

Supermarket Sermons:

Notes on Beauty, Grace and the Wisdom of Popular Religion

Michael E. DeSanctis

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Soon after I resumed my role as book editor of *Emmanuel Magazine*, I learned that our senior editor, Michael DeSanctis, Ph.D., had recently written a new book of his own. When I questioned Dr. DeSanctis about the nature and scope of *Supermarket Sermons*, as he titled his latest publication, he noted it was a collection mostly of articles he had written for the monthly “Senior Spirituality” column he pens as part of a senior news tabloid distributed free-of-charge at outlets throughout Pennsylvania, New York and Ohio.

The book's title offers a clear indication of its spiritual thrust and hints at one of the venues in which its contents would first have been made available to readers. The author was good enough to provide me a copy so that I could determine whether or not it might be of interest to readers of *Emmanuel*. After reviewing the book, I can give a strong affirmative to that question!

I believe that many *Emmanuel* enthusiasts might fit into the category of "seniors." I myself am a proud member of the "Boomer" generation born between in 1946 and 1964. It is primarily—but not exclusively—to this audience that Dr. DeSanctis directs his "Sermons."

What does DeSanctis bring to his writing that makes him credible? He brings knowledge of being a senior himself—a man of faith, a husband, a father, a professor of theology, a man who reads widely in Christianity and yet has a familiarity with Judaism, Muslim texts and a wide variety of Asian religions. Readers will sense that he is a man enriched by his practical experience with church architecture. His reflections do not emanate from an "ivory tower" but from the grittiness of real life known to all of us. They help us make sense of who we are where we are going.

Each of DeSanctis' "Sermons" begins with a recounting of some incident in his life with which readers will likely share familiarity: a quest for meaning in time of loss, a father's confusion at the choices made by his children, the loss of a sense of family around holiday celebrations, the ambiguity of New Year's resolutions. DeSanctis takes these as a starting point and moves into theological reflections that invite members of his audience to

contemplate where, as seniors or others, they are on their own journeys. From my perspective, these “Sermons” proved worthwhile.

Beyond his “Sermons,” Dr. DeSanctis’ book offers some articles that were previously published in *Emmanuel*, *Today’s American Catholic* and *Commonweal*. You can easily identify these as closer in length and orientation to academic writing. In one such example of the latter, DeSanctis describes how, as a former professor of fine arts and theology at Gannon University, a diocesan institution in Erie, Pennsylvania, he strove to introduce his students to the beauty of church architecture, liturgy and Catholic dogma through methods of teaching that melded theory with lived experience. As a former teacher of graduate courses on church history myself, I greatly admired the creative ways in which he moved students toward greater

“*Supermarket Sermons* provides fresh insights into the intersection of faith and life with a wit and light touch needed for our contemporary times.”

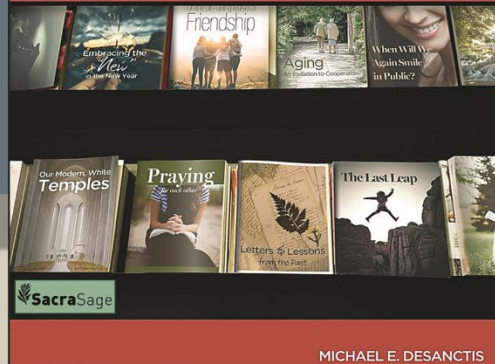
--Brent C. Sleasman, President
Winebrenner Theological Seminary



Supermarket Sermons is a collection of essays on God's involvement in the circumstances of modern men and women drawn primarily from the popular "Senior Spirituality" column written by Michael E. DeSanctis, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Fine Arts and Theology at Gannon University, Erie, PA, and Scholar-in-Residence at Erie's Jefferson Educational Society, drawn primarily from his popular "Senior Spirituality" in a informational newspaper distributed at grocery stores and other commercial venues throughout Northwestern Pennsylvania, Northwestern New York and Northeastern Ohio.

SUPERMARKET SERMONS

NOTES ON BEAUTY, GRACE AND THE WISDOM OF POPULAR RELIGION



MICHAEL E. DESANCTIS

“Faith shines through the writing here [and] reflects the author’s sensitivity to the holy as it appears in the lives of ordinary people. I encourage everyone to read this gem.”

--Sr. Stephanie Schmidt, OSB, Prioress
Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Pennsylvania

“Whether you’re an old soul, young at heart, or something in between, you’ll be grateful for the well-earned wisdom of this informed and accessible collection.

--Michael Centore, Editor *Today’s American Catholic*



Available from Amazon and Google Books

appreciation for the life of the Church as much through their senses as through their minds.

I am happy to bring this marvelous book to the attention of *Emmanuel* readers. I was enriched by this gem and hope that some of you might also pick it up and experience its luster.

*Patrick J. Riley, D.Min.
Cleveland Heights, Ohio*

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