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INTRODUCTION TO THIS ISSUE OF THE DEACON'S CALL

We are blessed to have three new writers in this issue of The Deacon's Call. Den. Kevin Bagley, ordained in 2001, is a 2013 graduate of the Catholic University of America with a Doctorate in Ministry, specializing in Liturgical Studies and Sacramental Theology. Kevin ministers at Saint Leo the Great in Little Italy. Den. Fritz Bauerschmidt, ordained in 2007, received his Doctorate at Duke University in 1996 and currently chairs the Theology Dept. at Loyola University and ministers at Corpus Christi. Fritz has authored four books; the most recent one, Faith, Reason and Following Christ, will soon be available from Amazon. I highly recommend his class on Thomas Aquinas. Den. Kevin Brown, ordained in 2005, received a Master's degree in Church Ministry from the Ecumenical Institute in May, 2013 and ministers at Holy Trinity, Good Shepard and Crucifixion, all in Glen Burnie. We asked these men to reflect on the Pope's recent encyclical, Lumen Fidei and present their perspectives on this document.

Den. Monti Montalto, in "Are you a Dynamic Catholic," offers insights into what we all see going on at our parishes. May his thoughts encourage all of us to preach and teach more effectively.

Peace and many blessings,
Lee Benson

Lumen Fidei: Perspectives on the New Encyclical

'Four Hands' Witness to Unity of Faith

Deacon Fritz Bauerschmidt, Ph.D.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart left his final work, the Requiem, unfinished to be completed by his friend and some-time assistant Franz Xaver Süssmayr. It is somehow fitting that Pope Benedict, a great lover of Mozart, left his last encyclical unfinished to be completed by another.

Pope Francis has described Lumen Fidei, the first encyclical to appear under his name, as "the work of four hands," though both the speed with which it appeared after Benedict's

See Bauerschmidt, page 2

Faith: A Gift to be Nurtured and Shared

by Kevin Bagley, D. Min.

It is uncommon for one pontiff to begin an encyclical and another to complete it. We have, in Lumen Fidei, the work of two magnificent intellectuals to guide us to a better understanding of the light of faith.

Released near the 50th anniversary of the 2nd Vatican Council, the encyclical expounds on the work of the Council and reminds us that faith is able to illuminate all existence, helping us separate good from evil, especially in this age where truth

See Bagley, page 3

Everyone Is Invited Into an Encounter with God

by Kevin Brown, M.A.

Lumen Fidei reminds us of the baptism rite for children, when we hand a lighted candle, lit from the Easter candle, to the parents, saying, "Receive the Light of Christ." This sign of the child being enlightened by Christ and receiving the flame of faith expresses the importance of the gift of faith.

Not surprisingly, the third chapter of the encyclical contains a baptismal catechesis on the transmission of faith that is useful for a baptism homily.

See Brown, page 4

Believe what you read,
Teach what you believe,
Practice what you teach.

REFLECTIONS ON *LUMEN FIDEI*

*Lumen Fidei*—Bauerschmidt ... cont'd. from page 1

resignation, along with the presence of characteristically Benedictine touches, seems to indicate that this is largely Benedict's encyclical. In the end, however, what is most striking is the way in which two quite different Popes can join together in a common teaching on faith.

As in Benedict's previous encyclicals, *Lumen Fidei* is filled with references to Scripture and the great Patristic and Scholastic theologians, as well as to modern writers – not only philosophers ranging from Rousseau to Nietzsche to Wittgenstein, but also such literary figures as Dostoevsky and T. S. Eliot. We also find themes that have been characteristic of Benedict's papacy, such as the continuing importance of the Greek philosophical heritage and the perils posed to the Christian faith by modernity, with its characteristics of relativism, scientific reductionism, and individualism. While it is probably futile to attempt to disentangle the strands of Francis' contribution to Benedict's draft, there are a few points where the encyclical sounds notes that have already become characteristic of Francis' papacy, such as the statement that “anyone who sets off on the path of doing good to others is already drawing near to God, is already sustained by his help” (§35). Still, *Lumen Fidei* seems to be much more Benedict's final encyclical – forming along with *Deus Caritas Est* and *Spees Salvi* three-fold meditation on the theological virtues – than it does Francis' first.

The encyclical is concerned to assert, against the modern tendency to either dismiss faith's claims entirely or to reduce them to statements of subjective preference, that faith is a source of genuine knowledge. *Lumen Fidei* has no time for such sentiments as the oft-heard claim that it doesn't matter what you believe in as long as you believe in something. “Faith without truth does not save, it does not provide a sure footing” (§24). While faith takes us beyond what we can know by reason alone, it is neither a leap into the dark nor merely a source of personal consolation (§3). It is a light that illumines the mind and gives us new eyes with which to perceive God's truth. As the encyclical puts it, “Faith does not merely gaze at Jesus, but

sees things as Jesus himself sees them, with his own eyes: it is a participation in his way of seeing” (§18).

One source of the objectivity of faith is its ecclesial nature. Faith is never simply “mine;” it belongs to the Church, “a Mother who teaches us to speak the language of faith” (§38). I do not construct my own belief system any more than I could speak a private language known by no one but me. Believers are united in a single faith within the communion of the Church. My “I believe” is rooted and grounded in the communal “we believe” of the Church, which is transmitted via “the profession of faith, the celebration of the sacraments, the path of the ten commandments, and prayer” (§46).

Because faith is not simply a personal preference, because it is a light that illumines genuine truth, it is of relevance not only to individuals and to the Church, but also to the wider world. It “makes us appreciate the architecture of human relationships because it grasps their ultimate foundation and definitive destiny in God” (§51). Particularly in modern, secularized societies, it is important to maintain our commitment to the public character of faith and not capitulate to the pressure to turn faith into a matter of private opinion. Christians must be confident that the knowledge of God and of all things in relation to God that faith provides is crucial to the building of a more human and humane world.

This encyclical, coming from the “four hands” of Benedict and Francis, is a witness to the unity of the faith. Benedict and Francis are Popes with very different backgrounds, one an academic and the other a pastor, one from the Old World and the other from the New. Benedict was very concerned with the internal life of the Church while Francis seems more focused on the Church's interface with the world. And yet in bringing Benedict's encyclical to completion, Francis shows that our common faith can transcend – and indeed be enriched by – such differences. This is perhaps the most profound lesson that *Lumen Fidei* can teach us about faith. ❖

## REQUEST FOR ARTICLES: WE VALUE YOUR INPUT!

Here are some topics for the next issue. Would you consider writing on one of them? Articles of 1,000 words or less are due December 2, 2013.

- ◆ The Word Made Flesh — Reflections on the Incarnation
- ◆ Mary, Mother of God — Reflections on Mary and her role in our lives
- ◆ John the Baptist: Being a Prophet in our Modern World
- ◆ Movie Reviews and Book Reviews: What have you been watching or reading lately?

## REFLECTIONS ON LUMEN FIDEI

*Lumen Fidei*—Bagley ... cont'd. from page 1

has become blurred. The pontiff speaks of a, “massive amnesia in our contemporary world” where relativism is the norm and “truth” is determined by “what I think.”

In fact, truth is centered on an encounter with Jesus Christ—the Truth with no beginning and no end Who became incarnate to guide us to a greater good by filling us with His grace and transforming our hearts. If we heed His words and let them touch our being, we can follow Him and live in His light.

Introducing his first encyclical in Saint Peter’s Square, Francis said, “I offer it with joy to the whole People of God: in fact, especially today, we need to go to the essentials of the Christian faith, to deepen it, and to measure current issues by it. But I think that this encyclical, at least in some parts, can also be useful to those who are searching for God and for the meaning of life. I put it in the hands of Mary, the perfect icon of faith, that it may bring in the fruits that the Lord wants.”

For deacons, these words ring true. We have learned the essentials of our faith and continually strive to deepen our understanding of the Gospels and the Catechism. As ordained men working in secular professions and living in the public square, we must challenge the norms of today that try to make truth relative.

We must live the Gospel message and bring that living Word to all we meet – our co-workers, the cashier in the store, the teller at the bank, our neighbors, our closest family members. From the infant we baptize to the hospice patient to whom we bring viaticum, we must be bringing Christ’s light to all.

The Word of God has been a source of light from the beginning of God’s relationship with man. Abraham listened to the word of God, and Jesus brought us to a deeper understanding, revealing God to us and inspiring us to want to live as he lived. As we trust in Jesus and in His word, we find that we can follow His way.

With, “the crisis of truth in our age”, the pope states that it is more important than ever to recognize the true truth – not the truth of technology or science, which are useful for the moment but do not last. God’s great love and truth can and will transform those who follow; we will see the true reality with new eyes. God’s truth is not violently imposed and does not crush the individual. It renders humble the believer, who must coexist with and respect others, trusting that God can be found by anyone with a sincere heart who is seeking the true light.

Nonetheless, evangelization must not be understated in this modern age. The pope encourages us to bring light into the darkness, faith to the unbeliever, a flame to those without. We cannot believe on our own; we must rely on a community of faith to strengthen and support us to bring the love and light of God to others. Baptism reminds us that we belong to a community of faithful, beginning with the family. Eucharist nourishes and strengthens our faith, making present the Pascal mystery.

The most important areas illuminated by faith are the family, based on the marriage of one man with one woman, youth, who demonstrate the “joy of faith,” and social relations, that make us children of God. We must not be ashamed to confess our love for God publicly because faith illuminates the social life. Faith is linked to hope, especially to those who suffer.

Through our Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the pope prays that she might assist us in our faith, remind us that we are never alone, and teach us to see others through the eyes of Jesus.

As deacons we have the authority and the grace to teach, preach and reach our brothers and sisters in the faith and those without faith. We take this teaching of Pope Francis to heart, to live our calling as ministers of the Gospel and heralds of the Word. At ordination, we were enjoined to “Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become: Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.” *Lumen Fidei* reminds us that faith is a gift to be nurtured, shared, and passed along. ❖

## The Deacon’s Call

*Newsletter of the Baltimore Deacon Community*

July – September 2013

Issues are published quarterly, in normally March, May, August, and November. The deadline for articles is on the 15<sup>th</sup> 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](#)

[Cliff Britton](#)

[Harbey Santiago](#)

[Angela Martin](#)

REFLECTIONS ON *LUMEN FIDEI**Lumen Fidei*—Brown ... cont'd. from page 1

*Lumen Fidei* tells us that faith is enlightening to the mind and heart, and is not a “blind faith” that operates without reason—in fact, faith illuminates the whole of life and broadens the horizons of reason. The theme of the interplay of faith and reason is a favorite of Pope Benedict, and indeed this encyclical is partly his work. It completes the series on the theological virtues begun by Pope Benedict and, as expected, ties faith to love and hope. This “work of four hands” is also partly a response to the shallow and mistaken understanding of faith that is currently fashionable among modern agnostics and atheists. In defiance of the modern atheists, the encyclical points out the fruitful dialogue of reason and faith that developed in the early church and continues to this day (as another recent example, see John Paul II’s *Fides et Ratio*). In fact, the second chapter of *Lumen Fidei* is pointedly entitled “Unless you believe, you will not understand.”

“Faith is born of an encounter with the living God who calls us and reveals his love,” Francis writes (§4). Thus, faith is primarily relational, not just for individuals, but for the community, seeking the oneness with others that Jesus prays for in John’s Gospel. Faith is not confined to the relationship between God and me: “faith sets us on a journey; it enables witness and dialogue with all” (§34). This means that faith, as God’s gift, invites everyone into an encounter with God, including the agnostic, the atheist, the seeker, and

those who doubt. Those who are seeking God will be encouraged by this thought (§35): “To the extent that they are sincerely open to love and set out with whatever light they can find, they are already, even without knowing it, on the path leading to faith.” Later in the same paragraph, Francis says: “Religious man is a wayfarer; he must be ready to let himself be led, to come out of



himself and to find the God of perpetual surprises.” I think this “God of surprises” appeals to all who open their hearts to love and truth, especially those who are in doubt. This means that at moments when we least expect it, we may be of help to someone who is seeking God, even though we may not realize it. Faith as a gift from God cannot be given to others solely by our own efforts, although it can be nurtured and encouraged.

Often in my own journey of faith, I have been surprised by God, including my original call to the diaconate. Like the prophets and judges of the Old Testament, I thought when I received my calling that perhaps God had “gotten the wrong number.” The experiences of my ministry have also been surprising—sometimes in the seemingly most mun-

dane or ordinary events there are hidden depths of the spirit that open up, revealing God’s truth and love for us. The tasks that seem at first unfruitful and perhaps inconvenient or even annoying to us may be where God reveals himself the most or is best using us for his purposes. This is a surprising God indeed—proven lately by his calling in succession two men who were ready to retire to take up the pontificate instead.

This encyclical contains much that invites thought and prayer, especially in its linkage of faith and love. In §15 we read: “In the love of God revealed in Jesus, faith perceives the foundation on which all reality and its final destiny rest.” Thus God, in love, invites us into a relationship that engages our entire being and every moment of our lives.

The experience of faith rooted in love is also transformative. In §21, Pope Francis says: “Those who believe are transformed by the love to which they have opened their hearts in faith.” This statement calls to mind an epistle: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). This transformation is something that we have all experienced and have seen in others as we undergo conversion in all aspects of our lives. At times dramatically, at times subtly, we are being transformed to shine with the light of love that emanates from Jesus Christ.

I hope these brief words will inspire others to take up this encyclical and find in it inspiration for prayer, teaching, preaching—and living! ❖

## Into the Abyss with the Lord

by Deacon Kevin Reid

Not long ago, while vacationing at my brother's house in Connecticut, I stepped off a second floor staircase in the middle of the night in a dark hallway and went head over heels down the stairs, landing at the bottom in a bruised and bloody state.

Miraculously nothing was broken; however, I suffered a bad concussion that caused a brain bleed, and I had to be transported from a small community hospital to a major trauma center in Providence, R.I. For 41 miles, I listened to the wail of the siren knowing God was with me. Although in shock, I felt amazement—logic could not explain how I tumbled down an entire flight of stairs without breaking anything.

At the hospital, they said it was because I didn't tense up as I went end over end. I think my Guardian Angel protected me that night; I took a beating, but I could have been dead.

Recently I preached to the patients at GBMC about my fall and how God had been present with me, if you pardon the pun, *every step* of the way.

God never leaves us, especially during those most difficult times we all face at one time or another. He promises to be with us and He is true to his word — believe me, I know. He never left me on my own during that night. From the EMT who kept me awake during the ride, to the ER doctor in Connecticut, to the chief resident at the trauma center reassuring me that the neurosurgeons would soon be looking at my brain, God acted through the hands of many people; He was in control.

The first hospital was a quiet place with a just a handful of people—two nurses, a few technicians, and one doctor—working the night shift. Realizing I would need a larger facility that was better equipped to handle a brain injury, they offered me a helicopter ride to Boston. I had seen too many episodes of MASH to trust a helicopter, so I opted instead for an ambulance ride to Providence.

At the trauma center, a team of 12-15 nurses and doctors were waiting for me to arrive — it was like a scene from “ER,” with Dr. Carter barking out commands to everyone present. Within minutes, I was given morphine and the aching pain in my head and side began to subside.

The bleeding had stopped and I was ready to go back to sleep, but I waited to be anointed by the priest on duty before falling asleep in the arms of the angels who had been with me throughout my adventure.

Just as Christ promised the Apostles, “I will always be with you,” so He was with me. I want to thank all of you who prayed for me after my accident and throughout my recovery. For in this time, God used you not as Brother Deacons, but as Angels. ❖

## ARE YOU A DYNAMIC CATHOLIC?

by Deacon Monti Montalto

Matthew Kelly, a popular Catholic apologist, has described what he calls a “dynamic Catholic.” To put his comments into perspective, a 2009 Pew survey indicated that 79 percent of baptized Catholics in America leave active participation in the Roman Catholic Church by the time they are 24 years old; of the remaining 21 percent, about seven percent of those who go to Church regularly can be considered “dynamic Catholics.”

Kelly suggests that by increasing the number of dynamic Catholics by just one percent in every parish each year, the Catholic Church could have a tremendous impact on people's lives.

His four characteristics of a dynamic Catholic are not new, but he puts them together in a coherent way. They are daily prayer, study, generosity and evangelization.

**Daily prayer.** The best prayer is the Mass, which contains all we need to be spiritually fed. At daily Mass, we say prayers of petition, adoration, contrition and thanksgiving, we hear the Word of our Triune God proclaimed, and we receive the Body and Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus in the Eucharist. Not everyone can get to Mass each day, but we can pray the Divine Office, the Rosary, the Catholic prayers that have been passed down to us, and our own private prayer.

**Study.** Dynamic Catholics always have one or two bookmarks in Catholic books. If they have difficulty accepting a teaching, they find

## From Dynamic Catholic ... cont'd. from page 5

out why the Church holds that position from its wealth of theologians, philosophers, popes, and spiritual giants. They not only study Catholic teachings and literature, they internalize it and make it a lived experience. They accept that the Catholic Church is the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church established by Jesus Christ. They never doubt that what the Church teaches is from God for the sole purpose of getting us to the joy of eternal salvation in heaven.

**Generosity.** Generally speaking about seven percent of Catholics financially and personally support about 80 percent of the local parish and all the other ministries. But generosity extends beyond financial support. Dynamic Catholics are generous in sharing their time and talent, not only at Church, but at home, at work, and in their social

activities. They are the “go to” people who always seem to have time to listen, to say hello and ask about the family. They take the time to send a Mass card, write a note, or make a phone call—they really care.

### “Are you a dynamic Catholic?”

**Evangelization.** This is hardest one for dynamic Catholics to accept about themselves—they don’t see themselves as evangelizers. When asked, they say that evangelizers are those with mega-churches or television shows. But they always seem to be giving away good books or Catholic talks on CDs. Dynamic Catholics share their faith in the Catholic Church with family and friends as casually as talking about the weather. Their Catholic faith is a lived experience.

So Matt Kelly asks each of us the question: “Are you a dynamic Catholic?”

## COMMITTEES

### Deacon Personnel Board

Chair: [George Sisson](#)

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### Placement Committee

Chair: [Mike Dodge](#)

*The committees need members! Both deacons and wives are invited — just email the appropriate committee chair.*

## Current Emmaus Groups

### St. Ephrem Fraternity

2nd Tuesday of each month  
10 a.m. — Immaculate Conception  
Contact: [Deacon John Gramling](#)  
410-823-0694

### Harford County - St. Stephen

4th Friday of each month  
7:30 p.m. — St. Mark, Fallston  
Contact: [Deacon Chuck Hicks](#)  
410-879-2496

### 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

## SAVE THE DATE!

### Neumann Vicariate

#### Deacons' Gathering

Monday, November 18, 2013  
6 p.m. — 9:15 p.m.  
Saint Joseph, Fullerton

### Seton Vicariate

#### Deacons' Gatherings

Monday, November 4, 2013  
6 p.m. — 8:30 p.m.  
Holy Family, Middletown

✠ ✠ ✠

Monday, April 7, 2014

6 p.m. — 8:30 p.m.  
Anne Arundel/Howard Co.  
Location TBD

## Coming Next Issue!

Dcn. Frank Zeiler and Denise Douglas were awarded the Culture of Life Medal recently for their work with Rachel's Vineyard. Read Dcn. Zeiler's reflection on this healing ministry for men and women hurt by abortion in the next issue.

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](#).