

Deacon Alan M. Rose, who ministered in hospice and prisons, dies at 88

Deacon Alan M. Rose, who ministered to prisoners on death row, helped one convert to the Catholic faith and made family history in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, died April 14, at age 88.

He was ordained to the permanent diaconate in 1989. When his son, Scott, did the same in May 2016, the Roses became the first father and son to be ordained permanent deacons for the archdiocese.

According to a Review **article at the time**, the elder Deacon Rose, a Chicago native and U.S. Navy veteran, taught English literature at the U.S. Naval Academy and Frostburg State University. In Frostburg, he began volunteering in campus ministry.

According to the Review, “he exited academia, moved with his wife, Abbie, to Baltimore, and began to work in prison and hospice ministry.”

Why, he was asked in 2016, did he take on such challenging ministries?

“It isn’t taxing, if you are called to it,” responded Deacon Rose, who was asked to elaborate. “Matthew 25:35-42: ‘When did we see a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?’

“Mother Teresa believed in that, literally. She believed that when she bathed emaciated, dying people she had gotten off the street, that she was touching the body of Christ. ‘Where were you when I was in prison?’ is that same thing.”

Deacon Scott Rose offered the homily at his father’s funeral Mass April 20 at St. Isaac Jogues in Carney. He cited that Gospel, and Jesus being “mysteriously, physically present in four types of people in need”: the poor, immigrants, the ill and those in prison.

“Dad covered all four,” said his son, who serves at St. John the Evangelist in Frederick and the Esperanza Center.

In addition to serving as a prison chaplain at the Maryland State Penitentiary in Baltimore and Patuxent Institution in Jessup, Deacon Rose ministered at a hospice that would become part of the network that included Gilchrist Center in Towson, where he died.

At St. Isaac Jogues Parish, where Deacon Rose worshiped, his son said he preached “about service and participating in outreach ministries.” In retirement, he served low-income adults living with mental illness.

The eulogists at Deacon Rose’s funeral Mass included Kirk Bloodsworth, the first American on death row to be exonerated by DNA testing. Convicted of murder in 1984 and sentenced to death, Bloodsworth spent many hours with Deacon Rose at the Maryland Penitentiary. He entered the Catholic Church in 1989; four years later he was proved innocent.

“You work enough years among inmates and you get a feel for how guys tell stories,” Deacon Rose **told the Review in a 2007 article**. “There was no question in my mind this was a guy speaking the truth.”

Deacon Rose broke the news to Bloodsworth of his mother’s death, and, according to the 2007 Review article, “accompanied him to a private viewing of her body with two armed guards.”

Another eulogist at the funeral Mass for Deacon Rose was Elinor Burkett, a former colleague from Frostburg State.

“When their country club in Frostburg in the 1970s refused membership to a black man,” Deacon Scott Rose said in his homily, “my parents quit in protest.”

The other homilist was Austin Rose, a grandson who is studying to be an immigration lawyer. His sister, Aubrey, begins work as a public defender in the fall. Their cousin, Justin, is an emergency room physician.

“His grandchildren complete his legacy,” Deacon Scott Rose told the Review.

He and his father were among the contributors to a book, “Fifteen Steps Out of Darkness, The Way of the Cross for People on the Journey of Mental Illness.”

“The thing about Dad,” his son told the Review, “is that he was a quiet role model. “Even at his funeral, we kept learning about things he did for people behind the scenes.”

Deacon Rose planned his funeral, which included a simple pine casket in the tradition of Trappist monks, and a recessional out of St. Isaac Jogues to “When the Saints Go Marching In.”

“Indeed,” his son said, “a New Orleans-style (four-piece) jazz band marched out behind his casket, followed by the congregation, into the street, playing that song to a joyous beat.”

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