



Americus M. Roy
(1929 – 2004)

The only son born to Melvin G. and Margaret Wilkins Roy, he grew up in East Baltimore and attended the City's public schools, graduating from Dunbar High School in 1945. After serving three years in the military, he took courses at the Community College of Baltimore and later worked with the Baltimore public schools and the U.S. Postal Service. He was married to Doris Braxton for over forty years, with whom he had two daughters. Following her death in 1996, he married Betty Brooks.

Raised in the tradition of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, he was introduced to Catholicism as a teenager through the work of Josephite Father Daniel Cassidy and converted at the age of 17. The examples of Fr. Cassidy and his own father, a former social worker remembered for his charity, had a great influence on his life and inspired his vocation to pastoral ministry, which was fulfilled when he was ordained a permanent deacon in 1971. The permanent diaconate, which had been reinstated at the Second Vatican Council, allowed him to officiate at baptisms, weddings, and funerals, proclaim the Gospel and preach, and minister to the people. He was one of the first men ordained to the permanent diaconate in the country, as well as the first African American. He began his ministry at St. Ambrose Church, where he served for twelve years, and later had assignments at St. Cecilia, St. Gregory the Great, and finally at St. Pius V, where he was appointed coordinator of pastoral administration and served until just a few months before his death.

His desire to assist those in need led to his involvement with prison ministry, which began during his time at St. Ambrose, observing: "These troubled people need ... compassion from the Church.... We have a mandate to help make their incarceration as bearable as possible." Over his thirty-year ministry, he assisted the chaplains at Jessup and Hagerstown, founded Prisoners Redirection Outreach (PRO), a program dedicated to providing assistance and services to incarcerated adults and youth and their families, and served on the board of the Pre-Release Unit for Women (PRUW), a program to assist near release women re-integrate into society. He had been active in the Civil Rights movement and the Baltimore Ministerial Alliance and was a founding member of the interfaith community power organization BUILD (Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development), serving as spokesman for many years. He also helped to establish the Archdiocese of Baltimore Office of Black Catholic Ministries. At his death, a close friend observed: "[he] touched and transformed thousands of lives. He had a great heart for social justice and the poor."

