

THE OUTREACH

St. Basil Catholic Church

South Haven, Michigan



“ *Prayer should be expressed in the moral attitude of our soul and in the virtuous actions throughout our life.*

— St. Basil

There’s a Job Called *Sacristan*?

Behind the Scenes, They Open the Doors and Set the Lord’s Table

By Roger Neper

The role of the sacristan is to assist the priest in preparing to celebrate the Paschal mystery, the Holy Eucharist, and other liturgical ceremonies.

St. Basil has a half dozen or so sacristans, who, like those in other Catholic parishes, perform their ministry behind the scenes, in a religious and dignified manner. The main duties of sacristans, from opening doors to cleaning chalices after Mass, are virtually the same whether they serve during the week or weekends. There are numerous technical names associated with the work, including the *sacrarium*, or a special sink for rinsing vessels, that drains directly into the soil.



On any given day, the sacristan on duty will:

- ◆ Unlock and lock church doors.
- ◆ Switch church lights and the audio system on and off.
- ◆ Set up the chalice and cups, various linens and the paten, a little plate that holds the large Communion wafer.
- ◆ Determine how much altar bread and wine will be needed for consecration.
- ◆ Set out bread and wine for the gift bearers to carry to the altar.
- ◆ Put in place the numerous holy texts, including the Roman Missal and The Book of the Gospels.
- ◆ On weekdays, consult with

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I Was in Prison, and You Visited Me

One by one, they filed into the large room with a concrete floor, surrounded by fencing topped with barbed wire.

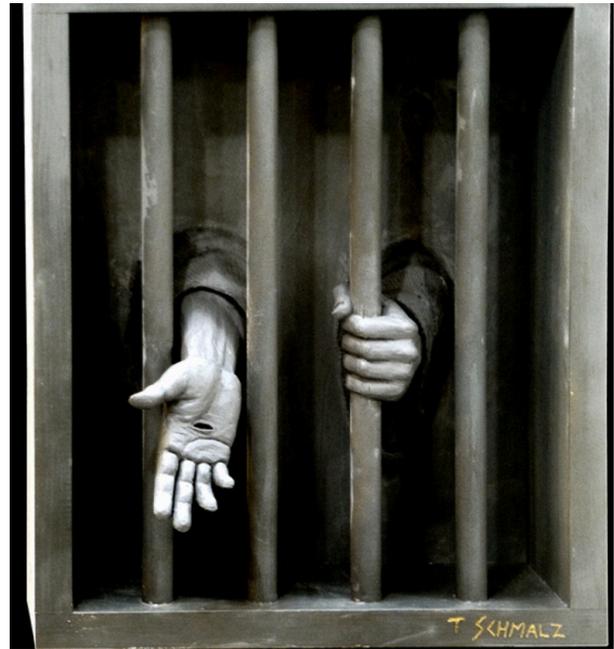
*A Ministry
Serving
Those
Serving
Time*

Escorted by guards, eighteen young men wearing orange prison uniforms arrived in the meeting room on a recent Monday afternoon. They were prisoners in the Allegan County jail, about thirty miles northeast of South Haven. On hand, too, was one of our deacons, **Bill Van Dril**, to visit them. For more than a decade, he and Russ Pogodzinski, his friend and another deacon, have led men in the Allegan jail in a weekly, 90-minute bible-study class.

The deacons hope to help the men encounter Christ and turn their lives around. Both men work with Forgotten Man Ministries, a Michigan nonprofit that provides prisoners with bibles and religious services. The group serves 175 men and women a day at the Allegan jail alone.

The young men sat in rows of chairs that resembled a classroom, but they were dressed as captives, in bright clothing that looked like pajamas, with matching orange slippers. Most have been convicted of one crime or another and were awaiting sentencing. In the meantime, they were being held in this jail, a building that was once a chair factory.

The deacons handed out prayer books to each of the men. One volunteer read the story from Exodus of Moses and the burning bush.



“How is a story 3,000 years old relevant to us today?” Deacon Bill asked. “Israel is in trouble and suffering and needs to be liberated. You guys are here—but you don’t want to be here. So, there’s a parallel. All of us are, in one way or another, captives, on our journey. And God hears our sorrows and sufferings. God never abandons us.”

Some men smiled, nodded in agreement. A tall man with short blond hair was slumped in his chair like an adolescent and suddenly raised his hand to speak. “Moses actually did something,” the young prisoner said. “When he saw the burning bush, he didn’t walk away; he checked it out. Because he paid attention to that sign, he was given a mission. He ended up with a higher destination: to save the Israelites.”

After a little discussion, the deacons played a recording of an inspirational song, “You

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Serving Those Serving Time

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Needed Me” by Anne Murray. One man, with a tattoo of two roses on his left arm, closed his eyes and listened. Another, with a dragon tattooed on his left arm, mouthed along.

*You gave me strength to stand alone
To face the world out on my own again.*

As another man then began to read the parable of the fig tree from Matthew’s Gospel, he ran into trouble pronouncing some words, halting like a young child, then getting stuck on the word “Galileans.” Deacon Bill pronounced it for him, so he could continue.

The prisoners—a group of white men, and one African American, all in their twenties and

thirties—listened as the next song was played, a Merle Haggard tune called “One Day at a Time, Sweet Jesus.”

A closing prayer asked God to bless the prisoners—and the guards and the judges who will sentence them.

Each man then lined up to shake hands with the two deacons, like young athletes on opposing teams at the end of a game. The guards took the prisoners back to their cells in the old chair factory, where they then sat and waited for judgement day.



Deacon Bill

Interested in the prison ministry? Contact Andrea Aleman at aaleman@saintbasilcatholicchurch.org

Yes... There is a Sacristan

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the priest for appropriate hymns and post the numbers on the song board.

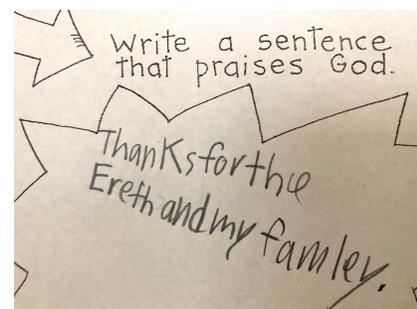
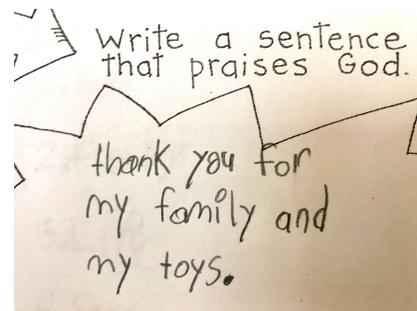
- ◆ At least fifteen minutes before the start of mass, check to make sure all assigned lay ministers are present. If not, find substitutes.
- ◆ Five minutes before the start of celebration, light the altar candles, if not previously lit.
- ◆ Following each celebration, clean the vessels and place soiled linens in a particular hamper. After the last celebration of the day, the sacristan places clean vessels, altar bread and wine into secured cabinets.

Want to become a sacristan? Contact Andrea Aleman at aaleman@saintbasilcatholicchurch.org



Musings From Sunday School

The first graders in youth faith formation have much to teach us about God. Spelling will come later.



Divine Encounter?



Christ is artfully portrayed as a homeless man, on a bench in downtown Seattle. Canadian sculptor Timothy Schmalz fashions street exhibits to remind us that helping the needy helps Jesus. See inside story for his artistic depiction of a prisoner.

Dear Fellow Parishioners:

We are open to story ideas, and new writers, for *The Outreach*, published every two months. Please reach out to us at:



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