Introduction to this issue of the *Deacon’s Call*

First, I want to thank Archbishop Lori for allowing us to reprint his homily. We are truly blessed to have such a wonderful Archbishop to encourage and guide us. Please make sure you read his inspiring words.

Secondly, I want to thank our writers. We included the second half of Debbie Czawlytko’s article on ministry to the ill. Deacon Paul Weber’s tribute to his wife reminds us all of the importance of relationships and particularly our relationship with our wives. Deacon Brown’s article on the Spirituality of Work offers important insights into our daily lives. Deacon Reid’s article recaps the Day of Enrichment. Lastly, we are indebted to Kate Sullivan for her help with the layout and ordination, wedding anniversaries, and necrology list.

Finally, allow me to share our vision for the *Deacon’s Call*. We hope that it will be From the Deacon community and For the Deacon Community. This is where we need your help. Specifically, we need your input. We are thankful for the deacons who readily contribute when asked. However, we need more contributors. Please consider writing something for a future issue. Share you insights into your ministry. Review a book that inspired you. Reflect on a meaningful event in your life. Review a movie that moved you. Only with your help can we together make the *Deacon’s Call* a source of encouragement and inspiration for us all. I know there are deacons and wives waiting to make a contribution. Please send them in. — Lee Benson

I. Introduction: Choosing the Name ‘Francis’

a. When it was learned in 2013 that the new Pope was a Jesuit and that he would be called Francis, some speculated that he wanted to honor the Jesuit missionary St. Francis Xavier. The Pope himself quickly made it clear that he chose the name Francis after St. Francis of Assisi, the saint whose feast day we celebrate today. He did so because he wanted to see ‘a church that was for the poor.’

b. At a public audience, Pope Francis described how it happened. As the conclave that elected him proceeded, it was becoming clear to then-Cardinal Bergoglio that he would be elected pope. Sitting next to him was the Brazilian Cardinal, Claudio Hummes, who offered his neighbor comfort and consolation at that emotional moment. When Cardinal Bergoglio received the two-thirds majority, Cardinal Hummes hugged him and said: “Don’t forget about the poor!” “And those words came to me,” Pope Francis recalled, “The poor. The poor. Then right away, thinking of the poor, I thought of Francis of Assisi. Then I thought of all the wars as the votes were being counted, until the end. Francis is also the man of peace. This is how the name came into my heart: Francis of Assisi.”

c. “The man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation,” How providential that we are gathered for this day of enrichment on the feast day of the great Francis of Assisi. And in my homily today, I will let Pope Francis guide our thoughts on how the example of Francis of Assisi applies to your lives and ministries here in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

*continued on page 2.....*
II. Embracing the Poor as Mediators of Light

a. All of us know something about the life of St. Francis of Assisi but it is good to retell the story, at least briefly. To put it briefly, Francis was born in 1182 into comfortable circumstances. His father sold “dry goods” as we used to say and was wealthy. Young Francis seemed destined to enjoy life and its much-vaunted pleasures, until, one day, a Gospel passage deeply touched his heart…the passage where Jesus sent his disciples forth on a missionary journey, instructing them to take “no sack for the journey or a second tunic, or sandals, or a walking stick” (Mat. 10:10).

b. To the utter astonishment of his family and friends, the young Francis abandoned the comfortable life into which he was born. He left behind everything he had in order to become poor, like Christ, and began to bear witness to Christ on the streets of Assisi. Before long, others came to join him, soon to be known as the Friars Minor.

c. Pope Francis tells us, however, what really sealed Francis of Assisi’s conversion. It was the moment he embraced a leper. That leper became for Francis of Assisi “a mediator of light” (Lumen Fidei, no. 57) because in the poor, the sick, and the suffering persons that we embrace, “we embrace the suffering Body of Christ.” Indeed, the mysteries of the Kingdom of God are revealed not only to the poor and the simple but also through them…

III. Embracing and Accompanying

a. But it is not enough, Pope Francis tells us, merely to embrace the poor, not enough for us to have only a passing relationship with the poor. Rather, he says, “we must hold the hand of the one in need, of the one who has fallen into the darkness of dependency without even knowing how, and you must say to her: ‘You can get up, you can stand up. It is difficult but it is possible, if you want to….You are never alone. The Church and so many people are close to you....”

b. In describing the patron saint of his papacy, Pope Francis also shares what I take to be two pillars of his pastoral program for the evangelization of the Church throughout the world: encounter and accompaniment. Just as St. Francis of Assisi encountered the leper by embracing him, immediately conveying love and acceptance, so too we are never to treat those to whom we minister impersonally. We must try to know those we serve and we must leave the door wide open so that they will want to talk with us, not merely about trivial things but about what really matters in their lives. Pope Francis makes it clear, as did Blessed Mother Teresa, that our openness must include the materially and spiritually poor, those who are sick, suffering, and otherwise so very vulnerable, as well as those who live in spiritual poverty because they are estranged from God.

c. But the moment of encounter is only the beginning. Pope Francis tells us and our co-workers in the vineyard, that we must accompany those we have encountered; we must help them along the way to encounter the Person of Christ, to experience the greatness of his love and mercy, and to receive the transforming power of his grace in the company of the Church. Once they arise and are standing, they too can be the Lord’s witnesses. Accompanying people on their spiritual journey is time-consuming and exhausting. It does not always lead to success, at least in worldly terms, and there is always the temptation to seek an easy way out. Pope Francis and Francis of Assisi would urge us not to do so.

IV. Representing the Church

a. As you know so well, the diaconal ministry has three pillars: Word, Altar, and Service to the Poor. St. John Paul II famously said that the diaconate represents “the Church’s service “sacramentalized” and the National Directory on the Diaconate goes on to say: “Therefore, the deacon’s service in the Church’s ministry of word and liturgy would be severely deficient if his exemplary witness and assistance in the Church’s ministry of charity and justice did not accompany it.” Again and again we are reminded that all three components of diaconal ministry are interrelated and co-joined, a mirror image of the Church herself. continued on page 3....
b. As the Archdiocese of Baltimore celebrates its 225th anniversary, we do well to note that we were one of the first dioceses to embrace the restoration of the diaconate after the II Vatican Council and we do well to celebrate those pioneering deacons, their wives, and their families. It is a moment for me to thank all of you for your ministry in our midst. This anniversary is also a time for us to embrace anew the mission of evangelization that has been entrusted to this Premier See, and that mission must include the proclamation of the Gospel by service to the poor, the needy and vulnerable, and by working to create a more just and compassionate society.

c. As deacons, together with your wives and families, you are called to engage in ministries that enable you to embrace the poor and to accompany them on their journey to Christ, knowing that your own journey is guided and hastened in the process. You are called to exemplify in your own lives the freedom of St. Francis of Assisi who, unencumbered by attachment to possessions, bore witness to Christ in ways that still captivate the heart of the world. May this great saint pray for you and may his example guide you in your ministry.

Our secular culture has a mixed attitude toward work-- as sometimes fulfilling but also as drudgery. It’s an economic necessity, providing us with goods and services we need or want, but we may also see it as wage slavery. There is also all the unpaid work we do: raising children, cleaning the house, keeping the yard tidy, etc. Why do so many drag themselves to work on Monday in a spirit of desolation, to use the Ignatian phrase, and experience the end of the work week in a spirit of consolation or elation? Is paid work only what we do so we can have a “real life” the rest of the time? What is the Church’s view of all these forms of work, and is there really a “spirituality of work” that allows work to be a part of our relationship with God and our neighbors?

Corporations and organizations of all sorts spend time and money to build “team spirit,” through incentives, “attaboys,” and endless sloganeering. Must we propagandize ourselves into believing that what we do for pay has some meaning beyond the profit motive? It is clear that some forms of work, such as the medical profession, do have the advantage of offering some direct help to those in need. Nonetheless, even the most altruistic charitable work may become disappointing and wearying to us as we encounter the endless neediness of our fellow humans. What about forms of work that don’t seem directly connected to the good of our fellow man? Is there some spiritual aspect to human work itself?

Jesus as our model shows us the dignity of the human being and of human work: he and his foster father Joseph worked in construction, and his mother Mary did the duties of the “domestic engineer.” Also, we know that in his public ministry Jesus went about doing his Father’s work, as we read in John 5:17: “My Father is still working, and I also am working.” Indeed, there are many statements in Scripture about God working. Since we are made in God’s image and likeness, and God is always active, we can see that our activities must have meaning, and work has an intrinsic value as a means of human self actualization and self realization. Yet this is easy to say but not realize in our daily activities, so we need to look to examples of people who have found God in their work.

Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection wrote letters which were gathered after his death into a small volume. This work is usually titled “The Practice of the Presence of God.” Bro. Lawrence constantly recollected himself, knowing that he was in God’s presence at all times and in all activities. Therefore he found God in all his work, especially among the pots and pans in the monastery kitchen, where he labored for much of his life. Bro. Lawrence worked for the love of God at all times: “Do everything for the love of God. continued on page 4
Everything can be used to show God our love and to maintain his presence within . . . I flip over my omelet in the pan for love of God.” Knowing God and His presence in our lives gives us the assurance of our dignity and worth, no matter what work we may be doing, or how difficult it may be.

What is needed for this practice of God’s presence is (1) the determination to be at prayer at all times by practicing a continual conversation with God, and (2) recalling to mind the greatness of God and His mystery, rather than being distracted by other thoughts—as is so common in our culture of constant noise. Brother Lawrence says: “Our sanctification depends, not on changing what we do, but rather on doing for God what we normally do for ourselves.” God will give us the grace to become saints—not in spite of our work, but during our work and through our work.

John Paul II wrote the encyclical letter Laborem Exercens to set out the Church’s view of the dignity of labor and of those who labor in order to urge all organizations to respect workers and their rights. His letter is a further development of the Church’s teachings on social justice which originated in a formal sense with Pope Leo XII in 1891. In the view of John Paul II, we cannot understand work without understanding man, and man has been given the task of work from the beginning. In fact, work in the subjective sense is man himself, as worker and as the subject of work.

So what can we recommend to ourselves and others in order to create a spirituality of work, and to make our work and lives into a prayer? Brother Lawrence’s practice of recollecting God’s presence is one way, both simple and profound: “The [practice of the] presence of God, a little difficult at the beginning, practiced with fidelity, brings about in the soul wonderful effects.” Our work at home and at our business should be viewed as our calling—each of us is called in some small way to be a co-creator with God of his kingdom. Viewed this way, all of our work can be part of Christ’s work of salvation. God created each of us for a specific reason, and each of us is unique. Cardinal Newman said: “God has committed some work to me which has not been committed to another. I have my mission—I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told of it in the next.”

The brief thoughts above will, I hope, inspire some reflection on your part about your own experience of God through your work (of all kinds). I also hope that it will inspire some homilies that will help our parishioners to see God at work in their lives and present in their work, so that they do not lose sight of God during the “daily grind.”

May God bless you all! And send you the grace to carry out your mission of work for his kingdom! 

Your brother Kevin

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It was said by someone in the Marine Corps who told his superior that he could not do a certain task because his wife needed him at a certain time that, “If the government had wanted you to have a wife, they would have issued you one.”

Unfortunately, some of us deacons act as though we felt that way as well. Fortunately, most do not.

My original Director of Deacons in formation told me that my primary spiritual director is my wife.

That makes sense when one considers that the marriage came before the ordination. My wife certainly had no inkling of anything resembling life as a deacon’s wife. At the time of our wedding I was a career military man for the foreseeable future.

When I was first ordained, I belonged to almost every ministry that the parish had. As a result, I was gone from the house very many times in any given week. I fell victim to the rationale “but they meet only once a month.” Do the math with 20 of them! Finally my wife quoted to me a saying, “You don’t have to save the world; it has already been done!” I had to learn to

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listen when she said I was getting too involved; when she asked me to stay home more.

Over my 32 years of ordination, my wife and I have had many points of contention. We found out over time that we could not serve on the same committees or be active in the same ministries. We are too much alike! We realized the hard way that I am not street wise in that I believe whatever a person tells me.

But through it all, my wife has been there. She was the primary source of two very fine now grown sons. She has persevered through my many absences and been there each time I came home. She has understood when I was asked by my pastor or bishop for whom I worked when they wanted me at specific meetings.

Not long ago, she was wondering whether she should get more involved in some ministry and contribute more of her talents to people. After she explored several avenues for doing that and finding none that worked for her, I finally convinced her that she had probably the most misunderstood and under-appreciated ministry a woman could have, being a deacon’s wife. The ministry allowed me to fulfill my ministry as a married deacon with a family and a job. Her ministry allowed our family to enjoy a happy life, a warm and loving home and a life based on the values in which we both believed. She loved golf, gardening, sewing and cooking and found time for it all while still “keeping the home fires burning.”

I share this to encourage the wives of deacons. They are precious gifts given to the church by an unexpected calling on their part. At the ordination of their husbands, they are asked to sign permission for their husbands to be ordained. They have really no understanding of how that permission will change their lives but they trust in God, the information provided by the formation experience and a small sense of future life from already ordained deacons and their wives. That is really a response to a call to ministry. They are never to be taken for granted.

Ministry to the sick often includes ministering to the dying as well. While Deacons cannot administer the Sacrament of the Sick, they can provide a great amount of comfort and support to both the dying person and the family. In his 2004 book, The Four Things That Matter Most, Dr. Ira Byock has written that dying people need to accomplish four tasks: ask forgiveness, grant forgiveness, say thank you, say I love you. A fifth task, saying goodbye to loved ones, is often included by those who work with the dying (see dying.about.com/od/reviews/gr/four_things). Much, much more could be written on this topic, but in this space we’ll just say that facilitating the accomplishment of these tasks is one extremely important way we can provide support.

Many people are already aware of the concept of hospice, in which life prolonging treatment is not given, but palliative care, or comfort measures, are provided. This type of care can take place in the home, nursing home, or hospice facility. Most hospice nurses and staff are very aware of the importance of spiritual care at the end of life, and work hard to see that all of the hospice patient’s needs – body, mind, and spirit – are met. Most hospice organizations have full-time and on-call chaplains, but a representative from one’s home parish can provide another level of support, and is a symbol that one’s parish family is supporting him/her as well. Therefore, it is important that we, as ministers to the sick, continue to visit when those to whom we’ve been ministering enter hospice care, if possible.

Each death, as each individual, is unique. Some are tragic, others peaceful and beautiful as well as sad. In all cases, the family – those left behind – need some special care, as well. As death draws near, most dying people seem for a time to have one foot in this world and one in the next. They may appear unconscious, but show some sort of response when an awaited family member arrives, or someone says goodbye with a kiss. Their bodies begin to shut down, and they no longer need food or water.

Because we don’t know exactly what the dying person experiences, we encourage people to continue to talk to and touch their loved one. Sometimes, families need to tell the dying person that it’s okay to let go.
We try to be very gentle at this time, speaking quietly, and staying in the background. It’s important for families to feel they’ve done all they can to make the dying person’s transition to the next life as easy as possible. The minister can offer to lead the family in prayer, or read from scripture as the family keeps vigil. Families usually do not remember what is said, but they do remember that someone from the Church was present to support them. Or not.

As with ministering to the sick, ministering to the family of a dying person is about listening more than talking. Even when a death is expected, family members feel shock and disbelief when death occurs. There is a saying that every death is a sudden death. Each survivor reacts differently. Again, the minister is there to support, not direct, the family. Some people will want to spend time with the body, while others will need to be the Martha of the family, and set about making arrangements. Planning a nice funeral is the last loving thing that can be done for the person who has died. Stress and misunderstanding sometimes surrounds the differing ways people react to a loved one’s death. For example, making sure all of the funeral arrangements are in order when death is imminent, but has not occurred, can be viewed as cold, hard, or worse. In actuality, the need to finalize plans may spring from a deep desire to lovingly prepare a proper burial, and a feeling that other tasks would be futile.

Bereavement is different for each person as well, and does not end with the luncheon after the funeral. Some folks really do just fine after a loss, and need a minimum of support. Others can take months or even years to feel whole. Grief is a normal response to a sad event. Instead of trying to help the living to “get over” grief after a significant loss, we need to understand that the pain of losing someone we deeply love never really goes away.

With time, the pain becomes less sharp, and the loss is integrated into a new way of living. The relationship does not disappear; it changes.

In his book, Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart, Dr. Alan Wolfelt describes six things the bereaved need to accomplish. These needs include accepting the reality of the death, feeling the pain of loss, remember the deceased, developing a new self-identity, finding meaning, allowing others to help. (p. 88) These needs are not meant to be sequential, like steps on a ladder. Working to meet these needs can be very strenuous and draining for the bereaved. The deacon can help by being supportive, listening and walking with the person doing this hard work.

Because body mind and spirit are so intimately connected, grief can lead to physical symptoms, along with mental and spiritual distress. In some cases, deep grief can lead to clinical depression. Because we know that clinical depression is a treatable, medical illness, it may be necessary for the bereaved to make an appointment with a primary care physician and/or a professional counselor or therapist. It’s important that recent loss and bereavement be included as part of the medical history. Remember: no one can will himself to stop feeling depressed. If that were the case, no one would ever have depression because it feels awful!!

Again, much more could be discussed regarding ministry to the bereaved. For now, we’ll finish with these few thoughts: If the home parish does not have its own bereavement support program it’s a good idea to become familiar with such groups within the community. Often hospice organizations provide some sort of bereavement care, and funeral homes can be another good source of referrals. In the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Stella Maris’ Counseling Center conducts several programs for the bereaved. St. Ignatius, Hickory in Harford County has an active bereavement ministry, which all are welcome to attend. ♣
Our every other year Deacon’s Day of Enrichment was held this past October at Saint Louis the King Parish in Clarksville. Each year either the Deacon’s Day of Enrichment or the Deacon’s Convocation is usually held as close to the Feast of Saint Francis as possible. And each year the Deacon’s renew their promises from Ordination to the Archbishop at either of the Masses celebrated. About 55 deacons and their wives were in attendance this year at our Mass.

The day began with a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Lori with Monsignors Joe Lucca and Jim Hannon concelebrating. After Mass, Archbishop Lori had a one-hour question and answer period with the deacons and their wives. A variety of topics were covered and discussed by the Archbishop.

Afterward, the Archbishop stayed and ate with us and visited each table as we enjoyed a "Thanksgiving" style meal of turkey, mashed potatoes, and stuffing with gravy from the local Boston Market.

Deacon Dave Page, chair of the D.P.B. Ongoing Formation Committee, planned the day and was able to get Mrs. Maria del Mar Munoz-Visoso, executive director of the Secretariat for Diversity to the U.S.C.C.B., to be our featured speaker.

Her presentation to the assembled deacon community and wives truly helped us learn how we as deacons can be part of the ongoing mission of the Church to evangelize and welcome diversity among the many possible new groups of believers that might come into our parish communities. With the underlying hope that, through these newly-acquired practices, we might achieve the goal of Jesus Christ "so that they all may be one."

We learned about the six stages of intercultural sensitivity: denial, defense, minimizing, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Additionally, we covered the Catholic understanding of the parish life and mission. We also touched on best practices used around the United States in parishes who have successfully navigated through the six stages of intercultural sensitivity.

Certainly we as an Archdiocese are now in the process of the assimilation of many people from other cultures, customs and languages into some of our parish communities. Her PowerPoint presentation is available by contacting her at the USCCB. She gave each couple a bilingual book from the USCCB titled "Best Practices for Shared Parishes so that they All May be One".

Finally we finished off our DOE with Evening Prayer and a Memorial Service for our dearly departed brother deacons from October 2013 through October 2014.

Our thanks to Deacon Dave Page and the members of the Deacon Personnel Board led by Deacon George Sisson and for the ongoing support of Monsignor Jim Hannon, Cindy Orr and Carol Purwin from the Office of Clergy Personnel. And once again our very special thanks to Monsignor Joe Lucca and our three brother deacons Fred Mauser, DPB member Scott Lancaster and Frank Sarro from the parish of St. Louis the King in Clarksville for their hospitality to the deacon community.

The Deacon’s Call
Newsletter of the Baltimore Deacon Community -- December 2014

Issues are published quarterly, normally in March, May, August, and November. The deadline for articles is on the 15th of the month preceding publication. Your comments and ideas for future newsletters are welcome.

We need articles! Please consider writing a brief article on an aspect of your ministry or a review of a book you have read or a film you have seen.

Please email comments to any member of the Communications Committee.

~Lee Benson, Chair
Current Emmaus Groups

St. Ephrem Fraternity
2nd Tuesday of each month
10 a.m. — Immaculate Conception
Contact: Deacon John Gramling
410-823-0694

St. Lawrence
3rd Friday of each month
8:30 a.m. — Location varies
Contact: Deacon Mark Soloski
410-664-4654

The Amen Corner
Last Thursday of each month
Noon — An Poitin Stil Irish Pub
St. Vincent Fraternity
Contact: Deacon Jack Ames

Holy Trinity
2nd Tuesday of each month
6 p.m. — Holy Trinity, Glen Burnie
Contact: Deacon Kevin Brown
410-544-6330

Urban Emmaus Group
2nd Saturday of each month
8 a.m. -- St. Peter Claver/St. Pius V
1546 N. Fremont Ave., Baltimore
Contact: Deacon Will Witherspoon
410-599-8327

Deacon Families of Central Maryland (includes wives)
Fourth Sunday (location changes)
Contact: Deacon George Sisson
301-473-4800

If you have started a new Emmaus Group, or if your group’s information needs updating, please provide the pertinent information to The Deacon’s Call.

Wedding Anniversary Dates

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<td>Herman &amp; Loretta Wilkins</td>
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<td>Nicholas &amp; Mary Ann Feurer</td>
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<td>J. Edward &amp; Kay Bee</td>
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<td>Paul &amp; Patti Gifford</td>
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<td>Gerald &amp; Mary Theresa Roberts</td>
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Please remember to check your email for the letter from Msgr. Hannon concerning the Shield the Vulnerable compliance management system. We must complete the registration and the continuing education requirements by December 31, 2014. Please contact the Archdiocese’s Office of Child and Youth Protection at 410-547-5348 if you have any questions or concerns.