at pornography and see women as objects for their own gratification."

Houck said that he has seen anecdotal evidence that addiction to drugs, which can be overcome when the brain chemistry is restored, is easier to kick than addiction to pornography, which "stays in the brain" with indelible images.

"A man may not look at pornography for the rest of his life, but he still has these 'tapes' that are in his head," he said. "So it's different than the typical addict, but it's a struggle that can be overcome. In therapy, you have to get at the (original) wound."

The program will start at 8 p.m. in the campus ministry lounge at St. Vincent College. The Catholic Men's Fellowship meets at 7 a.m. at Panera's and is open to men of all faiths. Women also are welcome at the peaceful demonstration from 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday at the adult book store on Route 30, near the college.