

FOCUS
IN HIS

DEACON TERRY MAACK – ‘WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET’

“He’s not a bad mechanic for a deacon,” says Ken Malsack with a laugh. Malsack is the accountant at St. Peter Parish in Kenosha, and he’s talking about Deacon Terry Maack, whose full-time job is service director for Palmen Pontiac Buick GMC in Racine. “He’s a spiritual sort of guy, a real family guy,” continues Malsack. “He’s an asset to our church and has been for a long time. He can relate to us, and we can relate to him.”

Deacon Maack has been a member of the St. Peter community for 30 years as a parishioner and for the past 16 as a deacon. He is a dedicated husband, father of two grown sons, a doting grandfather, gentleman farmer and once served as the model for a portrait of Christ. If that sounds like a lot, it is, but he keeps it all in perspective. “I’m not going in all directions anymore,” he explains. “I just find the whole thing rewarding – I’m still enthusiastic after 16 years.”

Through all his commitments – visiting the homebound, leading worship services in jail, teaching baptismal classes, chairing the maintenance committee, helping couples prepare for marriage, training lectors, blessing the fleet, and more – it’s clear that Deacon Maack is motivated by a longing to serve.

“It’s just serving the Church. Actually if you meditate on the Gospel and follow the Gospel, that’s basically what your whole life is – ‘how can I serve you?’ That’s what Jesus did. He served,” says Deacon Maack with conviction.

Fr. William Hayward, pastor at St. Peter, says Deacon Maack is driven by his love of the Church. “He has a great love for all things Catholic and a love of parish life. He has a wonderful sense of his ministry and where it can be used. He’s a seasoned man as a deacon.”

However, Deacon Maack almost didn’t become a deacon. It had been in the back of his mind ever since he read an article about the first diaconate class in Milwaukee. It interested him, although he

had gone to public school and hadn’t even been an altar boy. Later, he and his young family moved to Kenosha, joined St.

Peter’s and became very active there. He began discussing the idea with his pastor and others and praying about it. He eventually applied but was deferred, ironically, because he was too involved at the parish.



He is a dedicated husband, father of two grown sons, a doting grandfather, gentleman farmer and once served as the model for a portrait of Christ.

“They thought that with my kids at the age they were I probably had too many activities going on and I should just pick a few. I think I was on every committee except for the Women’s Club,” he remembers, laughing.

Two years later he applied again and was accepted. One of his first tasks was to teach the baptismal classes that had been reinstated at St. Peter’s, and he still teaches them today.

“I go through the rite of baptism and what the Church is asking parents. I stress that their responsibility is like building a fire – if you don’t put logs on it, the fire goes out,” Deacon Maack notes. He adds that the greatest baptisms for him were performing the rite for his grandchildren – he has four now. He was also proud to preside at the marriage of

his younger son, an emotional moment in his career as a deacon.

His visits to the sick and homebound and his jail ministry are two cornerstones to his work as a deacon. He visits several people regularly, including some he has visited for years. He visited one woman who lived in an Assisi retirement home until she died. He had become such a fixture there for the other residents that he now goes every other Sunday to lead a Communion service. Two other lay volunteers help on the opposite Sundays.

He remembers another woman he visited. She was 90 years old and had several kinds of cancer. "Just being her friend at that particular time when she needed somebody to hold her hand after all her friends were gone" was important, he says. "You have to be a good listener. That's all people need." From this work, he thinks he'd like to be chaplain at a hospital or nursing home eventually when he retires from the car business.

A few years ago, Deacon Maack was asked to visit someone from St. Peter's who was in the Kenosha County Jail. "I was apprehensive – it was out of the comfort zone," he admits. His first jail visit was delayed because even though he had done all the paperwork, the guard gave him a hard time, and he wasn't allowed to visit the inmate. "I was more concerned that the fellow thought I'd abandoned him when he wanted to talk to someone," he remembers. His second attempt went without a hitch, and so began his journey into jail ministry.

Next, he was asked to help bring Catholic services to the new detention center at the time. Other faiths offered services, but there was no Catholic presence. Working with archdiocesan

staff members, it took 18 months to get permission from the detention center. After all that effort, Maack says, having that first man come up and receive Communion in jail was really touching.

Fr. Michael Sturm, coordinator of Correctional Ministries for the archdiocese, says Deacon Maack provides the leadership for jail ministry in Kenosha County. "He's sincerely interested in jail ministry. He was instrumental in helping me get ministry started in Kenosha County. I'm very appreciative of that." Three other deacons and a lay minister from St. Peter's share the responsibility of leading services at the detention center, and Deacon Maack says he looks forward to his visits there.

While Deacon Maack doesn't proclaim his faith at work, it's still a kind of ministry for him. Among his co-workers and their families, he has performed several marriages, baptisms and even funerals, all a testament to his faith and the trust and respect others have for him.

His visits to the sick and homebound and his jail ministry are two cornerstones to his work as a deacon.

Deacon Maack also helps out at St. Lucy Parish in Racine, and Fr. Jeff Thielen, the former pastor there says, "He's very devoted, highly committed and full of faith. I think he brings his

"He's sincerely interested in jail ministry. He was instrumental in helping me get ministry started in Kenosha County. I'm very appreciative of that."

– Fr. Michael Sturm, coordinator of Correctional Ministries for the archdiocese

faith to work and puts his faith into action. He's every pastor's dream."

As for the portrait of Christ, Kenosha artist George Pollard used Deacon Maack as a model back in the early 1990s. Pollard had his car serviced where Deacon Maack was working at the time. "He came in one day and said, 'Do you mind if I borrow your beard?'" The artist took dozens of photos of the deacon's face and beard and never told his model it was for a portrait of Christ. When he saw the finished product, Deacon Maack says, it was his eyes that the artist used as much as the beard. "It's just kind of interesting to see what I look like with long hair," he says, smiling.

It's easy to see that Deacon Maack lives what he believes. "If you treat people the way you want to be treated, I think that's the biggest thing. Then you get it back. What goes around comes around. I really believe that – everybody respects dignity."

So many men have dedicated their lives in service to God and His people in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee that we cannot adequately recognize all their good works. Still, we want to share with you stories of some men whose contribution, sacrifice, vision and commitment may otherwise go unnoticed or underappreciated. Through this series, *IN HIS FOOTSTEPS*, we profile some of those clergy who have enriched us as Catholics and have helped shape our faith community and our world. *IN HIS FOOTSTEPS* installments also are available at www.archmil.org. Your feedback is welcome. Send your comments to Kathleen Hohl at hohlk@archmil.org or 414-769-3453.