Ministering to Those in Prison

What Eyes Have Seen and Ears Have Heard

by Deacon Seigfried Presberry

For more than 24 years, day in and day out, I would report for duty as a Maryland State Correctional Officer, a career both frightening and appalling: I would be frisked for contraband upon entrance, and the sound of the metal gates opening and closing still rings in my ears to this day. You report for your post and cautiously prepare yourself for the unknown. You are in another world—a world where survival of the fittest is practiced by those for whom society has no remorse. You are in the midst of those serving time for various crimes and somehow you are serving time with them.

People inquire, “How can you do that kind of work? Do you get any joy or satisfaction out of it?” My response is usually “No.” How can you? Who cares? You are just trying to get through the day without getting harmed. There were days when I wanted to quit but, being a husband and father of two children, I needed a job that provided health and insurance benefits to my family. It was and still is a good job if you can handle the pressure and stress that comes with it.

As time went on, I found myself doing a lot of praying. Asking God to be with me and get me home safely. I was not a religious person at that time, so praying was something new for me. I was a non-practicing Christian who only talked to God for personal needs only. I was being selfish and deep down inside I knew it. Then one day I was assigned to observe an inmate who was believed to be suicidal. This assignment changed my life.

Not since 1961 had anyone been executed in the State of Maryland. This changed in 1994 when a new law was enacted stating that the State of Maryland could execute persons convicted of a capital crime as long as it was by lethal injection. Prior to this law, Maryland executions were performed by hanging. The inmate I was watching was convicted and sentenced to be executed.

During this assignment, somehow the name of Jesus Christ came up. I listened intently as the inmate described in graphic detail an encounter he had with Jesus Christ about death and the afterlife. He seemed content in accepting his fate. I could not believe that someone who committed such a heinous crime could say and believe that he had an encounter with Christ. “Nonsense, nonsense.” I said to myself. “God is not like that.” How wrong I was.

When I retired from Corrections, I vowed never to go back to that life. Being a Deacon, I knew that I could not serve two masters. So how did I become involved in...

God’s love is not contained within walls but within hearts.

Continued on page 2

Articles and ideas for future newsletters are welcome. Feel free to contact a member of the Communications Committee or send your suggestions to the Editor, Deacon Mark Soloski, at msoloski@archbalt.org. Issues are published quarterly, with deadlines on the 15th of February, May, July, and October.
prison ministry for the Archdiocese of Baltimore? I too had an encounter with Jesus Christ.

I was told that each and every one of us is a child of God regardless of what we have done, who we are, where we have been or are going. Whether black, white, brown or yellow, no one has the right to judge that which belongs to God.

For 24 years, I considered myself to be judge and juror while I worked in Correction. I had power and control over the most forgotten members of our society—the imprisoned.

I believe that this is where God wants me now, to assist the Archdiocese of Baltimore in bringing glad tidings and joy to all. As Jesus said in Matthew Chapter 25, “Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

May we remember that God’s love is not contained within walls but within hearts.

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**IN MEMORIAM**

Deacon Mike Flamini

*May 13, 1949 – Sept. 23, 2011*

None of us know the hour or the day when God will call us. So it was for Michael Flamini. Mike had made plans to attend the Deacon Convocation this year. However, our Lord had another plan. He called Mike to his eternal reward as he slept on the Friday night prior to the event.

Michael’s life gives us no time to mourn. He was so full of life, with his quick response to something said, or his wonderful smile when his heart was touched.

The parishioners of his parish touched him deeply. When our Emmaus group met at St. Michael’s, parishioners were always standing on the street in front of church. They greeted Michael in Spanish and he responded in kind. Smiles abounded.

Our Emmaus group would pray Morning Prayer in the small chapel. After this we met in the rectory or in a restaurant for breakfast. Our discussions ranged from our personal lives, the Church and our group’s experience.

Throughout any meeting Michael’s input, laughter and wisdom were a joy to experience. His respect for human life from natural conception to natural death (our Emmaus group’s concern), no doubt resulted in an army of children in heaven, welcoming him with Jesus.

Our hearts were lifted at Michael’s funeral liturgy. There was no time to weep because his life was a symphony of joy. We will miss him. Yet, our faith should lift hearts to recognize that “not knowing the hour or the day” means simply that heaven will be sudden and beautiful for us because we will see Michael Flamini and all of our loved ones again, for eternity.

Thank you, Michael, for sharing your life and your love with us.

— Deacon Jack Ames
Deacon Michael Misulia

I lost a friend, mentor, and model of faith when Deacon Michael Misulia passed from this life to the next after 93 years on this earth and 33 years as a deacon.

Deacon Mike’s lived faith and service helped me discern my own call to the diaconate. He was a walking, talking version of the Beatitudes. His humility and total reliance on God were evidenced by his love for visiting the homebound, serving others, and praying before the Blessed Sacrament. The death of his beloved wife Josephine in 1988 left a void in his life, but he never wavered in his service, faithfully doing what the Lord had called him to do until he could be with her again.

Mike was pro-life, pro-family, pro-people. I doubt he ever met a person he didn’t get along with. He had a heart for all who were in need. During my formation, I had the opportunity to observe and assist with several funeral wake services. I marveled at how Deacon Mike could enter the funeral home knowing nothing about the deceased, and within a few moments, he would develop such a rapport with the family that he could offer words of comfort, inject a little humor, and gently draw the family into the hopeful wonder that the Church offers to those who mourn.

Michael exemplified the biblical meaning of meekness. He was soft spoken, but when he spoke, people listened. No one could doubt what he believed, and he led all who heard him to place their trust in the love and faithfulness of God.

It’s interesting to note that Mike was ordained at age 60 and he continued faithfully serving at the altar long after reaching the age for retirement. Thanks be to God that the Church had the service of this holy man for 33 years. We are all called to holiness and the hope of sainthood. Deacon Mike Misulia was a model of how a saint might live, love, and serve. Well done, good and faithful servant.

— Deacon John Martin
ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

September 6, 1984
Joseph Jensen

September 6, 1992
Robert Baker

September 7, 1996
Peter Barbersit

September 8, 1984
Charles Hiebler
Robert Lehr

J. Donald MacKnew
C. Richard Swann

September 29, 1998
Gary Lee Fulmer

September 30, 1978
Robert Keeley

October 1, 1983
Paul Ciesla
Harri O’Neill

October 8, 1977
Richard Novak

October 12, 1976
John Manley

October 15, 1989
Matthew Podniesinski
Alan Rose

October 24, 1986
David Conley
Henry Davis
James Mann
Richard Montalto
Frank Rongione

October 28, 1989
John Boscoc
Robert Hacker
Charles Hicks
Loren Mooney
J. Donald Murray
Darrell Smith
Hugh Mills

October 29, 1983
John Rafter

November 4, 1972
Robert Keenan

November 4, 1977
Daniel Streitmater

November 18, 1990
Donald Latrick

November 28, 1989
Alphonse Bankard

December 8, 1972
Anthony Grillo

December 8, 1974
Frederick Seibold

September – December 2011

DEACON BIRTHDAYS

September
1st.................................Ray Britt
1st...............................Lawrence Matheny
1st...............................Michael McCoy
1st...............................Anthony Norcio
6th...............................Gary Dumer
6th...............................Richard Kunkel
7th...............................John Martin
9th...............................Martin Wolf
10th..............................Paul Ciesla
12th.............................Philip Seneschal
13th.............................George Sisson
14th..............................George Jenkins
18th.............................John Langmead
19th.............................Henry Davis
19th.............................Robert Lehr
19th.............................Mark Ripper
21st..............................Frederick Bauernsclmidt
22nd.............................Jack Connor
23rd.............................Kevin Brown
24th.............................Kevin Bagley
25th.............................Robert Hacker
26th.............................Gary Lee Fulmer
27th.............................Clifford Britton
27th.............................Douglas Nathan
29th.............................James Monaghan

October
1st..............................Edward Sullivan
6th...............................Michael Baxter
8th...............................Robert Baker
8th...............................Robert Shepard
13th.............................John Ames
14th.............................J. Edward Bee
15th.............................P. Gregory Rausch
17th.............................James Prosser
18th.............................Larry Wilson
22nd.............................Nickolas Pitocco
29th.............................Paul Mann

November
2nd.............................Richard Novak
2nd.............................Mark Soloski
5th..............................Paul Weber
8th.............................John McKenna
8th.............................David Page
17th.............................Lee Benson
18th.............................John Manley
25th.............................Francis Werner

December
3rd.............................Rodrique Mortel
3rd.............................Richard Montalto
4th.............................Peter Calabrese
4th.............................Robert Lynne
8th.............................Harry O’Neill
11th.............................Kevin Reid
12th.............................Harvey Santiago
15th.............................Stanley Wise
15th.............................William Albaugh
14th.............................Frank Hodges
16th.............................John Coster
17th.............................Richard Morris
19th.............................Paul Dignan
21st.............................David Conley
26th.............................Charles McCandless
28th.............................Theodore Gross

The Deacon’s Call
Newsletter of the Baltimore Deacon Community

October–December 2011

Issues are published quarterly, in March, June, September, and December. The deadline for articles is on the 15th of the month preceding publication.

Please email your comments to any member of the Communications Committee:

Mark Soloski, Chair
Lee Benson
Carol Matheny

Brent Heathcort
Angela Martin
## WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

### September

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<td>4th</td>
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<td>Francis &amp; Mary Ann Laws (40)</td>
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<td>Kevin &amp; Donna Bagley (30)</td>
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<td>15th</td>
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<td>Anthony &amp; Armella Norcio (57)</td>
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<td>John &amp; Janet Comegna (43)</td>
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<td>James &amp; Maureen Westwater (50)</td>
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<td>J. Donald &amp; Charlotte Murray (50)</td>
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<td>Skip &amp; Janet Comegna (44)</td>
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<td>30th</td>
<td>Nicholas &amp; Mary Ann Feurer (53)</td>
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## REST IN PEACE

- Earl A. Smith .................................. September 9, 2007
- Leo Nuedling ................................... September 11, 2001
- Melvin L. Baranoski ............................. September 15, 2000
- Michael Flamin .................................. September 23, 2011
- Gilbert Hartlieb .................................. October 5, 2010
- Raymond A. Bullinger ............................. October 11, 2001
- John F. Naughton .................................. October 12, 2008
- George T. Jenkins .................................. October 22, 2009
- Bertrand Michael .................................. October 30, 2006
- Michael Misulia .................................. October 30, 2011
- J. Faherty Casey .................................. November 6, 2000
- Malcolm Thompson .................................. November 17, 2004
- Verdan P. Wiedel .................................. November 18, 2009
- James R. Kent ...................................... November 24, 2001
- Raymond C. Crawford .............................. December 23, 2008
- William F. Grape .................................. December 24, 2001
- Daniel Spytkowski .................................. December 29, 2000
- Rafael R. Villagaray ................................ December 23, 2004

## SAVE THE DATES!

### DREAM Act Training Session

**Thursday, Jan. 12, 2012**
Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, Baltimore

**Sponsored by the Maryland Catholic Conference**

For information or to register, visit [www.midatlanticcongress.org](http://www.midatlanticcongress.org).

### Deacon Wives’ Day of Reflection

**Saturday, Feb. 25, 2012**
Bon Secours Retreat Center, Marriottsville

### Mid-Atlantic Congress for Pastoral Leadership

**March 8–10, 2012**
Baltimore Hilton Inner Harbor

For information or to register, visit [www.midatlanticcongress.org](http://www.midatlanticcongress.org)

### Deacon Retreat Weekend

**May 4–6, 2012**
Bon Secours Retreat Center, Marriottsville
BOOK REVIEW: HOW TO WIN THE CULTURE WAR
by Angela Martin

A global war is being waged, but many of the combatants don’t realize they are at war—and those who do may not know who the enemy is.

That’s the premise of How to Win the Culture War: A Christian Battle Plan for a Society in Crisis (InterVarsity Press, 2002) by Peter Kreeft, a philosophy professor at Boston College with a gift for expressing intellectual ideas in a way anyone can understand.

He has given us a concise, practical plan for winning the culture war. The first step is to realize that we are at war. The best way to lose a war, he maintains, is to deny that we’re in one. The second step is to know who the enemy is — and how he works.

Christians have a tendency, says Kreeft, to look for enemies in the media, in liberal universities, in the purveyors of porn, in the abortion industry, or even in those whose religious beliefs differ from ours, whether they be atheists, Muslims, or mainline Protestants. To Kreeft, these are not enemies but casualties of a battle that transcends our human differences.

The culture war we face today is the same one that began well before Eden and our enemy is none other than the prince of darkness himself.

Too many of us, according to Kreeft, have given up the fight. The solution he proposes avoids both extremes — we must not demonize our fellow combatants, nor should we capitulate to the culture. Instead, we will win the battle by becoming saints.

Kreeft is no ivory tower academic. His down-to-earth, humorous, and occasionally sarcastic writing style is eminently readable — more like a conversation over a beer than a philosophical treatise. He pulls no punches when describing Satan’s “Seven Step Sexual Strategy”—and he’s likely to offend some with his assertion that the culture of death has flourished because many people, including most Christians, “defend divorce and fornication and masturbation and contraception and abortion and sodomy…”

But he’s also no pessimist. Kreeft believes in the ultimate victory. He lays out nine principles for getting there, beginning with the basics of spiritual warfare and ending with basic training for becoming a saint.

Along the way, he quotes from sources as diverse as Martin Luther and Charles Colson — this is no partisan treatise! Kreeft is a true ecumenical who counsels us to discard labels like “liberal” and “conservative. Instead, he urges us to love, with the true, self-forgetful love that is only possible through God’s grace.

In the end, good triumphs over evil, life triumphs over death, and love always wins. Kreeft’s call to action challenges us to reflect on what we must do to achieve the victory.

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 Simon Driesen
410-457-0451 or Deacon Chuck Hicks
410-879-2496

St. Lawrence
3rd Friday of each month
8:30 a.m. — Shrine of the Sacred Heart
Contact: Deacon Ray Moreau
410-464-4005

St. Vincent Fraternity
Meeting times & locations vary
Contact: Deacon Jack Ames

The Amen Corner
Last Thursday of each month
Noon — An Poitin Stil Irish Pub
Contact: Deacon Ken Pivec
410-663-0560

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 & Wives of Central Maryland
Meeting times & locations vary
Contact: Deacon George Sisson
301-473-4800

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

If you have started a new Emmaus Group, please provide the pertinent information to The Deacon’s Call so we can include it in future issues.