



MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

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Dear Friend,

It's always edifying to visit with our retired priests and brothers at St. Charles Center and hear about their lives. They read voraciously, keep up on the national and local news, golf, garden, play cards, and help out as often as they can with Mass and confessions at neighboring parishes.

I marvel at their good humor and can-do attitude. It sometimes seems as if they'll go on forever. But of course they cannot. None of us can.

As we age, there comes a time when we have to give up some of the things we love to do. This can be just as hard for priests and brothers as it is for other folks. What we hope to provide at St. Charles Center is a place where our priests and brothers will be cared for with love and compassion right up to the moment when God calls them home.

Sometimes, that care is reciprocal.

Earlier this year, it became obvious that it was taking more and more effort for Fr. Rich Riedel, C.P.P.S., to go about his daily life, "but he kept pushing himself," said Fr. Jim Dugal, C.P.P.S., his longtime friend and next-door neighbor at St. Charles.



Fr. Rich Riedel, right, and Fr. Jim Dugal visit with IC parishioners at a fish fry in Lent 2016.

Fr. Rich, who turned 90 in June, had been a pastor for most of his 64 years as a priest. At every parish where he served, the people loved him for his gentle but steadfast leadership and his big heart. In his retirement years, he missed being in active ministry but he enjoyed his life at St. Charles, where he had a fine, sunny apartment. But this summer, his body began to fail him. Intractable health problems were draining his strength. Eventually, he was moved to the infirmary at St. Charles, where our nursing staff could keep a closer eye on him.

"Life has a way of gradually stripping you of things," Fr. Dugal said. "First Fr. Rich couldn't play golf anymore. Then he had to give up driving. Then came the move to the infirmary."

Once there, he settled in with a sense of peace and tranquility not often seen even among men of God. "Throughout his life as a priest, Fr. Rich helped so many people die peacefully," Fr. Dugal said. "He was a man of faith, and that faith helps us see that there's something better ahead."

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Yes, I would like to help retired C.P.P.S. priests and brothers.

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I ___ have or ___ wish to include the Missionaries in my estate planning.

For he was dying. Connie Klosterman, who has served as the head nurse in the St. Charles infirmary for many years, could see it. "It's different for everybody, but if you listen to their verbal cues and pay attention to their body language, that tells you a lot," she said. "You have to be observant, be on the lookout for signs of pain and discomfort, because not everybody responds to that in the same way."

Fr. Rich responded to the dying process in his own unique way: he continued on as a pastor until the very end. Even when he could barely talk, he expressed his gratitude daily to his caregivers. "Fr. Rich, two or three days before he died, tried to give me a hug," Connie said. "He asked me, 'How are you?' He knew that he was going home, and he was ready for that. He was more concerned about the rest of us."

He had a stream of visitors, our own priests and brothers and also people who knew and loved him from his days in their parish. Jane McNeal, who had been one of his parishioners when he served at Immaculate Conception Church in Celina, Ohio, said that Fr. Rich was restless at first when she visited, but he grew calmer as she stayed by his side, holding his hand. "I didn't talk much; I didn't want to wear him out," said Jane, who is a Hospice volunteer and accustomed to sitting at the bedside of the dying. "I prayed for him the whole time I was there, reflecting on all the years he spent in ministry, all the people he had married, the Masses he'd celebrated, the confessions he heard. I thanked God for his ministry."



Fr. Rich visits with Fr. Ken Schnipke, C.P.P.S., last spring.

Fr. Rich died on September 29. He left behind his large extended family back in Kansas and thousands of people whose lives he touched.

He also left behind his brother Missionaries of the Precious Blood, whom he loved and to whom he dedicated his life so many years ago. We hope that—we know that—Fr. Rich was fulfilled and blessed by his life in ministry, and we hope that we were true brothers to him, brothers who cared for him and walked with him right up until his last steps.

That's what we hope for all our members, that they are loved and cared for by our religious community, even when—especially when—their strength is ebbing and they need more care. We want them to enjoy their life and feel cherished and respected at St. Charles. We hope that you'll join with us in our care for these good and faithful servants of God. We rely on your help since we receive no other outside funding for our retired members. Will you help us care for those who spent their lives caring for others? I hope your answer is "yes" and you'll consider a donation.

May God bless all those who take care of the sick and the suffering and who stay by the bedside of the dying. May God give all of us the eyes to see and the heart to respond to those who need us. And may God grant all of us the assurance that there's something better ahead.

Yours in the Precious Blood,

V. Rev. Larry J. Hemmelgarn, C.P.P.S.
Provincial Director

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