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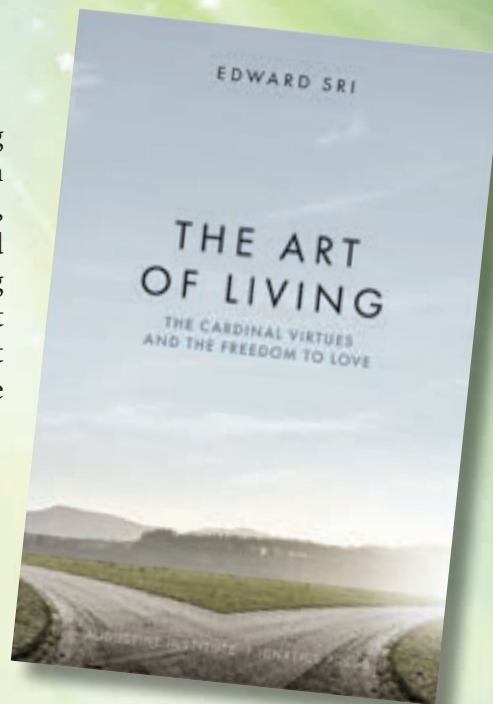
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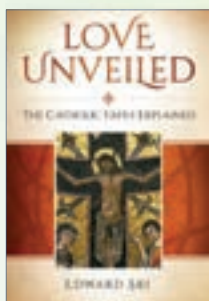
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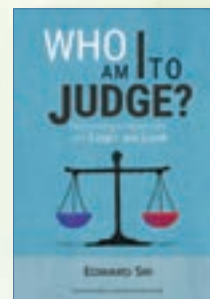
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By Deacon Dominic Cerrato, Ph.D.

# A Revelation of Love

## *Entering Thanksgiving and Christmas with prayerful intentionality*

Sometimes two things seem to come together that, from all outward appearances, have almost nothing to do with one another. Take, for example, Thanksgiving and Christmas. To be sure, they occur near the same time of year, but for very different reasons; one to commemorate the pilgrims' gratitude to God who saw them through a difficult winter, and the other for the gift of God in Jesus Christ.

In both cases, what is at the core of these holidays is God, albeit from different perspectives with different intensities. In the case of Thanksgiving, it was something that God gave the pilgrims to survive harsh conditions in a foreign land, and in the case of Christmas, it was God himself in Christ Jesus.

Thought of this way, Thanksgiving and Christmas form a natural progression of sorts. One reveals divine providence, and in the other, the one whose providence is divine. In each case, and in their own way, they are meant to be ways in which we encounter and re-encounter Our Lord by entering into these holidays with prayerful intentionality.

With respect to our diaconate, the progression found from Thanksgiving to Christmas can be both instructive and inspiring. This is particularly true when we reflect on how a gift, given in genuine love, reveals the giver.

When we give a gift to someone we love, we do so with great care as it represents a token of our relationship. The more intimate the relationship, the more intimate the gift.

Thus, for example, when we court another, we may give gifts such as flowers and chocolate. As the relationship increases in intimacy, the gifts become more precious.

At some point, it may progress to include an engagement ring that signifies an even deeper gift to come, the exchange of self at the altar.

Likewise, Thanksgiving and Christmas, though celebrated chronologically out of order (Christmas came first) reveal none-

theless, a kind of order of progression. God gives us something, such as the Law of the Old Testament, and then, as the relationship increases in intimacy on our part, he gives himself — first through the Incarnation, and then through his passion, death and resurrection.

This progression has broad applications in the Christian life and, in particular, to those called to ecclesial service through the diaconate.

Initially, we might be tempted to view the exercise of our ministry as “gifts” we give others, as things we do for their sake. While this is certainly true, it is the first truth in a progression that, with grace, reveals an even greater truth.

Diaconal ministry is not simply something we give, things we do, but someone we give, our very selves.

This imbues our ministry with a Christocentric quality because it enables us to incarnate, in ourselves, Christ the Servant, the very one to whom we were configured on the day of our ordination.

As we celebrate these holidays, let us intentionally and prayerfully reflect upon their meaning not only for the whole of Christianity but for our diaconate as well. Indeed, as we rejoice in the gift we've received at baptism and ordination, let us be filled with such gratitude that we give thanks (Thanksgiving) such that we incarnate the living God revealing him in our presence (Christmas).

May you and your families have a blessed Thanksgiving and a joyous Christmas. **TD**

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# The Deacon

Serving deacons as they serve the Church

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## CARA Report Analyzes Deacon Candidates

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) released a statistical overview of Catholic deacons' formation in the United States on Sept. 7. The study, completed in July, indicates a slight decline of 50 in the 2,105 candidates enrolled during the 2020-21 academic year. But the good news is the number of permanent deacons has remained steady in recent years after steady growth with ordinations since 1972.

Nearly half, 45% of candidates, were in their 50s and 33% were age 60 or older.

The report also indicated: 95% were married; 2% were single, never married; 2% were widowed or divorced.

The United States had 159 formation programs, an additional 15 programs listed as "most likely to exist," and 35 programs had no candidates in formation in the 2020-21 academic year.



**18,075**

Permanent deacons in the United States reported by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)



**97%**

Of the world's permanent deacons live in the Americas and Europe according to CARA's research

## USCCB Releases Updated National Directory

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has released the second edition of the "National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States" (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, \$21.95), the first update since November 2004.

The directory outlines the guidelines and directives used by dioceses in preparing or updating a diaconate program and formulating policies for the ministry and life of deacons.

Reflecting upon the wisdom of a broad spectrum of deacons and their formators, the directory's focus is on the identity of the deacon as a "living icon of Christ the Servant within the Church," and a minister of Word, liturgy and charity in the community. For new and seasoned deacons, the directory can be a source of reflection and strengthen their call and ministry in the Church.

The book also includes the norms required to take effect June 9, 2022, and were developed by the USCCB's Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations (CCLV).

Bishop James F. Checchio of Metuchen, New Jersey, who serves as chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, said: "I am grateful for the good work of the CCLV committee that has led to the publication of the updated National Directory. This document will serve as an instrumental resource for dioceses as they work to strengthen their permanent diaconate programs. It is my hope that permanent deacons and those who accompany them will be encouraged by the new edition of the directory and be inspired to continue in their faithful service to the Church in imitation of Christ the Servant."

Data was collected by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University.

The directory is available for purchase at the USCCB store at [www.usccb.org/resources](http://www.usccb.org/resources).





Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Texas, ordains 17 permanent deacons. Courtesy photo

## Dioceses Across the Nation Ordain Permanent Deacons

Although a recent CARA (the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate) report announced a decline in the number of permanent deacons across the United States, dioceses continue to ordain large numbers of deacons.

Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Texas, ordained 17 men as permanent deacons on Aug. 6 at St. Mark Catholic Church.

Bishop William Koenig of Wilmington, Delaware, ordained 15 permanent deacons at St. Joseph's Church in Middletown, Delaware, on Aug. 7.

On Aug. 14, Bishop Michael G. Duca of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, ordained six men as deacons at St. Joseph Cathedral.

On Aug. 21, Bishop Salvatore R. Matano ordained Brian Mizzone to the permanent diaconate at Sacred Heart Cathedral at Rochester, New York. The bishop also ordained a transitional deacon at the Mass.



Bishop William Koenig prays over 15 men who were ordained to the diaconate on Aug. 7, 2021, at St. Joseph Church in Middletown, Delaware. TheDialog.org

*"It's a beautiful thing that they brought the in-person Masses back. People needed it; the parishes needed it. **The children of God needed it.**"*

— Deacon Michael Chirichella of the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York, describing the return of the faithful to daily Mass in Manhattan

*"Good times or bad, **God has always been there for us.**"*

— Deacon John Churchill, who with his wife, Genevieve, received the 34th annual African American Catholic Leadership Award in the Archdiocese of Louisville, Kentucky, on Aug. 14

*"Once the gravity goes, you have no control. You just go wherever. They kept saying that if you're going right, you just continue to go right. Because if you panic and **you try to control where you're going, you just spin, and you're totally out of control.**"*

— Deacon Gary Nosacek of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in an interview with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. The deacon became the first Catholic clergy to experience weightlessness in a zero-gravity flight above Las Vegas on July 11.



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# PRAY

THE STORY OF PATRICK PEYTON

# What are some of the ways a deacon can bear witness to the sanctity of life?

“**A**side from relentlessly advocating for life from conception to natural death, deacons should do their best to always be seen as disciples of joy! Take St. Teresa of Ávila, who despite the many hardships she faced while reforming the Carmelite order was purported to have said: ‘From sour-faced saints, good Lord, deliver us!’ Therefore, in promoting the sanctity of life, deacons must rail against evil and death-promoting while simultaneously seeking out and encouraging good and life-giving in people and things because advocacy for the good promotes the sanctity of life!”

— **Deacon Ernest Scrivani, T.O. Carm.**, Bloomfield, Connecticut

“I was born in the winter of 1955, too early, too sick and too small. I stayed in the hospital until the medical doctors could do no more. They handed me to my mother and told her it was best for the baby to die at home. I became a life-long witness to the sanctity of life.”

— **Deacon Peter A Robinson**  
Joliet, Illinois

“We bless children who come to Communion but are not yet of age. Do we also bless the babies in the womb when mom comes up for Communion? I do, and moms are very grateful.”

— **Deacon John Heithaus**  
St. Louis, Missouri

“Simply by showing care and love to all. The marginalized, the elderly, the dying and the unborn all need the attention of the deacon. The deacon must be an advocate for all.”

— **Deacon Peter Cistaro**  
Parsippany, New Jersey

“**T**he sanctity of life isn’t something we deacons do in some ways. It is our foundation. *Evangelium Vitae* states that we are ‘called to proclaim to the people of all times this “Gospel.” The Gospel of God’s love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel.’”

— **Deacon Chris Wickern**, Jefferson City, Missouri

“Deacons can witness the sanctity of life by how we listen to others. Everyone has a past, has brokenness and scars from their journey up to and including today. Everyone wants to be heard and know someone cares. Jesus listened first and then responded to the needs of those who came to him. Be like Christ and listen with a loving heart.”

— **Deacon Bob Mayo**  
St. Louis, Missouri

“So often I hear, ‘Pro-lifers only care about the baby before it’s born, and they never care about the mother.’ This overlooks all the good work that crisis pregnancy centers do. Offering diapers, clothes, car seats, parenting classes, help with navigating all the aid programs that are available. Deacons really need to talk up the work that happens.”

— **Deacon Gary Nosacek**  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

## NEXT QUESTION:

What are some of the ways a deacon can better relate to his pastor?

**You can offer your feedback (100 words or less) via [thedeacon@osv.com](mailto:thedeacon@osv.com), or on Facebook by searching “The Deacon.” Selected answers to this question will appear in the January/February 2022 issue.**

# When Others Drive Us Crazy

*Building the confidence to resist vice and cooperate with virtue in ourselves and others*

**By Father Kenneth G. Davis, OFM Conv.**

A recent study by Microsoft claims that with the advent of the smartphone a young person's typical attention span is now one second shorter than that of a goldfish.

So, if you're already wondering how this essay ends, that means the goldfish won!

However, other studies have long indicated that when it comes to regarding the opposite sex, these same young adults persevere like a seven-year cicada. Moreover, when it comes to video games, some can concentrate so long that, like Captain America, they enter a kind of suspended animation. But instead of awakening as a vital youngster, they only wake (between nodding off) with worn eyes and eroded joints once solely typical of their grandparents.

For all preachers, but perhaps especially deacons who are also parents, this poses a question: Why is it that when it comes to vice we all have the patience of Job, but when it comes to virtue we're as impatient as Jonah? How might deacons better understand vice and virtue in daily life?

**Good Draws Us**

I found a helpful guide on a cassette tape so long ago that, unfortunately, I cannot remember enough to credit the authors. However, they made an alliterative distinction that I've always remembered: While evil drives us, good draws us. Good, like the true, the beautiful and the loving, always draws us and calls us, but never controls us. Good entreats with love; ap-

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*While evil drives us, good draws us.  
Good, like the true, the beautiful  
and the loving, always draws us and  
calls us, but never controls us.*

---

peals with truth; and attracts with beauty. Evil, however, entices with temptation, deceives with manipulation and finally imprisons through habituation. Good, like God, draws us while always respecting and ever increasing our freedom. But evil always drives us like slaves, ever decreasing our freedom by slowly habituating us to vices that become restrictive, compulsive and addictive.

Consider the following examples of virtues that draw us into freedom, and the

attendant opposite vices that drive us into oppression. As you do so, consider the corresponding biblical figures that you may have found difficult to understand and what was driving them to drive others crazy, as well as how God's grace finally freed them from vice and for virtue.

For example, the same person may be drawn to the virtue of justice, and yet when challenged driven to self-righteousness.

Think of the apostle Paul, who went from imprisoning Christians to being imprisoned for Christ. Another person may be drawn to express his own uniqueness, which can also drive him to endless selfies.

Ponder the patriarch Joseph who extolled himself as he recounted a dream to his brothers all the while dressed

in his distinctively colored cloak. Later, that same unique gift endeared him to the Pharaoh, thus empowering him to help his relatives.

Or someone might be drawn to the cool clarity of reason, only to find himself driven into an ivory tower of rationalization. Does doubting Thomas come to mind? However, a pious tradition in India holds that later it was Thomas who believed the empty tomb of the Assumed Virgin Mary when the other apostles doubted.



St. Paul writing his letters to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, c. AD 62, while imprisoned in Rome. World Religions Photo Library / Bridgeman Images

Perhaps by nature, one is drawn to friendships yet easily driven to jealousy. Contemplate the elder brother of the prodigal son who had friends, but was envious of his brother, who had none, and yet whose father loved both.

Some of us are drawn by optimism and spontaneity yet are driven by impulsiveness and excess. Peter the Apostle was both Jesus' deserter and his most enthusiastic follower, whether with tears or cheers.

Still, others are drawn to straight-

talking, no-nonsense honesty, but when confronted with ambiguity or nuance are driven to intimidating others. Consider Martha, who first seems a bit of a bully to Mary, yet upon the death of Lazarus she confesses that Jesus is Lord and Messiah.

Sadly, some people sincerely drawn to service can also be driven to succeed. Recall Jacob, who robbed his brother of his father Isaac's blessing, but later admits to his brother how he has driven himself, his flock and his family almost to death: He can serve as Israel only after Esau forgives

him.

Some drawn to bravery are also driven by insecurity or anxiety. Reflect upon Eve who had everything until an appeal to her insecurity and anxiety overcame her; however, recall also that Adam sinned simply upon the word of a woman while it took the devil himself to tempt the bold Eve!

Perhaps you've known someone who seems drawn to protect the weak one moment, yet are driven to aggression the next. Someone like the Gerasen, the demoniac. He is feared by the townspeople, but



#### PAPAL WISDOM

The fight against evil is long and difficult. It is essential to pray constantly and to be patient.  
— Pope Francis, Nov. 2, 2013

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*Deacons, like all Church leaders, might pray for the confidence to resist vice and cooperate with virtue. We need both confidence in ourselves and faith in Christ.*

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himself warns the seemingly vulnerable Christ about the uncontrollable demons within him. Everyone is amazed when he becomes a docile disciple to the Decapolis.

Finally, we may be drawn to virtuous commitment, but also sometimes driven to stubbornness.

Mull the mulish Jonah who simply believed he knew better than God how to treat those darned Ninevites, but he never doubted God himself.

Scripture is replete with as many examples as our own lived experiences of how we are both attracted to virtue and enticed by vice; sometimes the difference is as little as the width between the two faces of the same coin.

#### **Resisting Vice and Cooperating with Virtue**

Deacons who act as spiritual directors or preachers may use this insight to help others discern what drives and enslaves them to serious sins. However, it may also indicate a penchant for the opposite virtue. Preaching is an opportunity to remind our parishioners, perhaps with biblical examples such as those above, how evil ensnares and entraps, and how as we accommodate it we become accustomed to

it. Slowly, the trap becomes so comfy and familiar we don't even feel the constricting effect of sin.

Deacons, like all Church leaders, might pray for the confidence to resist vice and cooperate with virtue. We need both confidence in ourselves and faith in Christ. Remember: Although we may have the attention span of a fruit fly, God's love is everlasting.

We may be easily distracted, but God's mercy is forever constant. Thus whether in daily interaction with parishioners or publicly preaching at the pulpit, deacons, like their patron St. Stephen, the first martyr, might use this insight to delineate the thin difference between what drives and what draws all humans, to help them pray with their patron: "Lay not this sin to their charge."

Such prayer robs vice of its power and empowers virtue with its example. Then, vice that drives others to drive you crazy may become a virtue that draws you to the witness of prayerful forgiveness. **TD**

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FATHER KENNETH G. DAVIS, OFM Conv., has published and taught extensively on many aspects of ministerial formation. He is currently prefect of formation for his province.

#### VIRTUES FROM THE CATECHISM

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1803, speaks of the virtues: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions.

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# Preaching, Digestion and Transformation

*Tips for good homilies include preparation, contemplation and listening*

## By Deacon Anthony Gooley

The purpose of a homily is to assist the people to receive the word of God. It is, in some sense, analogous to the Rite of Communion, through which the people receive from the table of the Eucharist. The homily helps us receive from the table of the word. Preaching assists us with the process of digestion of the word. We need to keep in mind that it is the word of God and not the words of the homilist that is to be received. The preacher's part is a help toward the process of reception.

When we eat ordinary food, we transform it into our own bodies, but with the Eucharist the process is reversed. What we consume as bread and wine transforms us into the body of Christ, the Church. The Eucharist makes us; we don't make the Eucharist.

Good preaching assists us to experience the same process with the Scriptures. We are transformed by the word of God heard with our ears into the Word of God who became incarnate and dwelt among

us. The word of God makes us and transforms us by the Holy Spirit.

If good preaching assists digestion of the word, I want to suggest that bad preaching may become a hindrance to the process and result in indigestion.

---

*Remember that a homily is there to assist the people to digest the word of God and not the words of the preacher. It may be that the person who receives your homily may receive from it something very different from what you intended, and that this reception may be a legitimate outcome of the preaching process.*

---

Good preaching should set hearts on fire. Poor preaching can cause the wrong kind of heartburn.

Three things are essential for good preaching — preparation, contemplation

and listening. Other things are necessary, but these three are at the top of the list. Doing the opposite of these is characteristic of bad preaching.

## Preparation

There are two quotes I have on my study wall, and I look at them each time I have to prepare a homily. The first is from Walter J. Burghardt, which appears in his book "Preaching: The Art and the Craft" (Paulist Press, \$18.95): "To me, the unprepared homilist is a menace. I do not minimize divine inspiration; I simply suggest it is rarely allotted to the lazy."

The second comes from Rino Fisichella, in his book "The New Evangelization: Responding to the Challenge of Indifference" (Gracewing Publishing, \$16.95), "To neglect

the preparation of the homily or, even worse, to improvise a homily, is a wrong done to the word of God and after that it is a humiliation inflicted upon the faithful."

Preparation requires reading the texts



Deacon Bill Weeks preaches a homily at St. Cecilia's Church, in Tustin, California. Spencer Grant

well ahead of time. This means reading them several times during the week. Consulting a commentary, especially about the Gospel text, is essential to understanding. Reading different translations of the texts from different Bibles can also assist in developing understanding.

Having a sense of how the text relates to the feast or season being celebrated is important when we preach at Mass. Every Mass is a celebration of the Paschal Mystery. How can the text and season be related to assisting people to deepen their appreciation for the mystery that we are celebrating?

Make sure you know the doctrinal content of your homily. When in doubt, refer to the relevant section of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. For many people, what they hear in a homily is the only faith formation that they get, so you want to make sure you are providing what is true.

Write your homily in full, and practice

saying it aloud. Having the full text allows you to see the flow of your own homily and keeps you on task. Reciting it aloud helps you imagine how a congregation might hear it. Speaking it out loud also allows you to recognize words and phrases that you need to emphasize by a change in intonation or pauses, as well as other verbal cues to help people process the content.

Hearing the text aloud also allows you to accurately time your homily. For a Sunday Mass in the context of a world shaped by the internet, social media and other short-attention-span technology, a homily of seven to ten minutes is more than enough. At a funeral or wedding, maybe only five to seven minutes is enough. Quality of words, not quantity, makes a better homily.

### **Contemplation**

If you do not already know about or practice *lectio divina*, learn it and apply it

to your reading of Scripture. *Lectio* is about a slow and meditative reading of Scripture. A key element of the process is *ruminatio*, which is to ruminate on the text.

Pope Francis, in his document establishing the Year of Mercy, wrote, "Through contemplation and conversion, we discover a word of mercy the world needs to hear and learn to say it in a way that the world can comprehend." Preachers need to cultivate a contemplative dimension, which not only ponders the word of God found in the Bible, but also can read the signs of the times in the light of that Gospel.

When a preacher contemplates a text, a double reading is required. He needs the text to nurture his own faith. He needs to be able to ask, What does God want me to say about this word to the people at this time and in the context of their lives and the world in which we live? What is required is more than study of the Bible, though that, too, is required. Contempla-



The Priest magazine offers homily helps for the Sunday readings and holy days of obligation. Subscribe at [thepriest.com/subscribe](http://thepriest.com/subscribe).

## 'INTENSE AND HAPPY EXPERIENCE OF THE SPIRIT'

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments made the Homiletic Directory of 2015 available so “that ‘the homily can actually be an intense and happy experience of the Spirit, a consoling encounter with God’s word, a constant source of renewal and growth’ (*Evangelii Gaudium*, No. 135). Each homilist, making his own the sentiments of the apostle Paul, is to renew the understanding that ‘as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts’ (1 Thes 2:4).”

tion is a reading of the Bible that allows the Word to read us and our times.

### Listening

Finally, I think good preaching requires another type of listening. We need to listen to the people who listen to our homilies. When we are starting out in preaching, it is good to ask three people in the congregation to be our official listeners, who can take up the task of listening so as to help you learn to be a better preacher. They don’t have to do this active listening every time you preach, but, certainly when you start out in those first years, it is good to have semi-regular official listeners. If you have never done this and have been preaching for a while, try it. It’s great.

I ask my official listeners to each take one aspect of my preaching. I ask one to listen to my speaking, including clarity and projection, pace and intonation. I ask the second to listen for the structure and development of my homily. How did it flow and how were the connections made between ideas? I ask the final one to tell me what they thought my homily was about or what seemed to be my main point.

Be prepared for the response to the last one. Remember that a homily is there to assist the people to digest the word of God and not the words of the preacher. It may be that the person who receives your homily may receive from it something very different from what you intended, and that this reception may be a legitimate outcome of the preaching process. Be prepared sometimes to be surprised, and to


have confirmed for you once again that a homily aims to assist digestion of the Scripture proclaimed.

Listen in all humility to your active listeners because they may be crucial to you becoming the kind of preacher who sets hearts on fire. If you get it right, you will set their hearts on fire in the right kind of way, and not give them indigestion and heartburn.

Try to be the best preacher that you can be and set hearts on fire. Help people receive the Word and be transformed by that encounter. While you strive for that, know that sometimes you will get it wrong, just as the great preacher St. Paul got it horribly wrong. One day he droned on and on, “and a young man named Eutychus who was sitting on the window sill was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. Once overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and when he was picked up, he was dead” (Acts 20:9). Your bad preaching may not result in death; heartburn is rarely fatal. Good preaching should leave the people with some sense to say to one another, “Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?” (Lk 24:32). **TD**

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DEACON ANTHONY GOOLEY lives in Sydney and is a deacon of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, Australia. His ministry includes working on mission and identity formation in Catholic healthcare and aged-care settings. His most recent book is “Deacons Today: New Wine & New Wine Skins” (Coventry Press, \$23.95).



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# Preaching Advent

*Connecting the dots within the rhythm of the liturgy*

**By Deacon Steven D. Greydanus**

G.K. Chesterton begins “The Everlasting Man” with a parable inspired by England’s immense chalk hill figures, like the White Horses of Uffington and Westbury. He imagines a boy growing up on a slope bearing the image of some gigantic figure, unaware that the familiar borders of his farm and garden are small parts of a vast, unguessed design. One day he goes in search of the mysterious monument of the giant he has heard about, and, of course, it’s not until he has gotten far enough from home that he is able to see the whole picture.

Something like this applies to how many Catholics experience the liturgical calendar and the Lectionary.

We’re all attuned to the rhythms of the workweek. While we may occasionally be surprised that it’s already (or only) Wednesday, the arrival of the Lord’s Day seldom if ever catches us unawares. But we all know Catholics who are surprised every year by the capricious arrival of Ash Wednesday; and I remember well, year after year as a young Catholic convert, the startled feeling that once again the solemnity of Christ the King at the end of the liturgical year had come upon me like a thief in the night.

As for the Lectionary, it remains *terra incognita* to most Catholics, no matter

how many times they’ve heard the same triennial cycle of readings. Those who are paying attention on any given Sunday may note thematic links between the first reading and the Gospel — but who recalls last Sunday’s readings well enough to recognize, for example, a string of kingdom parables or readings from the Sermon on the Mount, let alone to follow St. Paul’s line of thought over a number of weeks?

## **Liturgical Context**

The homily is meant to flow from and

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*The homily is meant to flow from and serve the liturgy.*

---

serve the liturgy. One way to pursue this goal is to work to help parishioners grasp and appreciate the liturgical big picture: the pattern of this Sunday in relation to last Sunday, next Sunday, and the larger seasonal landscape; to stitch back together the biblical texts parceled out in the Lectionary.

The solemnity of Christ the King marks, of course, the last Sunday of the liturgical year, and the new year begins with the start of Advent. In that sense, there is a break, a disjunction. Ordinary Time of Year B ends, and Advent of Year C begins.

But there is also, unnoticed by many, continuity and transition. The eschatological themes of the solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe — apocalyptic trial and tribulation, the Second Coming, final judgment — are foreshadowed on the Sunday before (the Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time) and carry over into Advent.

Especially at the start, Advent has a double focus on both of Christ’s comings, with initial emphasis on looking forward to the Second Coming leading into anticipation of the Christmas celebration of his first coming.

By the Second and Third Sundays of Advent, this double focus converges in the figure of St. John the Baptist. As the forerunner of Jesus and the last prophet of the Old Covenant, John sums up the whole history of Israel’s long expectation of the coming Messiah; as the proclaimer of the imminent kingdom of God, he already points to Christ’s Second Coming.

On the First Sunday of Advent, though, Jesus’ two comings appear as separate themes, with the emphasis on the second, particularly in the Gospel, carried over from the last weeks of the old year.

## **Three Apocalyptic Weeks**

This year, for example, on Nov. 14, the

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Mosaic of Jesus and Pontius Pilate on Good Friday. AdobeStock

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Gospel is from St. Mark's "Little Apocalypse," with a warning of tribulation and a prophecy of the Second Coming, the day and hour of which no one knows. The first reading, from Daniel 12, is likewise a prophecy of worldwide distress culminating the resurrections of the just and the unjust, while the second reading, from Hebrews 10, speaks of how Jesus, seated at the Father's right hand, "waits until his enemies are made his footstool."

These eschatological themes anticipate the "crowning of the liturgical year" — as Popes Benedict and Francis have both called the solemnity of Christ the King — in which we look forward to the culmination of history and the definitive revelation of the reign of God. There's no

reason this solemnity should come upon anyone like a thief — not, at least, if we homilists are doing our job!

This year, the Gospel for Christ the King is from Jesus' exchange with Pilate in John 18, with the words, "My kingdom does not belong to this world." The first reading is, again, from Daniel, this time from Chapter 7, with the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven and receiving everlasting dominion — language echoed in the second reading from Revelation 1 ("Behold, he is coming amid the clouds").

Then comes Advent: the sanctuary decked in violet; the familiar strains of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"; and the first reading from Jeremiah 33: "In those days, in that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot." All this invites us to turn our minds

toward anticipating the celebration of Christ's birth.

Perhaps the second reading from 1 Thessalonians, with Paul's concern for his readers to be blameless at the Lord's coming, slips by without much notice. But then, with the faithful standing for the Gospel, comes yet another eschatological warning, this time from Luke's "Little Apocalypse": signs in the heavens, people dying of fright, and the Son of Man "coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

If this apocalypticism feels like an intrusion or anomaly in our Advent celebration, we homilists haven't done our job. Or, at least, we have our work cut out for us!

### **Making Everything Count**

A complicating factor for most deacons is, of course, limitations on our preaching opportunities. I know deacons who preach on a weekly basis, but once a month or so is more the norm. We must make the most of what is given us.

If we preach Christ the King or the Sunday before, we can look forward toward Advent and connect the dots ahead of time.

If we're on for the First Sunday of Advent, we can pick up the strands from the previous Sundays, perhaps recalling themes from prior homilies, whoever preached them.

A homiletic series with running themes is no bad thing, even with more than one homilist preaching. If one's relationship with one's pastor and/or other celebrants allows for advanced collaboration, so much the better. **TD**

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DEACON STEVEN D. GREYDANUS writes for the *National Catholic Register* and has contributed to the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* and the *Encyclopedia of Catholic Social Thought, Social Science, and Social Policy*. He has M.A.s in religious studies and theology from, respectively, St. Charles Borromeo Seminary and Immaculate Conception Seminary at Seton Hall University.

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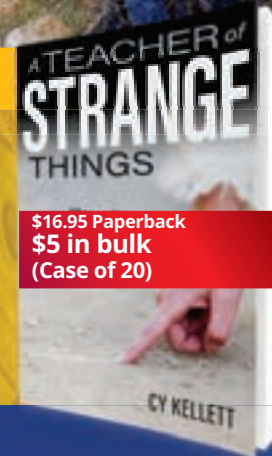
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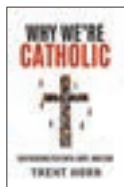
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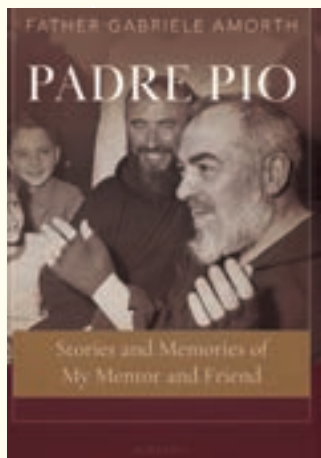
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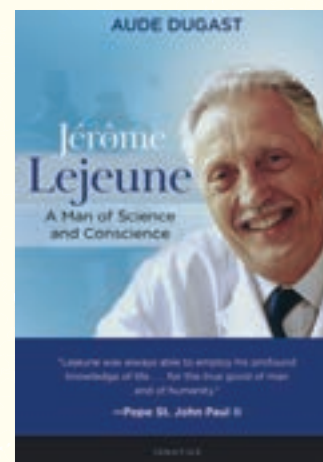
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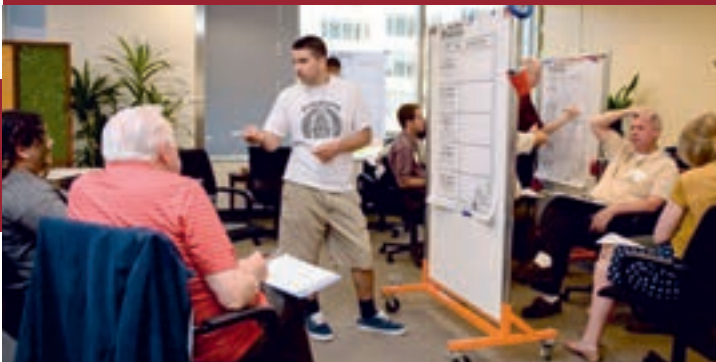
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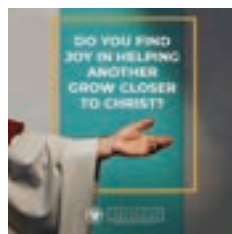
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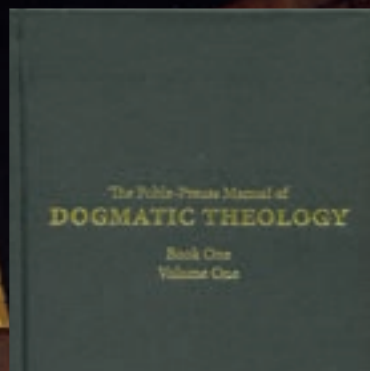
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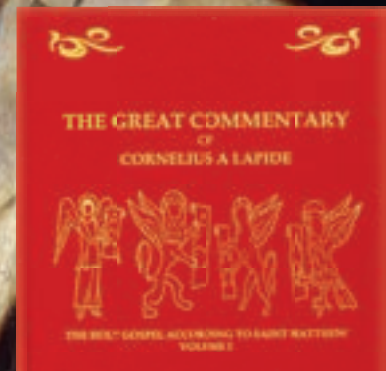
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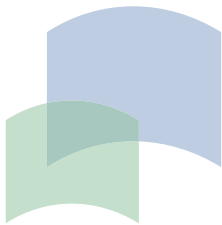
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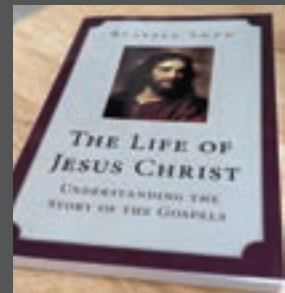
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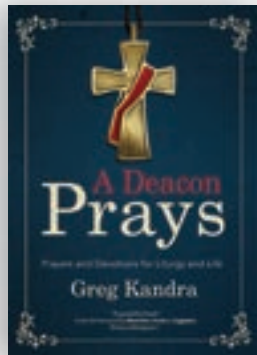


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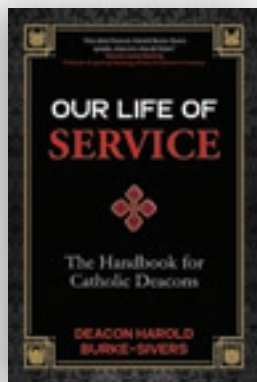
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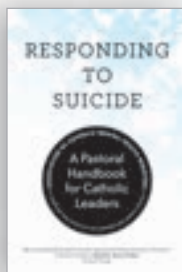
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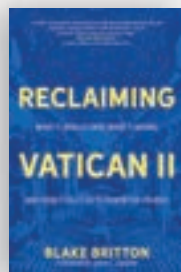
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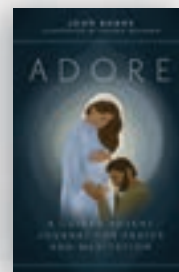
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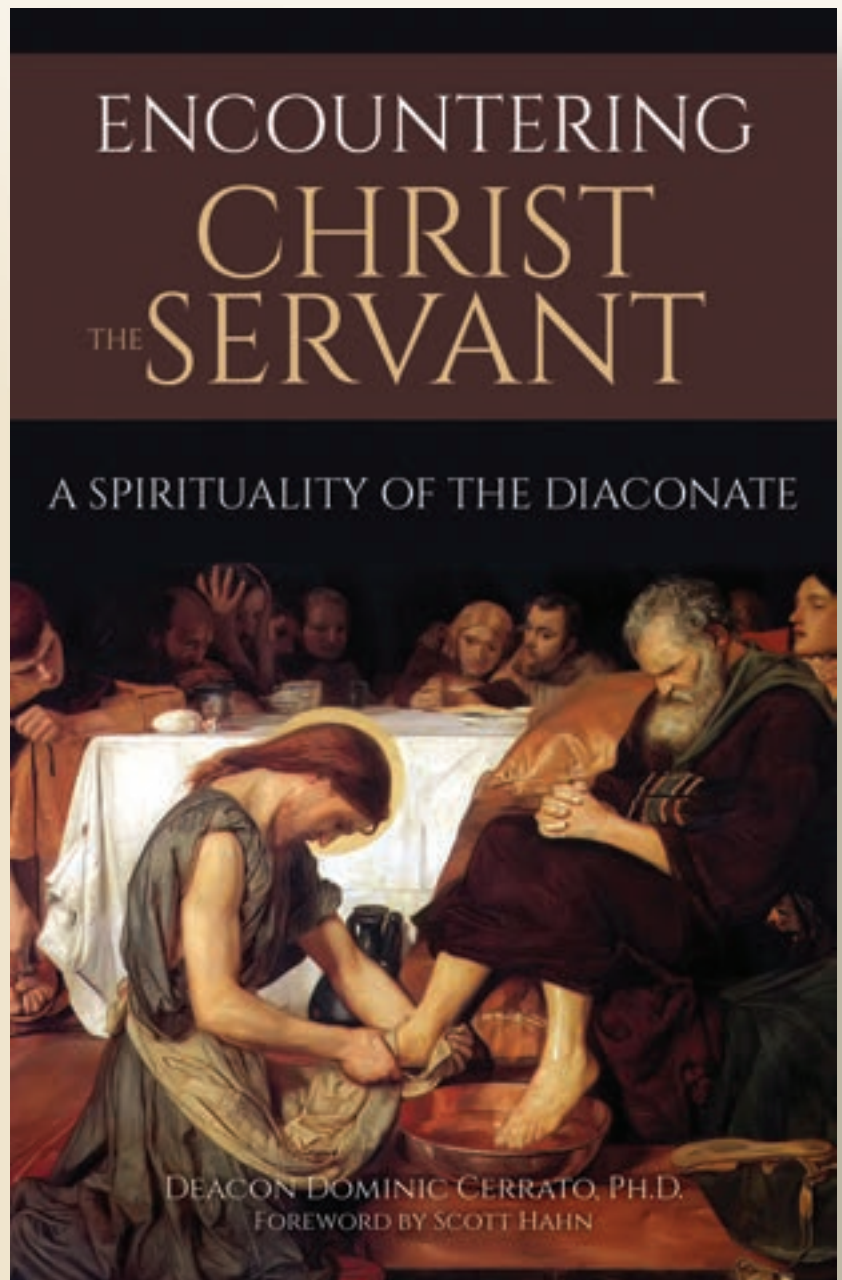
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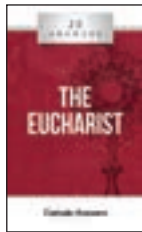


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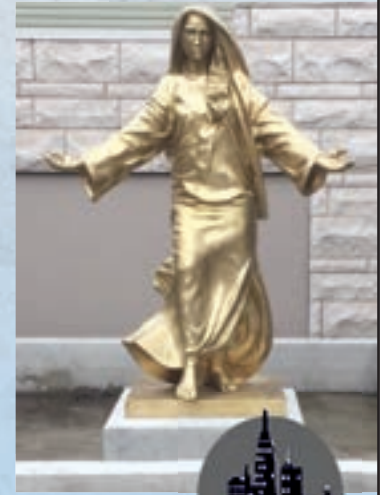


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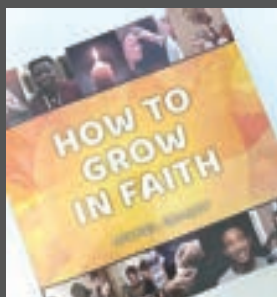
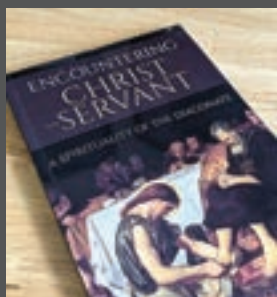
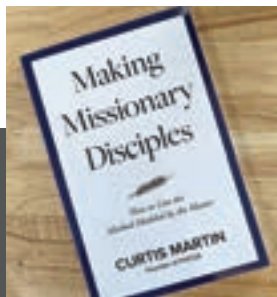
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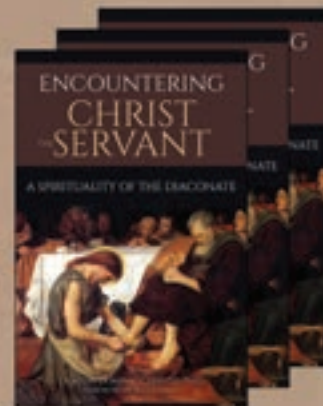


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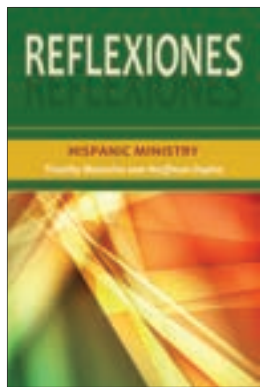


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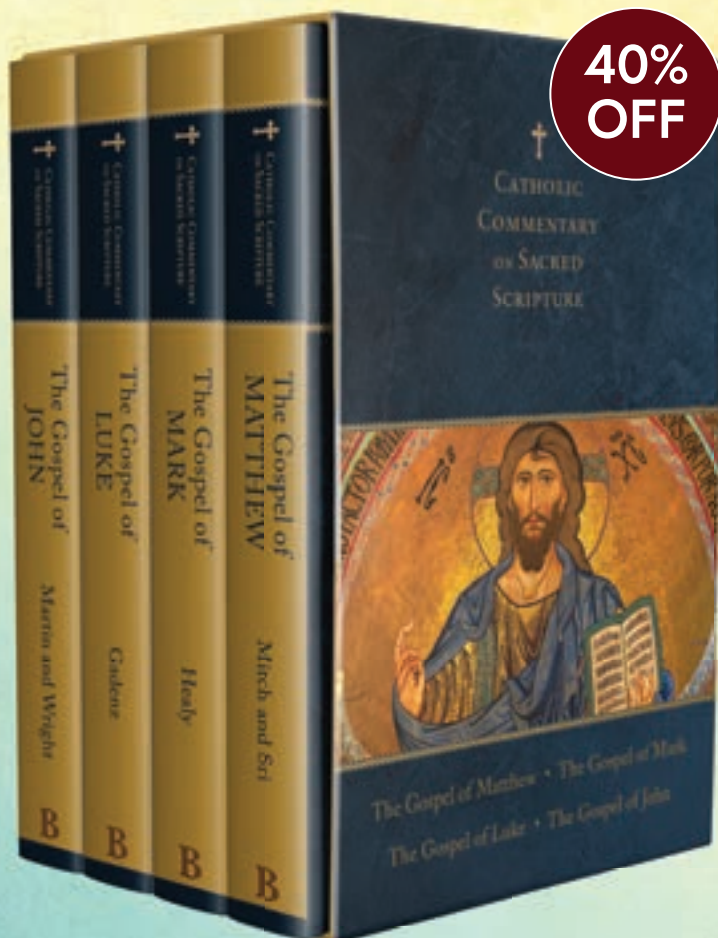
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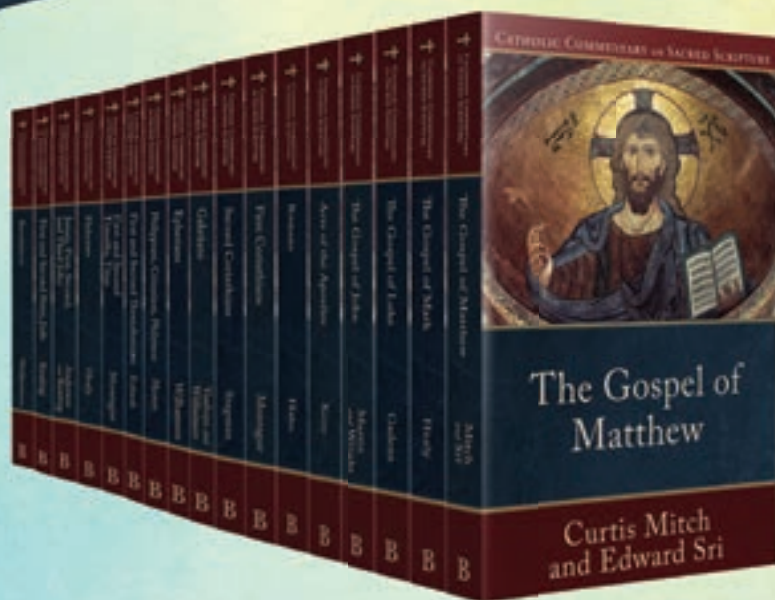
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# Measuring Up

*How Pope Francis' remarks to Rome's deacons are pertinent to all deacons*

**By Deacon Richard F. Hudzik, D.Min.**

Despite the distance we might think exists between the pope and the deacon, Pope Francis' June 19, 2021, remarks to the deacons of Rome were remarkably germane to our own concerns here. The pope is attuned to the life of a deacon, his family, his parish and his ministry.

Although I encourage you to read the complete text at the Vatican website, I offer here a few items that struck me. Moreover, I believe the pope's vision is a standard against which we can measure ourselves.

## **Custodians of Service**

First, the pope spoke of the diaconate leading us "to the center of the mystery of the Church." That breathtaking assertion is amplified by the suggestion that the Church think of itself as being "a constitutively diaconal Church" — that is, service is the heart of the Church, and deacons are the custodians of service in the Church.

Second, note that the pope is attuned to the tension between the deacon's "ordinary" duties and those to which he might be called because of the decrease in the number of priests. The deacons become substitutes for the priests in some tasks, which, "however important, do not consti-

tute the specific nature of the diaconate. They are substitute tasks." Were it possible, it would be preferable for the deacon to be "dedicated to duties of charity and of administration" (*Lumen Gentium*, No. 29). Deacons are not to "be 'half-priests' or second-rate priests, nor will they be 'special altar boys.'"

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***"Deacons are not to be 'half-priests' or second-rate priests, nor will they be 'special altar boys.'" — Pope Francis***

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## **Expectations**

What does the pope expect of deacons?

- "Firstly, I expect you to be humble."
- "Secondly, I expect you to be good spouses and good fathers. And good grandparents."
- "Thirdly, I expect you to be sentinels ... to help the Christian community to recognize Jesus in the poor and the distant."

And, lest we think the pope is speaking only to Roman circumstances, we hear the pope say, for all deacons: "Whatever the need, see the Lord. So you, too, recognize

the Lord when, in so many of his smaller brothers and sisters, he asks to be fed, to be welcomed and loved. I would like this to be the profile of the deacons of Rome and of the whole world. Work on this."

## **Measuring Up**

Now, viewing the pope's challenge from the perspective not as an individual deacon but as the director of deacon personnel (here in Chicago, known as "the vicar for deacons"), I ask you, how does your (arch)diocese's diaconate measure up to the pope's challenge? How does the Archdiocese of Chicago? I can offer some thoughts as to

where we are. Please, eschew our errors and, if it is helpful, embrace what might work for you to serve your people.

In Chicago, the journey to ordination is by way of the University of St. Mary of the Lake. All preordination formation is accomplished by the university's Institute for Diaconal Studies and the *Instituto de Liderazgo Pastoral*.

From the moment of ordination on, the Office of the Diaconate takes on the responsibility of formation for all deacons, whether newly ordained or longer in service. What is important to note is that for all formation endeavors of the diaconate



**JOHN PAUL II  
WISDOM**

“The diaconate can only be conferred on those who believe in the value of the bishop’s and priest’s pastoral mission and in the Holy Spirit’s assistance guiding them in their actions and their decisions. In particular it must again be said that the deacon should ‘profess reverence and obedience to the bishop.’”

— General Audience, Oct. 20, 1993



Pope Francis leads an audience with permanent deacons of the Diocese of Rome and their families at the Vatican on June 19, 2021. CNS photo/Vatican Media

office, we organize everything in recognition of the four elements of formation noted in the National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States. All programming looks to deepen formation in the human, the intellectual, the spiritual and the ministerial dimensions.

Even as we come together for several community events, we situate them within the context of the four formation elements. Gathering as deacons and wives, even at a purely social event, such as a community dinner, brings us to reflect on the gift that is the diaconate. We celebrate St. Lawrence, St. Francis and St. Stephen together and do so with, variously, Mass, banquets, convocations and symposia. We witness publicly against street violence

with an initiative of the Black deacons — the popular August Sunrise Prayer Service and Mass on the beach at Lake Michigan. The Spanish-speaking deacons and wives gather monthly for education and solidarity.

The archdiocese is blessed to have its own retreat center, and, accordingly, we are able to sponsor nine or ten retreats annually. There are four in Spanish for deacons and wives; four in English for deacons and wives; one or two for deacons only; and a retreat for the wives and widows.

Serving as something of a “diaconate senate,” Chicago’s diaconate is ably assisted by its Diaconate Council. This body of about 50 deacons, with representation for the wives as well, serves as a vital part



of the communication — in both directions — between the diaconate office and the community. Moreover, the council, through its fundraising efforts, helps support our educational activities and, importantly, the diaconate's favored charities.

Thus we can count on the council to represent us well as they make grants to charities, typically staffed or animated by deacons, in the areas of homelessness, the incarcerated, mental illness, men in transition from homelessness, men living on the streets, disadvantaged youth in Central and South America, and assistance to diaconate ministry in Mexico and Guatemala.

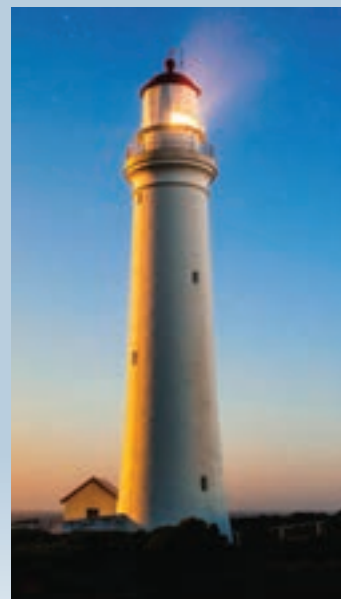
Changes in diaconate parish assignments these days are occurring because of the Archdiocese's Renew My Church proj-

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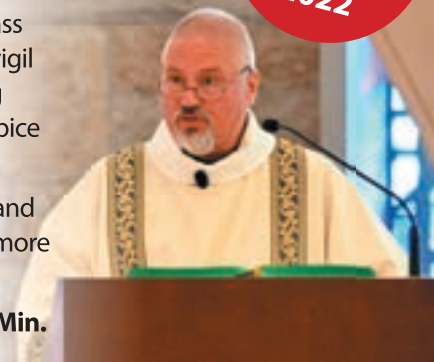
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### DEACON'S SPIRITUALITY

In meeting with permanent deacons and their Families in Rome on June 19, 2021, Pope Francis described the spirituality of deacons as “availability inside and openness outside ... available inside, from the heart, ready to say ‘yes,’ docile, without making one’s life revolve around one’s own agenda; and open outside, looking at everyone, especially those who are left out, those who feel excluded.”

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## *Service is the heart of the Church, and the deacons are the custodians of service in the Church.*

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ect which is fundamentally realigning and reconfiguring the parish landscape. Yes, that means that some parishes are united with other parishes; some buildings are closed and sold. As parishes merge and realign, deacons often find themselves as signs of continuity for the parishioners. With mergers, pastors are often reassigned and the people can feel bereft with the transitions.

It is the expectation that the deacon remains in place for a period of time (right now, we are saying a minimum of six months) to accompany the parishioners with the new reality. Six months is, admittedly, not a long time. However, given the fact that the realignment process takes months before the final implementation date, the parishioners are attuned to the fact that things are changing.

### **Diaconal Church**

Returning again to Pope Francis’ remarks, we see “the diaconate ... leads us to the center of the mystery of the Church,” and “we should speak of a ‘constitutively diaconal Church.’” If the diaconate leads to the center, each deacon must be on his game.

To be fully formed, we pursue learning skills of doing the tasks assigned (the ministerial pillar). We ground everything in prayer (the spiritual pillar). We have to be, among other attributes the pope requires, men of humility (a dimension of the human pillar). Finally, out of love for those whom we serve, those whom Jesus first loved, deacons will want to pass on the wealth of the Tradition and the wisdom of the Church (and we need to know what we are talking about — the intellectual pillar).

Service as a deacon, who is often a husband and father and a worker, can take on a thousand different looks. At Chicago’s Office of the Diaconate, we endeavor to have the work that we do for the deacons be a part of how the deacons, aided by their wives, their families, their parishioners and their bishops, become ready to fulfill those expectations articulated by Pope Francis.

No doubt that is the case throughout the United States. **TD**

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DEACON RICHARD F. HUDZIK, D.Min., is Vicar for Deacons for the Archdiocese of Chicago, a husband, father, grandfather, YouTuber (“Handing on the Faith”) and former attorney.

### A DIACONAL CHURCH

Pope Francis spoke of a “constitutively diaconal Church” in an address to deacons on June 19. He explained: “If we do not live this dimension of service, every ministry is emptied from within, it becomes sterile, it does not bear fruit. And little by little it becomes worldly. Deacons remind the Church that what St. Thérèse discovered is true: the Church has a heart inflamed by love. Yes, a humble heart throbbing with service. Deacons remind us of this when, like the deacon St. Francis, they bring God’s closeness to others without imposing themselves, serving with humility and joy. The generosity of a deacon who gives of himself without seeking the front ranks has about him the perfume of the Gospel, he tells of the greatness of God’s humility in taking the first step — always, God always takes the first step — to meet even those who have turned their backs on him.”

# Living as a Herald of the Gospel

*How do deacons effectively proclaim the Gospel through Word, liturgy and charity?*



Chicago Auxiliary Bishop Robert Casey presents the Book of the Gospels to newly ordained Deacon Rafel Romani at Holy Name Cathedral on May 8, 2021. Twenty-two permanent and transitional Catholic deacons were ordained that day. Karen Callaway/Chicago Catholic

## **By Deacon Keith Strohm**

Some life experiences stay with us forever.

The death of a loved one, our wedding day, the birth of a child — all of these memories endure despite the passage of time. The same is likely true for deacons as we reflect on the day of our diaconal ordination. Although I was ordained a lit-

tle over six years ago, I can still recall the balmy heat of the day, the smell of Holy Name Cathedral, redolent with incense and the slightly musty scent of old wood, and the supportive, loving presence of my wife beside me as we processed in.

In the midst of these powerful recollections, one memory stands above the others: kneeling before the bishop as a

newly ordained deacon holding the Book of the Gospels as he proclaimed, “Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.”

I knew that at the moment of my ordination I had become a herald of the Gospel in a particular diaconal context. However,



**POPE FRANCIS'  
ADVICE**

“You can offer the Lord your work, your little inconveniences, your weariness and your hopes in an authentic prayer that brings your life to the Lord and the Lord to your life. When you serve at the table of the Eucharist, there you will find the presence of Jesus, who gives himself to you so that you can give yourselves to others.”

— Mass for Jubilee of Permanent Deacons, May 30, 2016

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*Since the Eucharistic celebration is the source and summit of our faith, we can also say that it is the fullest way that the People of God can live out and experience the reality of the Gospel message.*

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as I have reflected over the past six years on that important moment, I find myself asking the same fundamental question: What does that really mean? What does it mean to live as a herald of the Gospel, particularly as a deacon?

In common usage, a herald is one who announces, proclaims or delivers news. A person or a thing can also herald an upcoming event, functioning as a kind of sign that something is going to occur. Bringing both those common definitions together, we can arrive at a foundational understanding of what it means to be a diaconal herald. Configured to Christ the Servant at his ordination, the deacon stands as a sign, proclaiming something through his words, actions and very existence.

That still leaves us with an important question to reflect on: What is it that deacons herald? In other words, what is the Gospel? That might seem like an easy question to answer. Since the bishop places the Book of the Gospels in our hands, this must refer specifically to the reality that deacons proclaim the Gospel at Mass and pass on the Church’s teaching, right? That conclusion, however, reveals a fundamentally truncated and reductive understanding of one of the most critical and richest aspects of our faith. In fact, several years ago, I wrote a book entitled “Jesus: The Story You Thought You Knew” (OSV, \$15.95), so that more Catholics might encounter, wrestle with, surrender to and share the Gospel from an experience of its richness.

That same experience is necessary for the diaconal community as a whole!

In the Basic Norms for the Formation

of Permanent Deacons, the Church writes “that the ministry of deacons is nothing other than ‘the ministry of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before time began and who appeared at the end of time.’”

Since Jesus’ humanity and divinity were completely integrated within himself, there must be an essential unity to the life and ministry of the deacon. The triple *munera* (teaching, sanctifying and governing) expressed within the context of *diakonia* as service to Word, liturgy and charity have within them an integral dynamism that can be challenging to express within the life of a deacon.

Early on in my own ministry, I tried feverishly to balance my participation in service to Word, liturgy and charity, making sure I didn’t spend too much time operating in any one *munus*. Without meaning to, I had introduced a level of frustration, anxiety and artificiality that only served to set each area of diaconal service against the other, rather than express their fundamental unity.

When we function out of a limited understanding of the Gospel and reduce the reality of being a herald of the Gospel to the deacon’s ministry of the Word, we risk contributing to the siloing of this essentially linked *munera* in our diaconal life. However, if we can excavate the richness of the reality of the Gospel and then view the life and ministry of the deacon through a Gospel-focused lens, the unified nature of our ministry comes into clearer focus.

**Power of the Gospel**

Simply put, the Gospel is the Good News or the great story of our salvation re-

counting what we were created for, what we lost through disobedience, and what the Father has done in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to set us free from bondage and restore us with his very life. Though we recognize that all good stories have the power to move us, change our perspective and widen our perspective, the Gospel story — because it is primarily about what God has done for us and centers around the person of Jesus — contains particular power to open our hearts to the love, mercy and power of God.

The heart of the Gospel story is called the *kerygma*, which in Greek means to preach or to proclaim. When we share this proclamation with others, God’s Spirit moves. This is why Paul writes that the Gospel is “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16). Intentional proclamation of the *kerygma* is always already a supernatural act whose purpose is to awaken the faith of those who hear through the power of God. Paul again acknowledges the necessity of this proclamation in Romans 10:13, as he talks about how “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

He then goes on to lament that no one can call on God for salvation if they don’t believe in him, nor can they believe in him if no one shares the reality of God with them.

He concludes this section of his letter with the following affirmation: “Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ” (v. 17).

Rather than being a loose summary of the good things God has done, the *kerygma* contains essential content that is critical to hear and wrestle with. Although there are many ways to present the *kerygma*, the heart of the Gospel proclamation includes the following:

1. We were created for an eternal life of union with God and one another.

2. The original sin of our first parents, along with our subsequent personal sin, separates us from the reality of communion with God.
3. The Father makes a way for us to return to him through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of his Son, Jesus.
4. Jesus invites every human person to turn from sin, surrender their life to him and follow him as a disciple.
5. Through baptism, Jesus fills us with the resurrected life of the Kingdom by giving us the Holy Spirit, and he incorporates us into his body, the Church, which he sends out to manifest the reality of God’s kingdom on earth and live as the herald of his Gospel.

The heart of the Gospel message, then, could be summarized like this: what Jesus is by nature (Son of God) he invites us to become through grace. In other words, the Gospel is about healing, restoration and transformation. Jesus offers himself for us so that we might be freed from the power of sin and its effects, and filled with his divine life, becoming more fully what we were created to be — daughters and sons of God.

Because the entire reality of the Gospel is contained in the very person of Jesus, it suffuses and grounds the life and ministry of the ordained. In a diaconal context, therefore, service to Word, liturgy and

charity is fundamentally rooted in Jesus and his Gospel (Good News).

### Service to the Word

“The principal function of the deacon, therefore, is to collaborate with the bishop and the priests in the exercise of a ministry which is not of their own wisdom but of the word of God, calling all to conversion and holiness” (Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons, No. 23).

Though we have spoken of this briefly in the introduction to this article, the Church herself declares that a deacon’s service to the Word must be oriented to conversion and holiness — in other words, an intentional surrender to the person of Jesus in the midst of his Church, and a commitment to an ever-deepening relationship with him that transforms one interiorly and bears fruit — rather than simply an assent to doctrinal norms.

In both theory and practice, it would be a mistake to pit proclamation of the Gospel against formative catechesis, though this often happens “on the ground” within parishes when doctrine and revelation are transmitted without reference to the fundamental Gospel message. Explicitly connecting the Gospel to preaching and the catechetical and instructional activity of deacons helps ensure both that initial proclamation of the Good News occurs, and that the essential activity of catechesis is approached in the context of discipleship and personal relationship with Jesus, becoming more of an “apprenticeship” in the life of a disciple.

## THE DIAKONIA OF CHARITY

“In virtue of the Sacrament of Orders, deacons, in communion with the bishop and the diocesan presbyterate, participate in the same pastoral functions, but exercise them differently in serving and assisting the bishop and his priests. Since this participation is brought about by the sacrament, they serve God’s people in the name of Christ. For this reason, they exercise it in humility and charity, and, according to the words of St. Polycarp, they must always be ‘merciful, zealous and let them walk according to the truth of the Lord who became servant of all’” (Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons, No. 37).



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St. Ephrem, a deacon and Doctor of the Church, is known for his commentaries on the Bible. His skilled commentaries, sermons and hymns gave him the moniker of the "Harp of the Spirit."

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"So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" — 2 Corinthians 5:20.

**Service to Liturgy**

We know that the work and ministry of the deacon, especially around assistance at the altar, is distinct from the ministry of the priest, but it can be easy to become myopically fixated on the functional duties of the deacon.

If we take some time to look at our service to liturgy through the lens of the Gospel something powerful comes into focus. At the holy sacrifice of the Mass, "... he [the deacon] effectively represents on the one hand, the people of God and, specifically, helps them to unite their lives to the offering of Christ; while on the other, in the name of Christ himself, he helps the Church to participate in the fruits of that sacrifice" (No. 28).

Since the Eucharistic celebration is the source and summit of our faith, we can also say that it is the fullest way that the People of God can live out and experience the reality of the Gospel message. It is partially through the life and ministry of the deacon that the fruits of the Good News, especially the Paschal Mystery (which sits at the heart of the kerygma), can be received and cooperated with by the People of God. Participating in service to liturgy with this intentionality can allow deacons to be a more effective channel through which the fruit of grace can flow.

**Service to Charity**

The reality of diaconal service to charity goes beyond direct service to the poor and those suffering from systems of injustice. Rather, a deacon "seeks to help and foster all members of a particular Church, so that they may participate, in a spirit of communion and according to their proper charisms, in the life and mission of the Church" (No. 37).

It is quite possible, concerning the

charitable and transformative work of the Church in areas of justice, to become implicitly or explicitly disconnected from the life, mission, work and person of Jesus. It is possible to feed the hungry and never encounter Jesus in them, and it is entirely possible for them to never encounter Jesus within us. However, a deacon who lives intentionally as a kerygmatic witness (herald) can help anchor the apostolic work of laymen and women in the heart of the Gospel.

The kerygma is fundamentally kenotic; it is about Christ's emptying of himself for our sake. Jesus tells his disciples, "Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give" (Mt 10:8). The Word of God forsook the glory of heaven to dwell with us as man so that we might receive the abundance of heavenly life. So, too, Jesus calls his body, the Church, to give out of our abundance without counting the cost because we have received from the One who never counted the cost for our sake.

Seeing our diaconal ministry through the lens of the Gospel can make it easier for us to live out the unity which such ministry entails. When that happens more frequently, we begin to experience a cycle of fruitfulness. Service to Word, liturgy and charity "represent a unity in service at the level of divine Revelation: the ministry of the word leads to ministry at the altar, which in turn prompts the transformation of life by the liturgy, resulting in charity" (No. 39).

In other words, living as a herald of the Gospel both enlivens and empowers the ministry of deacons, placing them in fruitful service to the Church and the world. **TD**

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DEACON KEITH STROHM is a deacon for the Archdiocese of Chicago and executive director of M3 Ministries.



By Deacon Robert T. Yerhot, M.S.W.

# Emotional Maturity and the Interior Life

*Conquering the suffering inherent in the diaconate with emotional maturation*

Do you ever wonder why so many diaconal candidates deeply desire intimacy with God and his people, faithfully respond to the call, are ordained and then struggle to manage the inner tensions that arise when they reach out to God in prayer and to people in ministry?

Deacons soon discover there is a suffering inherent in the diaconate. It is a holy suffering, which expresses their relationship with the Trinity, their identity as beloved sons of the Father and their mission to be heralds of the Gospel in the world. This suffering must be freely undertaken, not forced. It requires an emotionally mature man!

Therein lies the rub. Deacons deeply desire this relationship, identity and mission. Yet, when pursuing them — often passionately pursuing them — they experience spiritual and interpersonal tensions for which they may be unprepared. The emotional and physical effects of these tensions may overwhelm, puzzle and frustrate them, and for some, lead to withdrawal from prayer and ministry, or, conversely, praying and ministering in a shallow manner.

Emotional maturation is necessary for growth in the interior life. Having recently retired as a clinical social worker and psychotherapist in clinical practice for 36 years, and now a deacon for 12 years, I primarily write from the perspectives of the behavioral sciences and Christian spiritual tradition.

The behavioral sciences have come to a greater understanding of the effects adverse life experiences — which I will call trauma — have on men's ability to maintain healthy relationships. Trauma may be defined as any environmental, physical, relational, emotional or spiritual event that exceeds one's learned capacity to meaningfully integrate into the totality of one's life.

When this disintegration occurs, men typically, emotionally “numb out,” dissociate from the experience or act out in a maladaptive manner. It is not difficult to see how this negatively impacts our interior lives and our ministries.

Interestingly, our Christian spiritual tradition has understood this for centuries and addressed these very same concerns, although using different concepts and language than the behavioral sciences.

We need to begin with ourselves and in these four ways:

1. Accept that we have been affected by trauma. We must acknowledge that our life histories and the culture in which we live have shaped us. This is an act of humility on our part.
2. Relate these trauma experiences to a good spiritual director who knows emotionally mature methods of entering into the suffering of prayer and ministry. This requires faith.
3. Receive God's grace and discard our own agendas! This is an act of submission.
4. Respond to grace by staying within our emotional capabilities. Pursuing too intensely the interior life — or ministry — will overwhelm our abilities to manage the suffering that arises, and harm ourselves and others. Again, this points to the importance of good spiritual direction. This requires prudence.

Emotional maturity is foundational to growth in the interior life. We all can grow as men of spiritual depth in active ministry.

**TD**

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DEACON BOB YERHOT is the assistant director-emeritus of the diaconate for the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota. He sits on the editorial board for the *Josephinum Diaconal Review* and has previously published articles on diaconal spirituality.



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By Father Deacon Basil Ryan Balke

# An Existential Crisis

*What to do when things that once brought meaning to our lives no longer cut it*

Some time ago, I was asked by a friend what are some of the trends I am seeing as a clinical mental health professional during the nearly two years of COVID-19. The one trend that I have seen more than anything else is what in clinical language we call the “existential crisis,” or “existential angst.”

Perhaps we should define some of our terms here: “existential” is dealing with existence and the nature of existence — that is, those big questions about meaning and the fear of death. When speaking about an existential crisis, we mean that the things that we found our meaning in, our purpose, our direction in the past, are no longer cutting it for us. We are in a crisis of meaning. The old answers don’t cut it anymore.

Parish-participation numbers in the post-pandemic world still look to be significantly lower than they were pre-pandemic, and the answer is simple as to why. People have been attending church for an exceptionally long time out of obligation, out of fear of damnation. Now, after months of being away, they have begun to ask these existential questions. They have begun to ask the question: “Why go back?” “Why bother?” How have we as a Church answered these questions?

**The wrong answers to the questions.** When asked about morality, we pick up a moral theology book. When asked why I should go to Church, we might respond with, “Because it’s an obligation.” Attempting to help a person’s existential crisis by merely pointing them to a book and saying “because I said so” is going to do nothing to assist the person to grow, and it will most likely turn them off Christianity in general.

**The right way to answer the questions.** The correct way to answer these sorts of existential questions is not to jump down the asker’s throat. Eastern Christianity has always had a strong existential approach to it. A philosophy textbook often lists faithful Eastern Christians as being existentialists: Vladimir Solovyov, Nikolai Berdyaev, Fyodor Dostoevsky and many more. And to be

clear, there is nothing particularly atheistic about asking such important questions.

Eastern Christianity prizes above all else the experience of God. The experience of God in the liturgy, the experience of God in prayer, the experience of God in the other person. In some ways, we spend all our time looking for the experience of God and seeking him with all our might. This is seen no more clearly than in the first acclamation of the Divine Liturgy: “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” In other words: “This here, this now, in this very moment, is the kingdom of God. You are present in the moment of union with God.” We experience him in the many hours of chanting the canons and *Troparia at Matins*, and we experience him in the middle of the night, and when we find him in the psalms.

This, to me, is the key need in the post-pandemic world. We, as a Church, have lost our moral authority to speak on issues. The sexual and financial scandals are at the top of many people’s minds when they think about the Catholic Church in any capacity. The willful incompetence, laziness and uncaring of many clergy last longer in the mind of the faithful than any exquisitely prepared homily.

The only way forward is to help facilitate true, honest and real encounters with the living God. We need to go into the midst of the questions about meaning and have an experience of God himself. The Eastern Church’s approach is liturgical, and I think that is a great meditation for us. Do our liturgies facilitate an experience with God? And perhaps the better question is, Do our liturgies facilitate an experience of God for our people? If the answer is no, then I would not expect our empty pews to fill up any time soon, nor should they. What is the point if not for God? **TD**

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FATHER DEACON BASIL RYAN BALKE is a Byzantine deacon, a licensed professional counselor and director of Mount Tabor Counseling.

# Reflective Practices: A Ministry for the Church

*Program offers educational support in caring for God's people*

**By Deacon Denny Nash, Deacon Trey Mobley and Dr. Ryan LaMothe**

One of the greatest blessings of ministry is the opportunity to enter sacred space with others where their greatest and deepest joys, pains and yearnings are expressed. For the deacon, this is a most sacred trust, a trust that involves respect and care for the vulnerability of others. One of the key skills needed to be faithful to this sacred trust is the ministry of listening.

Naturally, we all listen through the lens of our own experience with our own joys, pains and yearnings. One of the strengths of the diaconate is that we bring life experience different from the presbyterate and often more similar to parishioners. These experiences are possible opportunities for God's wisdom and grace to connect with and minister to others.

Other times, our past experiences can be impediments when they lead us to misinterpret key details or when we react out of our own fears or hurts. What opportunities do deacons have to reflect on their experiences in ministry, to discern when they are reading the situation well or when their actions are not pastorally effective?

How do deacons continue to grow in their ability to truly hear the other and to recognize God in the encounter?

## **Educational Support**

Once ordained, clergy, for a variety of reasons, lack the support and opportunity for consistent reflection on their experiences of ministry. Recognizing this, be-

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*For us deacons, who frequently call others to reflect on how they might live their lives better in the light of God's presence, we see the reflective practice as a gift that enables us to do this better.*

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tween 2002 and 2004, Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology developed a program for a Certificate in Reflective Practices in Pastoral Care.

This program entails training experienced ministers in the art of reflective practice, which we believe is an important ministry for the Church. Various pastoral documents speak to the importance of

this ministry, such as the USCCB's "A Family Perspective in Church and Society"; the recent document on priestly formation; and The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States.

Indeed, since all ministers have the sacred privilege of caring for people in moments of vulnerability, we believe there is a moral, categorical imperative that all ministers earnestly engage in lifelong learning. This program was developed in consideration of this imperative — to aid deacons in caring for all God's people.

## **Reflective Practice**

Reflective practice is a process of facilitating ministers' reflections on their ministerial experiences and actions, like the supervision people receive

in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). But it is meant to be a continual practice, a way to engage in lifelong learning and seek excellence in ministry.

An underlying theological premise for reflective practice is grace building on nature. By this, we mean that a deacon's ministry necessarily involves his complex subjectivity. Making use of this subjectivity



#### POPE FRANCIS' TIP

“Don't say: 'I have the solution for you.' Give them strength by your listening, that medicine which sadly is being forgotten: 'the therapy of listening.'”  
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for the sake of helping others requires the discipline of self-awareness. This understanding is critical to human formation, which is the foundation of the intellectual, pastoral and spiritual dimensions of formation.

The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States says: “Formation for ministry begins with human formation and development.

Participants ‘should therefore cultivate a series of human qualities, not only out of proper and due growth and realization of self, but also with a view to the ministry’” (No. 106).

Being self-aware is especially important when serving those who are vulnerable or different from ourselves, which includes those that deacons are particularly ordained to serve, like the poor and the marginalized.

Reflective practice is a process of grace

wherein deacons deepen and broaden their self-awareness, discerning how to make use of the self to incarnate God's love.

Saint Meinrad's Certificate in Reflective Practices has been offered to lay and clergy alike for the past 16 years. During this time, news of the program spread, largely through people who completed the certificate and sought to introduce this ministry into their dioceses and parishes. The program piqued the interest of Catholic physicians and nurses who believed reflective practice would be helpful in facilitating professional growth in their own healing ministry.

There has also been interest from clergy outside the United States. After earning the certificate, Father Michael de Stoop, from the Archdiocese of Sydney, Australia, developed a reflective practice program for the Diocese of Sydney that involves all ministers — lay and ordained.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Anyone interested in learning more about the Certificate in Reflective Practices may contact Dr. Agnes Kovacs ([akovacs@saintmeinrad.edu](mailto:akovacs@saintmeinrad.edu)) at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology.

For those interested in knowing more about the Archdiocese of Louisville's deacon program, contact Deacon Denny Nash ([dnash@archlou.org](mailto:dnash@archlou.org)) or Deacon Trey Mobley ([tmobley@archlou.org](mailto:tmobley@archlou.org)).



### **Model Program**

Closer to home, Deacon Denny Nash, director of the diaconate for the Archdiocese of Louisville, and Deacon Trey Mobley, the associate director of formation in the same diocese, found completing the certificate process enormously helpful, not only in their ministry as deacons but in their personal lives and relationships as well.

Realizing the benefit of reflective practice for those both in formation and in active ministry, they introduced the process to men in formation for the diaconate with the expectation that these men would enter reflective practice upon ordination. They understand self-awareness, listening and being present to the other as essential to diaconal ministry, and felt that reflective practice would significantly enhance and improve their skills in these

vital areas. And they found that after an introductory experience of the process, the candidates were enthusiastic about the prospect of continuing this learning, where they could explore their ministerial experiences in a safe setting with a trained facilitator.

Opting for a small group model, Deacons Nash and Mobley instituted a program whereby the newly ordained deacons would engage in group reflective practices for a period of two years after ordination. The hope is that in two years they will develop a habit of reflection with its associated skills and continue the practice for as long as they are in ministry.

In the group process, each participant, in turn, has the opportunity: (1) to select and describe a ministerial issue or situation; (2) to analyze/assess the event (raising questions for consideration); (3)

to identify new insights and learning. The process allows participants to get in touch with their vulnerability and to explore their subjectivity with others in a healthy and edifying way.

Group confidentiality and the leadership of a skilled facilitator are key elements in carrying out this process. The facilitators of these groups all completed Saint Meinrad's Certificate in Reflective Practices.

The pandemic offered new opportunities in videoconferencing, which can be an effective tool to give more flexibility in extending this ministry to other venues.

### **Growth**

Ministry is a complex, challenging, vulnerable and demanding undertaking. We believe all ministers would like to grow in their ability and wisdom in ministry. It is a

great gift to be able to step into the work of God more fully with one's whole self. Reflective practice can facilitate this type of growth. We believe it appropriate for all who minister — lay, priest and deacon.

Deacons, as servant leaders typically outside other authority structures, are particularly suited to take up this ministry of reflective practice, both as participants and facilitators. It takes courage and humility to be willing to explore with others how we can personally grow in our ministry. But if we open ourselves, these are the spaces that God most often strengthens us and blesses us richly. Essentially, reflective practice is a ministry to the minister, and that is how it is a ministry to the Church.

The Diaconate Program in the Archdiocese of Louisville is committed to the pursuit of lifelong learning for permanent deacons, whether they are preparing for ordination or engaging in their ministries as deacons.

If deacons truly desire excellence in their ministry, it seems imperative to us that they would want to reflect, with others, on how they might minister better.

We understand this task is not easy, that it requires vulnerability, courage and humility. It also requires practice and skills. Saint Meinrad is committed to training ministers in these skills.

For us deacons, who frequently call others to reflect on how they might live their lives better in the light of God's presence, we see the reflective practice as a gift that enables us to do this better. More importantly, it is a way for us to be an example ourselves and to honor one of the fundamental charisms of diaconal ministry: to practice what we preach. **TD**

**DEACON DENNY NASH** is the director of the diaconate for the Archdiocese of Louisville.

**DEACON TREY MOBLEY** is the associate director of formation for the Archdiocese of Louisville. **RYAN LAMOTHE, Ph.D.**, is a professor of pastoral care and counseling at Saint Meinrad Seminary.



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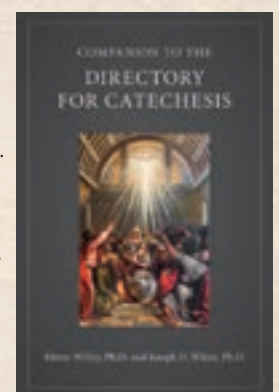
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# Tips to Stay Close to God

*Deacon Keating's book teaches us how to weave prayer into the day*

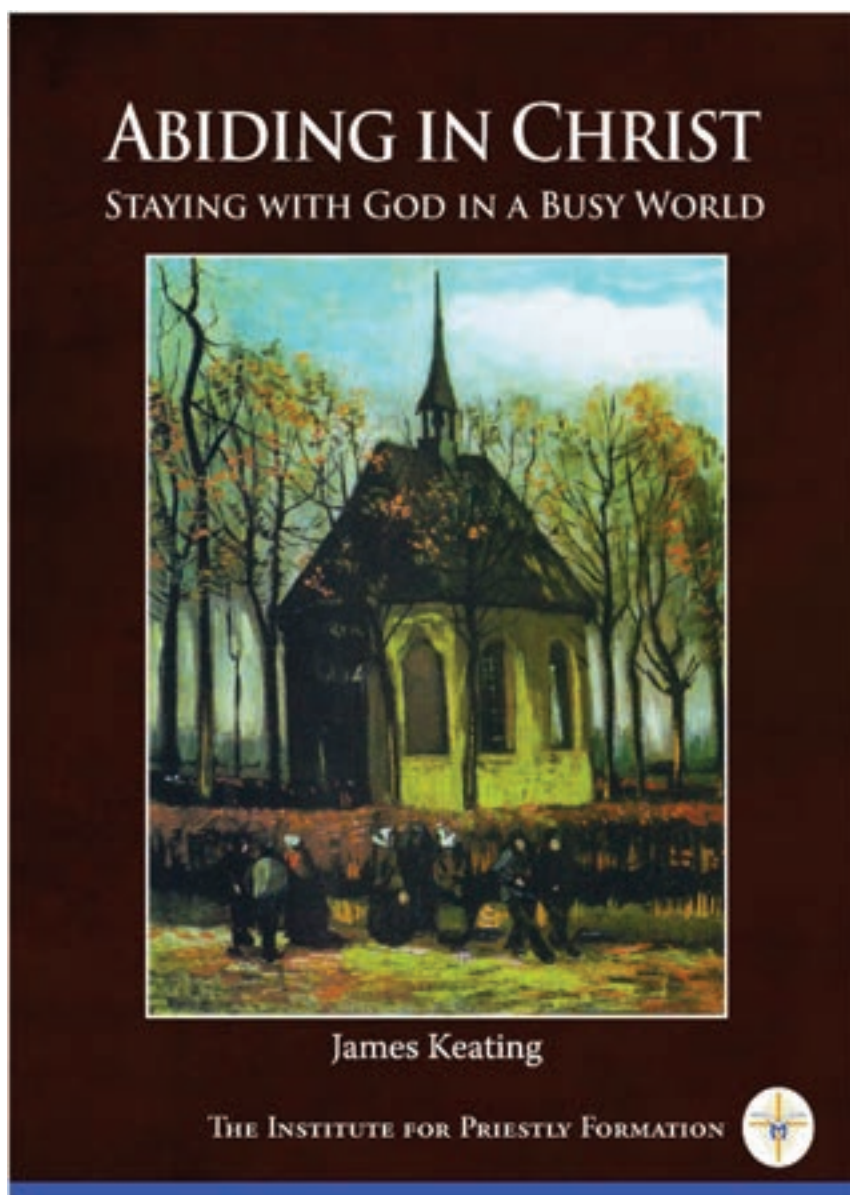
**By Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers**

Two weeks after I was ordained a deacon, we welcomed twins into our family. My wife and I were now raising a 4-year-old, a 2-year-old and newborn twins. Connecting with God through prayer in a deep and meaningful way every day while maintaining the intricate and vitally important balance between work and family was almost overwhelming. I wish Deacon James Keating's booklet was available back then!

All of us, at some point, struggle to fit God into our day. In our daily routines' busyness and the challenges that come with work and diaconal ministry, our hearts yearn for a simpler life. "Abiding in Christ: Staying with God in a Busy World" (Institute of Priestly Formation, \$5) delves into the complexity of life and teaches us how to stay close to God amidst the frenzy of human experience.

Deacon Keating shows how we can achieve a rich spiritual life through the transformative power of prayer, which is "fundamental, substantial, and fulfilling to our very humanity" and "defines our very lives" (page 2). The key lies in weaving the threads of prayer into the intricate fabric of our day. Thus the spiritual life — that is, living a life of holiness, prayer and moral living — becomes "not an achievement but a gift."

Part of the anxiety of finding space for



prayer comes from busyness, but also from our frustrations. Deacon Keating acknowledges this fact and insightfully shows that “the very frustrated desires you notice in yourself are what Christ wants to fulfill in you more than you can even imagine!”

This is because true human happiness flows from spiritual joy. Spiritual joy does not mean you are always going to be “happy” since spiritual joy involves suffering; it is the suffering of “letting go” to achieve interior peace.

“Abiding in Christ” also explores renunciation, celebration and hearing God as means of achieving divine intimacy or divinization (cf. 1 Jn 4:16 and 2 Pt 1:4). Deacon Keating explains that intimacy with the Lord comes from renouncing sin, and the more we turn to the Lord in our sin, the more we place ourselves in the presence of

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*All of us, at some point, struggle to fit God into our day.*

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his love, and the more our affection for sin will subside.

We “celebrate” when the “space formerly occupied by sinful interests becomes filled with joy and gratitude.” It is in celebrating that we create habits of love that are interspersed throughout our daily routines as the obligations and responsibilities of work, family and ministry vie for our time and attention.

Like a rich sauce that brings disparate elements of a meal into one cohesive dish, listening to God’s voice in silence unites divinization and celebration together into one harmonious song of praise.

Taking time every day to intentionally

make room for silence is critical. Since I often describe myself as “addicted” to Adoration, this is my favorite section of the book, where Deacon Keating provides an extraordinarily keen insight that has given me much food for thought: “Silence is not the absence of words but the fullness of presence, a presence ordered toward gift.”

Deacon Keating ends this short book with five practical ways to remain with God: vocation, prayer time, creative expression, service to others and communal worship. Deacon Keating offers prudent wisdom and sage spiritual guidance to help us navigate the sometimes turbulent waters of a busy and active life. **TD**

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DEACON HAROLD BURKE-SIVERS is the author of “Our Life of Service: The Handbook for Catholic Deacons” (Ave Maria, \$17.95).

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By Deacon Steve Kramer

# Preaching the Same Homily in Multiple Parishes

*The challenges presented in sharing the same message more than one time*

Ask five deacons what their preaching schedules are like and the answers will fluctuate widely. After my ordination in 1994, I typically preached once a month at one Mass. In 2010 my wife and I moved out of state. We went from a large Catholic suburban population to an area that was quite rural and had a small Catholic population. Leaving my former profession behind, I accepted a position as the director of pastoral care at a large (125-plus-bed) nursing facility. We had daily Mass at the nursing home, as well as one Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. Additionally, I served a parish that consisted of “three worship sites.” Three former stand-alone parishes (in a 40-mile radius) were now clustered together. The pastor did an outstanding job of bringing together three distinctly different communities.

The pastor and I worked out a schedule where he would preach all four Masses at the three parishes on any given weekend and on the following weekend I would do the same. Suddenly, my preaching schedule increased to three times a week at daily Mass, and every other or every third weekend preaching four or five Masses. How does one maintain the energy needed to finish Mass, drive 40 miles and preach again? Furthermore, those parish communities are distinctly different — different economic, housing, devotional and family situations. Could I tailor one message that could apply to each of the three communities plus the residents and staff at the nursing facility? Would it be possible to preach effectively by the third or fourth time the same homily was delivered?

Telling the same story, anecdote or homily three times in the span of several hours is a challenge. Anyone who has been in sales or marketing knows this all too well. If you see five customers in a day and you are able to pitch your product to three potential cli-

ents, the first presentation is exciting. Someone is ready to listen to you and the presentation is bright and engaging. Later in the day, you remember what you shared earlier and have made some modifications to make your pitch clearer and more succinct. By the third time you meet a customer you are tired and the sales presentation just doesn't seem fresh. You've been sharing it all day, and afterward you realize that you've left out a critical piece of information that may have cost you a sale.

The challenge for anyone making a presentation, and especially for homilists, is to understand that although you have heard the story multiple times, these listeners are hearing it for the first time.

Preachers who deliver multiple homilies on the same readings on any given Sunday will agree on these two points: First, the biggest challenge is to capture the flow of adrenaline and continue that feeling each Mass you preach. Second, knowing the idiosyncrasies of one's congregation (especially communities separated by long distances) is essential. While the basic bones of the homily remain the same, it is imperative to tweak the message so that it will relate to the group of people who are hearing the message for the first time.

Don't worry about reproducing your homily verbatim each time. Recall the important/main point(s). Remember, you are preaching to a different congregation. Pray, prepare and listen. God will use your words to change his people each time you preach. **TD**

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DEACON STEVE KRAMER, D.Min., is director of homiletics and associate professor of pastoral studies at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology in Hales Corners, Wisconsin.



By Susan Kehoe

# Healing for a Broken World

*It is Jesus who saves the world from sin*

The homilist at the funeral Mass described the deceased as a man who was profoundly broken. Father went on to add that it was through his brokenness that the man was able to help people in his diaconate ministry. My first thought: We are all broken.

But Father went on to say that the deacon knew how deeply broken he was. He knew how meaningless and lacking his life was until he turned his life over to God and developed a close relationship with Jesus. It takes humility to face our sins. Too often, we are prideful and try to protect our egos by rationalizing our shortcomings.

We are all broken and prone to sin. As Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote in “The Gulag Archipelago” (Harper, \$21.99), “The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either — but right through every human heart — and through all human hearts.”

God often uses our brokenness, our pain, our suffering, our failures to help us understand that every human being is completely dependent on God. We can only be healed of our sins — our brokenness — by clinging to Jesus and the Cross. It is only through God’s great mercy that we can be forgiven and healed, and be made whole.

We are living in an age where the whole world seems irrevocably broken. Our culture rejects the Christian understanding of what it means to be human — to be male and female.

Yet, Christians cannot despair, even as we struggle in a broken world gone mad. The story starts with the Incarnation. The Second Person of the Trinity becomes Emmanuel — God is with us. But it goes much deeper. The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him that Mary conceived a son by the power of the Holy Spirit. This child is called Jesus “because he will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21).

Yet we have to accept Jesus into our very being, and we have to accept his gift of salvation if we expect to change the world. We cannot do it on our own through politics or Twitter. Human

beings cannot bring justice and peace to the world without God.

A spiritual director once told me — he was quite frustrated — “The world already has a savior, and his name is Jesus, not Susan.” In other words, we cannot fix the world’s problems by our own efforts alone.

Pope Benedict said, “Only if people change will the world change; and in order to change, people need the light that comes from God, the light which so unexpectedly [on the night of Christmas] entered into our night” (Midnight Mass, Dec. 25, 2008).

We need to let Jesus — the light of the world — change us and work through us to heal the broken world.

If we develop a deep relationship with Jesus, we will understand that our weapons against our culture are not sharp tongues, anger, revenge or violence. Our weapons are those of Jesus. Repentance. Truth. Sacrificial love. But love is the most important. Real love turns away from the self toward the good of the other. The word sacrifice comes from the Latin term *sacrum facere*, which means to make sacred — to set aside as holy. Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice by dying on the cross for us. We are called to imitate him. We are called to be holy. It is that simple and that hard.


We are all tempted to sin because we are weak. Only by developing a deep relationship with Jesus the Christ can we overcome our weakness. God is always ready to forgive us and take us back if only we ask. St. Catherine of Sienna said: “The mercy which pours forth from you fills the whole world. It was by your mercy that we were created, and by your mercy that you redeemed us by sending your Son.”

That is why the prayer that I say every morning when I get up is, “Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” **TD**

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SUSAN KEHOE is co-director of RCIA at Christ the King Parish in Des Moines, Iowa, along with her husband, Deacon Larry Kehoe. She writes at [adeaconswife.com](http://adeaconswife.com).

## Leadership Program to Focus on the Eucharist

 The Notre Dame Center for Liturgy (NDCL) at the McGrath Institute for Church Life is launching a new initiative in 2022, The Mathis Liturgical Leadership Program (MLLP), to mark its 50th anniversary.

Every two years, the Mathis Liturgical Leadership Program identifies a pastoral issue facing the Church. The 2022-24 focus is fostering a Eucharistic culture in parishes, schools and dioceses to promote deeper affiliation with the Church, which aligns with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' initiative to deepen devotion to the Real Presence.

The Notre Dame

Center for Liturgy is designing a two-year formation program for 10-15 Church leaders that includes a hybrid process of education and formation. The program, funded by the center and scholarships, will be provided to leaders from select dioceses.

The program begins with a five-day conference held at the University of Notre

Dame and a six-week fall module. Spring 2023 includes a six-week module and a summer conference in Rome. The program culminates in the summer of 2024 with presentations at the University of Notre Dame.

Upon completion of the program, each participant will propose a project, teaching resource or publication, and the leaders will become ambassadors of the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy throughout the United States.

Get registration and additional information about The Mathis Liturgical Leadership Program at [mcgrath.nd.edu/mllp](http://mcgrath.nd.edu/mllp).



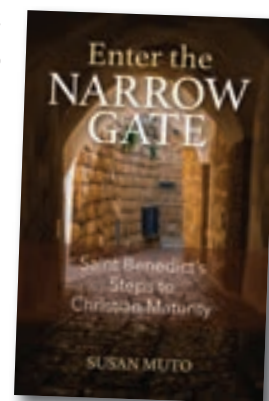
### 'Pray' Available for Home, Group Setting

"The family that prays together stays together" was coined by Father Patrick Peyton, an Irish immigrant who set sail for America in 1928 and became known as the Rosary priest. His story is told in the film **Pray: The Story of Patrick Peyton**, which is now available for home use and for licensing in a parish or group setting. "Father Peyton dedicated his entire life to his mission of changing the world through teaching others about the transformational power of prayer," according to Father David Guffey, CSC, director of Family Theater Productions and executive producer of "Pray." "We want to bring his inspirational message to audiences who are seeking to create a more meaningful way to connect with God and the universe during these challenging times." Visit [praythefilm.com](http://praythefilm.com).



### 'Enter the Narrow Gate'

The Christian call is to know, love and serve God in this world that we may be happy with him in heaven. This means finding and keeping the narrow way that Jesus describes.

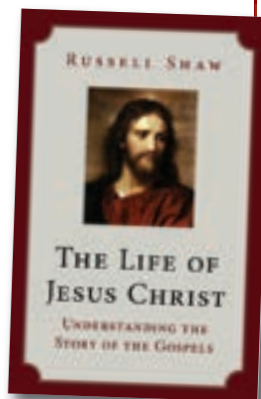


In **Enter the Narrow Gate: Saint Benedict's Steps to Christian Maturity** (OSV, \$15.95), Susan Muto, Ph.D., draws on St. Benedict's 12 steps and a collection of Christian classics to help us find encouragement and stay on the narrow path.

The choices we make have eternal ramifications, and there is no compromise between the narrow way and the easy road.

### Weaving Jesus' Life

Russell Shaw is taking a brand-new approach in **The Life of Jesus Christ: Understanding the Story of the Gospels** (OSV, \$15.95). He weaves together the events of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in chronological order, capturing a true and rounded picture of Jesus' life. With Shaw's guidance, readers will get to know Christ in a new way and should find the book a handy scriptural companion.



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