



Inside This Issue

Proclaiming the Truth in Formation	1
Marriage: A Unique Love	2
Deacon Retreat.....	2
Anniversaries and Birthdays.....	3
In Memoriam.....	3
Upcoming Events.....	3
Spotlight on Will Witherspoon	4
Neumann Vicariate Meeting Held	5
Parish Openings	5
Good Life Is a Model for Good Prayer.....	6
Film Review.....	7
Emmaus Groups.....	7
DPB Committees.....	7

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

Proclaiming the Truth

Formation Challenges Aspirants to Reflect

by Father Patrick Carrion

The 13 men in Aspirancy are halfway through their initial period of formation. Once a month, these men and their wives spend time together reviewing aspects of formation. The four pillars of formation (human, spiritual, pastoral and intellectual) are each presented in depth, giving the candidates and their spouses an opportunity to reflect thoroughly on them.

The 2012 portion of the Aspirancy year delves deeply into the Pastoral Formation pillar. Catholic Charities Executive Director Bill McCarthy and Our Daily Bread Employment Center representative Angelo Boer presented the many ministries of Catholic Charities, highlighting the resources available for people in need and encouraging the Aspirants to be involved and to encourage others to get involved as well.

Mary Ellen Russell, Executive Director of the Maryland Catholic Conference, presented on the legislation being considered by the Maryland General Assembly that is of interest to the Church. Issues of interest to the Church include same-sex marriage, immigration, rental vouchers for the poor, and tax incentives for companies that support Catholic

Education. Catholic issues cross partisan lines, and Aspirants were urged to recognize the importance of not supporting a particular party's agenda, but proclaiming the Truth.

Upcoming sessions for the Aspirants include presentations by a panel of deacons sharing their ministerial experiences and a panel of deacons and their spouses sharing how the sacraments of Holy Orders and

Marriage coexist – both the blessings and the challenges.

The 17 men in the formation class of 2013 are learning the basics of parish ministry in parish assignments ranging from Baltimore to Hagerstown. Besides spending hours in the 'field' each week, they spend hours in study. To see what they are reading, go to <http://stmarys.seminarytextbooks.com>, click on SOT Textbooks, and then Permanent Deacon Formation.

Finally, if you know a man who would make a good deacon candidate, encourage him to enroll in [Equip for Ministry](#), offered through the Department of Evangelization. Please contact Father Patrick Carrion, pcarrion@archbalt.org, for more information. ❖

Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan

A Unique Love

by Deacon Lee Benson

This article is the first in a series of four articles on marriage reflecting on the significance of married love in the Divine Plan.

We use the word, “Love” in a variety of ways.

We say we love our home, our car, or our favorite drink. But when we say we love our home, we do not expect our home to respond back. Our “love” for our favorite drink comes from the satisfaction we get from enjoying the taste and flavor of the drink. We consume the drink knowing that it will bring us this pleasure. We “love” our car because we enjoy looking at it, or because we like the gas mileage it gets, or because we enjoy the comfort the car gives us when we drive it.

However, when we use the word “love” in connection with another person we mean it in an entirely different way.

With another person we do not “consume” the other person. We do not love them for what they can do for us. We love another person because this is what our heart tells us to do.

John Paul II calls this the Personalistic Norm: “The person is a good towards which the only

proper and adequate attitude is love.” Yet even with the people we love, we experience a variety of loves. We love our neighbors, friends and family members in different ways. However the one love that we hold separately from all other loves is the special love between a man and woman that we call “married love.” Even if we are not married or not called to marriage, we all recognize and respect the uniqueness of married love.

We publicly celebrate this love in the “Marriage Ceremony.” We want everyone to know that this married love is different from all our other loves. We exchange vows of life-long fidelity to this love. We ask God to be part of this love in a very special way and bless this love with the gift of new life, children.

Recently the United States Bishops wrote a document on marriage called *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*. If you would like a free copy please stop by the Parish office. In the coming weeks I will be writing reflections on this document. I published this reflection at marriagejoy.wordpress.com. Please post your comments or email them to me at labdon70@gmail.com. ❖

The Deacon's Call

Newsletter of the Baltimore Deacon Community

January–March 2012

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

Brent Heathcott

Carol Matheny

Angela Martin

Cliff Britton



Deacon Retreat

May 4-6, 2012

Bon Secours Spiritual Center

Theme: “Francis of Assisi – A Model for the Diaconate”

Retreat Director:

Fr. Joachim Giermek,
OFM Conv.

Registration materials will be mailed in March.

Special Dates to Remember

ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

January 27, 1973

Phil Harcum

January 30, 1982

Paul Weber

March 21, 1992

Simon Driesen

Richard Kunkel

Robert Malinowski

Michael McCoy

Donald Miller

Lawrence Teixeira

Larry Wilson

Frank Zeiler

COMING SOON!

Mid-Atlantic Congress for Pastoral Leadership

March 8–10, 2012

Baltimore Hilton Inner Harbor

For information or to register:

www.midatlanticcongress.org



Listening Sessions

March 7, 2012

St. Joseph

17650 Virginia Ave., Hagerstown

March 21, 2012

St. Agnes

5422 Old Frederick Rd., Baltimore



Deacon Retreat Weekend

May 4–6, 2012

Bon Secours Retreat Center

Marriottsville



WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

January

1stBob & Eleanor Lynne (59)

5thJohn & Madalen McKenna (62)

8thSteve & Suzanne Cooley (40)

9thBob & Patricia Malinowski (47)

12thDave & Georgene Ebner (31)

12thJack & Ann Coster (55)

12thHenry & Rita Siarkowski (60)

14thBill & Pamela DeAngelis (45)

19thRichard & Blanche Stine (55)

19thRod & Cecelia Mortel (32)

21stJohn & Carole Langmead (45)

29thMonti & Marie Montalto (46)

February

2ndDon & Rosetta MacKnew (55)

4thBob & Libbi Keenan (51)

5thRay & Judy Moreau (44)

7thBill & Maryann Albaugh (42)

11thJhan & Janice Harris (29)

11thDan & Clarice Roff (51)

14thJohn & Diane Hawkins (25)

14thCharlie & Joyce Hiebler (42)

14thMark & Mary Soloski (25)

15thSteve & Michelle Rubio (26)

March

3rdJames & Marcie DeCapite (39)

18thWilliam & Mary Fallon (45)

18thJoseph & Colleen Knepper (23)

21stRichard & Michelle Bolgiano (30)

27thLoren & Suzanne Mooney (30)

30thMartin & Natalie Perry (27)

30thKarl & Gene Marie Bayhi (14)

DEACON BIRTHDAYS

January

4thBob Keenan

7thBob Oliver

11thRon Thompson

11thJerry Jennings

15thJim Barth

15thJohn Boscoe

15thDon MacKnew

16thJim Ryan

21stRick Clemens

22ndPaul Shelton

24thBill DeAngelis

25thEd Whitesell

26thBill Pearson

28thDarrell Smith

29thRuss Matthews

February

3rdLoren Mooney

3rdAl Chesnavage

6thJohn Sedlevicius

6thEd Stoops

11thFred Passauer

13thFrank Laws

15thAl Kosla

16thDon Latrick

19thDean Lopata

21stPeter Barbernitz

23rdGeorge Evans

23rdDon Battista

28rdJim Benjamin

28thNick Feurer

March

3rdJeffrey Sutterman

8thPatrick Goles

9thPaul Gifford

9thWillard Pinkney

10thThomas Beales

10thAlex Rodriguez

14thHarold Bradley

17thLawrence Teixeira

18thJ. Donald Murray

24thGerald Roberts

25thGary Ingold

25thDaniel Koczyk

26thJoseph Knepper

29thWilliam Nairn

29thMartin Perry

31stCharles Hicks

REST IN PEACE

Alexander SmithJan. 10, 2003

Ferdinand G. MillerJan. 11, 2002

Joseph J. KeatingJan. 17, 2001

Americus RoyJan. 19, 2004

Anthony S. MarantoJan. 25, 2002

Joseph L. NealeMar. 1, 2004

George W. MartinMar. 6, 2006

Walton A. SmithMar. 6, 2007

Paul DignanMar. 7, 2011

Gregory SpisslerMar. 10, 1987

John AbellMar. 23, 2004

DEACON IN THE SPOTLIGHT

WILL WITHERSPOON, S.F.O.

By Deacon Lee Benson

Recently Will and I enjoyed lunch together and, as he spoke, two Scripture verses came to mind. The first is Jeremiah 20:7 – “You duped me, O LORD, and I let myself be duped; you were too strong for me, and you triumphed.”

Similar to Jeremiah’s concern that his age did not qualify him to be a prophet, Will’s training in mathematics and actuarial science might not appear to qualify him to be a deacon. However, Will has allowed God’s grace to work in his life and, as Will said, he became a “growth in progress.”

Will found the formation process full of many challenges – something we all shared. He described his institutional assignment at a nursing home as the “best one for me.” There his people skills began to flourish. At his parish assignment, St. Joseph Monastery, Will came away with a lifelong mentor in the pastor, Fr. Bill Murphy. Yet Will’s journey to his diaconal ordination in 2009 shows how Will allowed the quiet voice of the Lord to guide him.

Will was not raised in any particular faith tradition. During and after college, Will encountered some people who would gently lead him closer to God. He came to know a Catholic couple who fervently lived their faith. He received instruction in the Catholic faith from a priest who also taught Will how to play golf – a sort of RCIA on the golf course. However, one key person really stands out for Will – Ray Sylvester Jr., who became Will’s closest friend. This man did not have to preach to Will about God. Instead the way he lived his life spoke to Will in the most profound way.

Will remembers his mother asking both of them, “Did you go to Mass yet?” These simple words encouraged Will to seek after the God who loved him. As the two men coached basketball together, Will’s faith grew deeper. While his friend did not ask Will

to become a deacon, he still had a prominent place in Will’s ongoing formation. One of Will’s first acts as a deacon was to preach at his friend’s funeral.

Assigned to St. Peter Claver after his ordination, Will encountered several challenges that in his words made his experience “much harder than I ever thought it would be.” Soon after Will arrived, their beloved pastor, Fr. Harper, fell down the stairs with Will right behind him. Will tried to reach out for the pastor but was not able to grab him; Fr. Harper later died from his injuries. The Archdiocese decided to close their sister parish, Pius V. Will counseled and consoled the parishioners who felt hurt and betrayed by this decision. At one of his first Baptisms, a man seeking food assistance arrived. Will asked him to wait and after the ceremony took him to a local store. Even though the man quickly filled up a grocery cart full of food, Will generously paid for all the items.

In RCIA, Will’s compassion and understanding shine forth. He “keeps it fun,” combining catechesis, socializing and relationship-building. Will “brings home the basic stuff.” Some of the seeds he planted years ago when he coached basketball (which he hopes to again find time for) have started to sprout – some of his former players are now attending RCIA. Will is also working to grow the parish men’s group. While he does miss being part of the choir, he does enjoy the opportunities to sing the deacon’s part of the Vigil mass.

Will readily admits that he is “a work in progress.” Yet his life is a wonderful testimony of what God’s grace can do in our lives. As Will said “Thank God I am not what I was.”

Which brings me to the second Scripture verse that came to mind while listening to Will share about all that God’s grace has done in his life: “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Phil 4:13) Will certainly brings this verse to life. ❖

Neumann Vicariate Deacons Meet with Bishop Madden

by Deacon Mark Soloski

The deacons of the Neumann vicariate gathered in December at Immaculate Conception Parish in Towson, where they were feted with a delicious lasagna dinner prepared by Deacon Kevin Reid. Vicar Bishop Denis Madden provided food for the spirit as he led evening prayer.

Bishop Madden began by sharing an upcoming meeting of Baltimore Ecumenical Leaders, reminding deacons of their obligation to interface with other Christians and asking them to consider ways to bring Christians together. He also directed attention to the recent Bishop's statement on religious liberty and gave a concrete example of why that statement was necessary. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) depends heavily on competitive grants from the federal government, but recently several highly rated CRS grants were passed over for funding, largely because the agency will not offer birth control or abortion services as part of its programs.

Msgr. Jay O'Connor shared changes in parish assignments and indicated that, as the Archdiocese moves forward with discussions on parish clustering, future consultations regarding pastoral assignments will involve the affected area or cluster in the process.

Ms. Georgina Vaca of the Office of Young Adult and Hispanic Ministries explained the varied efforts of her office, including an initiative to reach out to young adults via the Internet on [Facebook](#) and [Baltimore Catholic](#). She reminded the deacons that approaches to YA ministry need to be tailored to the specific YA culture. For example, *Theology on Tap* works with urban professionals but is not appropriate for other groups.

Ms. Vaca is available for more information on developing effective YA ministries.

Valerie Smithman-Brown of Immaculate Conception discussed her ministry of Special Education Catechesis, in which she works with young people with autism and other developmental disorders with behavioral challenges. By working with the entire family and encouraging them come to Mass together, the ministry can be a powerful tool for evangelization. Deacons were urged to consider if a special education ministry is a parish need. This can be a shared ministry, and training is available.

The discussion then turned to Parish Clustering. Deacon John Langmead, PLD at St Ursula's, is part of a six-parish cluster in East Baltimore County. Initially this was challenging, but over time considerable progress has been made.

A shared confirmation program has been developed, a new youth minister hired and new Mass schedules have been implemented. The clustering process has involved the formation of three inter-parish subcommittees that meet regularly and consider how the parishes can work together in areas of faith formation, liturgy and models of pastoral leadership. Deacon John considers this to be an opportunity to be more effective by sharing resources.

Deacon Paul Weber of St. Ignatius, shared the initial discussions involving the Central City parishes of St. Ignatius, St. Vincent de Paul, the Basilica, St. Alphonsus, and Corpus Christi, which noted shared similarities among parishes (unique history and heritage, two shrines,

OPENINGS FOR DEACONS

The pastors at the following parishes have expressed an interest in having a deacon assigned. Their needs are many and varied. If you would like more information, please contact Dcn. Kevin Reid by email at Kreid@archbalt.org

- St. Anthony Shrine–Emmitsburg & Our Lady of Mount Carmel –Thurmont
- St. Clement–Lansdowne
- Holy Family–Davidsonville
- St. Joseph's Church–Odenton
- Saint Margaret–Bel Air
- St. Pius X–Rodgers Forge
- Our Lady of the Chesapeake –Pasadena
- St. Augustine–Elkridge
- St. Cecilia & Immaculate Conception–Druid Hill/Baltimore
- St. Gregory the Great–Baltimore
- St. Joseph's Monastery Parish–Baltimore
- St. Mary's–Cumberland
- New All Saints–Baltimore
- Our Lady of Grace–Parkton
- Our Lady of Sorrows–West River
- St. Peter Claver–Baltimore
- Prince of Peace–Edgewood
- St. William of York–Baltimore
- Holy Trinity, Crucifixion & Good Shepherd–Glen Burnie
- Resurrection of our Lord–Laurel (bilingual: English/Spanish)

two parishes that have many non-resident parishioners and rely on lay leadership, and one parish (St Ignatius with several priests on staff and in residence). Although no new structures have been developed, the possibility of sharing clergy and lay leadership will be a focus of future discussions. ❖

Prayer and Spirituality

A Good Life is a Model for a Good Prayer

by Deacon Jim Westwater

To pray is to let God into our lives. Prayer and life cannot be separated. Ultimately, the greatest prayer of all is not what we say, but what we do. The challenge is not whether we have said our prayers, but whether we have lived them. Our deepest concern should be that we pray our lives; that we make our lives the expression of our prayer. We should see prayer as the heartbeat of life, which unites us as one: the hands of Martha with the heart of Mary.

Prayer is mysterious. To pray – just as to love – must be discovered within. Prayer is more a discovery than a task, more an adventure than a duty. It makes a pilgrim out of a wanderer. Learning to pray is learning about God. How we approach God in prayer depends on our attitude toward God. Prayer is a gift from God to those who pray.

Jesus taught us to pray. From Jesus we know that prayer places everything in perspective. In prayer the word of God, as presented to us in sacred scripture is understood, applied and lived. At the same time, scripture is the inspiration for our prayer. Prayer is the opportunity to reflect on the word of God and to draw forth the treasures that God has placed at our disposal.

As Christians, our churches are praying communities. Our churches were built for us to pray. Every local church exists to be an assembly of prayer. And every religious congregation should always be a community of prayer. As Christians, prayer lies at the heart of our lives. Every one of us prays, each in his or her own way. It is more important to pray as we can, not as we can't. To pray as we are, not as we wish we were. To pray where we are, not from where we think we should be.

The writings of Henri Nouwen may serve as a guide on prayer. His writings indicate that much of what he learned from life, he learned in prayer. "To whom do I belong?" was a core question of his life and his answer was: to God. Nouwen pointed to God as the center of spiritual life. In *Cry for Mercy*, Nouwen indicates that the goal of life is not people, but God. In

our struggles to love God, Nouwen believed that we cannot find God, we can only be found by Him.

Again and again, Nouwen pointed to a relationship with God through prayer, as the foundation of one's spirituality. Nouwen reflected on many spiritual disciplines such as silence, contemplation, and meditation. But the primary spiritual discipline in nurturing a relationship with God is prayer. Prayer is communion with God. It is primarily an activity of the heart. For Nouwen, prayer is a spiritual discipline that creates room in which God can transform a person. Just as Jesus often spoke of his prayer life in the sense of listening to his Father, Nouwen understood prayer as having eyes and ears for God.

Finding God in the reality of life means facing up to life itself.

A colleague frequently reminds me that when God wants to hide something he places it right in front of our eyes – the point being that God is not just present to us, He is also present within us and prayer is sharing our life with God. Prayer is a friendship between God and ourselves. Prayer is an expression of love;

it is discovering God's love, and then making our response.

One of the purposes of prayer is not to make us better, but to make us more real and more honest with God, with others, and with ourselves. Finding God in the reality of life means facing up to life itself. We live because God lives. And when we pray, we become aware of this mystery of life and of this mystery of ourselves. Awareness is the heart of our prayers. It is an awareness of God as a gift, and an awareness of ourselves as an expression of God's creative and sustaining love. As the mystics remind us, prayer, just like life itself, is a journey, and we make path by walking it. The more we pray, the more we desire to pray. As Henri Nouwen reminds us, a spiritual life without prayer is like the Gospel without Christ.

To pray is realizing God's presence in our lives, not only in the quiet moments of our personal reflections, but in our constant daily struggles. It is realizing that a good life is modeling a good prayer. ❖

FILM REVIEW: OF GODS AND MEN

by Lee Benson

In a recent comment to the Catholic News Agency, Archbishop Timothy Broglio stated: "Yes, you can say in a certain sense that the invasion of Iraq did provoke this tremendous diminution of the Christian population in that country." Approximately 650,000 Catholics emigrated from Iraq after the United States' intervention. The people decided to go and find safety rather than stay and live in danger.

No one can be faulted for looking out for the best interests of his or her family. However this problem of when to stay and when to leave goes back to the earliest days of the Church when it was being persecuted. Those who stayed faced the possibility of martyrdom and those who left could live for another day.

One common question joins the ancient Catholics with the modern ones: What is God's will for this situation? Does God want us to stay or leave?

The movie, *Of Gods and Men* (2010) offers an extraordinary insight into how the Monks of Tibirine in Algeria dealt with this question of staying or leaving. Faced with the rise of extremists in Algeria, the safety of the monks became a concern for the local officials, townspeople, and the monks themselves.

The local officials recommended that the monks leave, the townspeople wanted them to stay, and the monks themselves were divided on the question. The movie recounts the discussions among the monks as the tensions in Algeria continue to grow.

At various points, the extremists confront the monks, and the local officials become suspicious that the monks are helping the extremists. At each moment of confrontation Father Christian, the superior, responds to the demands of the extremists with charity and compassion. He also quotes

from the Quran passages that speak of peace and tolerance.

Some of the most compelling scenes in the movie come when the viewer listens in on the meetings of the monks as they express mixed feelings about the situation. Some feel strongly that they need to stay. Others feel the need to leave. Father Christian always lets everyone freely speak their feelings and never pressures anyone in their decision making process. Eventually the discussion leads to a vote. The monks unanimously decide to stay.

The movie ends with a reading of Father Christian's letter to the men who will come and take the monks away. Father Christian calls them his "friends" and hopes they will see each other in paradise. This letter—and this movie—challenges each of us to take a deeper look on our Lord's command to love our enemies and to pray for them. ❖

COMMITTEES

Deacon Personnel Board

Chair: [Skip Comegna](#)

Vice Chair: [Kevin Reid](#)

Policy Committee

Chair: [Frank Zeiler](#)

Communications Committee

Chair: [Mark Soloski](#)

Ongoing Formation Committee

Chair: [Skip Comegna](#) (acting)

Placement Committee

Chair: [Kevin Reid](#)

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 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 Still 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

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.