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The Precious Blood Bicentennial was a way to say thanks to all.

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Missionaries enter the Basilica of St. John Lateran on July 1.

C.PP.S. is an abbreviation of the Latin name of the Congregation, Congregatio Pretiosissimi Sanguinis, Congregation of the Most Precious Blood.

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All Hands on Deck

ne of my greatest blessings in our bicentennial year was the opportunity to get up in front of the more than 1,700 people who had gathered for our outdoor Mass at St. Charles Center on August 15 and thank all of them for supporting us. It was gratifying and humbling to look out over that sea of people and realize that our Missionaries meant to them. They'd gotten out of their regular weekend rhythm to participate in our event.

We hope and believe that in the last 200 years, our Missionaries have touched the lives of many people through our ministry in parishes, schools, hospitals, shrines, retreat centers and in many other ways. But to see such a gathering with our own eyes: I think I can speak for all the Missionaries present that we were deeply touched. (You can read more about how the celebration came together in our cover story on page three.)

To put on a celebration like our Precious Blood Bicentennial was a real labor of love. The biggest challenge I had that day was to attempt to thank all of those who helped. When it comes to expressing our gratitude, we never want to leave anybody out! I'm especially grateful to our Companions (lay associates), Amici (friends of the community) and other volunteers who are always so quick to say yes when asked for help; our members, lay residents and staff at St. Charles, who cheerfully welcomed so many guests to their home; and to our dedicated committee members who spent so many hours working behind the scenes. An event like that calls for all hands on deck, and people responded with wonderful generosity.

Throughout our bicentennial, we attempted to give all thanks and glory to God for the many blessings he has given to us through the years. In good times and bad, we've always been aware

that we're not walking alone. We minister side-by-side with the people of God, working for them and with them.

There were so many people who pitched in with the August 15 celebration, and with all of our bicentennial efforts, including the blood drives, community service hours and our event for young people and families, called *Jubilation!* It really helped our Missionaries see that their years of service to the people of God are valued and appreciated. And we in turn, cherish the connections we have made to the people we serve. Together, trusting in God's grace, we step without fear into our third century.

Between the Lines by Fr. Larry Hemmelgarn, C.PP.S.





A Thousand Tongues

Missionaries Celebrate Their Bicentennial

At their annual assembly in May, the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in the Cincinnati Province heard an update from Fr. Angelo Anthony, C.PP.S., about the ongoing celebration of their bicentennial, which would include an event on August 15, 2015, at St. Charles Center in Carthagena, Ohio.

Fr. Anthony, who chaired the province's bicentennial committee, asked everyone to pray for good weather for the



outdoor Mass and picnic meal that was to follow.

Then Fr. Larry Hemmelgarn, C.PP.S., the provincial director, went one step further. "Br. Theophane," he said, addressing Br. Theophane Woodall, C.PP.S., who was then serving as house director at St. Charles Center, "will the house accept the responsibility of praying for good weather?"

"Yes," said Br. Theophane. And that's just how it was: everyone pitched in.

That sums up the behind-thescenes story of the Precious Blood Bicentennial. The event unfolded like a flower in the weeks and months leading up to August 15, 2015, the actual 200th anniversary of the Congregation, founded in Italy by St. Gaspar del Bufalo. When people were asked to help, they said yes. When they had an idea, they offered it. When their special skills were essential, they stepped forward. All of that was needed as the province planned its biggest public celebration in recent memory.

At the Table Together

When the provincial council directed its bicentennial committee regarding the August 15 celebration, it had big goals in mind, Fr. Hemmelgarn said.

"The very first priority was to have a celebration that expressed our appreciation to all the people who support us, are part of us, and make us who we are today. And that's a very, very large family with concentric circles: our priest and brother members, our Companions (lay associates), our Amici (friends of the Community), the people who work with us at all of our ministry sites, our parishes and institutions, our supporters and donors. We were casting the net very broadly," he said.

"The second thing was, we wanted it to be memorable."

Of course, the people had to be fed, both spiritually and physically. "We assumed right from the beginning that it would be a Eucharistic celebration. That's who we are: we're at the table, constantly inviting people to come to the celebration. We knew that any celebration would have to be in the context of our faith," Fr. Hemmelgarn said. "The most important table after the Eucharistic table is the meal table. I don't know how we would do a celebration without doing both tables. There was no question that we would share a meal, because sharing a meal isn't just about physical sustenance. It's also about the joy that we get from being at the table together, sharing stories and memories."

A Thousand Tongues

Once the province's leadership had that vision, it was up to the committee to make it come true. "Throughout the bicentennial, we were focused on St. Gaspar's quote, 'I wish I had a thousand tongues to endear every heart to the Precious Blood of Jesus,'" Fr. Anthony said.

The dream was to draw 1,000 people to St. Charles for the celebration, but assuming there might be as many as 500 members, candidates and lay associates who would attend, that didn't leave much room for others from those concentric circles. Fairly quickly, the planning centered around 1,500 people.

"When we started talking about 1,000 tongues, and the ramifications of what that really meant, that's when it hit me: this could be really big. And we wanted it to be big," Fr. Anthony said. "That was St. Gaspar's dream and we're part of that dream."

Welcoming 1,500 people to St. Charles was more than Fr. Anthony, who is also the pastor of three parishes in Dayton, could handle, even with the help of a committee. The province hired Angela Hamberg of nearby New Bremen, Ohio, to serve as event organizer.

Hamberg went to work reserving tents for the liturgy and for the picnic to follow. She secured golf carts to shuttle people from the parking area to St. Charles' front lawn, and portapotties, drinking water and an emergency medical station.

The committee, which also included Fr. Dennis Chriszt, C.PP.S.; Amy Day, facilities manager at St. Charles; and Companions Jean Borgert of Sidney, Ohio; Mark and Jean Giesige of Celina, Ohio; and Dave and Jane McNeal of Wapakoneta, Ohio, met often

in person and over the phone to work out details. A parking subcommittee plotted the parking area in a field off US 127. Another subcommittee planned a 1 p.m. presentation, with a keynote address by Fr. Barry Fischer, C.PP.S., to celebrate the C.PP.S. missionary spirit.

The picnic subcommittee settled on a menu, the centerpiece of which was chicken that would be grilled by Ron and Larry Schnipke of Glandorf, Ohio, brothers of C.PP.S. Frs. Gene and Ken Schnipke. Fr. Anthony had asked the Schnipkes if they might be willing to cook for the celebration; they had plenty of experience grilling chicken for festivals and other large crowds. They not only said yes right away; they rounded up their volunteer crew and donors who funded the chicken and the charcoal to grill it.

A Thousand Details

There were a thousand details and a thousand considerations that had to be accepted and worked over by the committee, or put to the side. And the biggest worry of all could not be addressed by any subcommittee.

"The weather was my number-one worry," said Hamberg. "No matter how well we prepared, it was the one thing we would not be able to effectively address. Would it be hot? Would we need fans, and if so, how many? If there was rain, would less people attend?" Ultimately, all anyone could do was pray.

Meanwhile, the event continued to take shape. Cindy Rammel, who has worked at St. Charles for many years, and her husband, Nick, planted sunflowers in the spring to be used as decorations for the August celebration. All through the spring and summer, the Rammels carefully calculated the sunflowers' growth, hoping and praying throughout the wet summer months that they would bloom at the right time.

The committee worked on a detailed plan to register guests for the meal; there had to be a head count so that the Schnipke crew knew how much chicken to prepare. On May 20, registration opened to the public, and well before the deadline of July 15, all of the 1,500 tickets (1,000 for the public and 500 reserved for C.P.P.S. members, Companions, etc.) had been distributed.

Jean Borgert recruited volunteers and assigned them tasks. (The Brunnerdale class of 1971 opted to hold a reunion that week, and volunteered en masse along with their wives to serve as needed at the event. They were put to work as ushers at the Mass.) Dave and Jane McNeal





Above, Fr. Angelo Anthony, C.PP.S., and Candidate Matt Keller, C.PP.S., round up flowers in the Keller family Gator. Below, Fr. Charles Mullen, C.PP.S., helps cover tables in the picnic tent.

invited Precious Blood parishes and ministry sites to set up displays in St. Charles' main hall.

Formal invitations went out to bishops in dioceses where Missionaries serve (four eventually said yes), and plans were made to accommodate them and other VIP guests. A plea went out for 400 glass jars that would be used to hold floral arrangements in the picnic tent.

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ANGELA HAMBERG

Not Like a Backyard Tent

Meanwhile, Fr. Anthony was keeping his eyes open for items that he could borrow for the liturgy tent. It would be a huge space, and any decorations had to be of the proper scale. "I began dreaming, how do we turn this tent into a worship space? How

do we visually create a space that will lift our hearts in prayer and tell our story?" he said.

"I wanted the church space to look reverent, not like a backyard tent. I kept thinking of where I could borrow things so that we could keep within the budget, and I naturally turned to the parishes where I minister. I borrowed draping from St. Joseph, candlesticks from Holy Trinity, processional banners from Emanuel." The week of the celebration, he had to rent a U-Haul van to get it all from Dayton to Carthagena.

Members of the committee met with Reliable Tent Rental. with Perfect Party Catering, which provided the side dishes for the picnic, and with Norm Willoughby, who would supply the rented organ. They met with the sound technician, photographers and videographers. They talked with Radio Maria, which would send a crew to broadcast the Mass live. Members of local choirs, organized by Ron Johnson of Holy Trinity Parish in Coldwater, Ohio, and Fr. Ralph Verdi, C.PP.S., met to rehearse the music for the liturgy.

Checking the Forecast

Banners were ordered, as well as commemorative programs, and medals of St. Gaspar and Our Lady of the Precious Blood that would be gifts to the guests on August 15. And as the day got closer and closer, committee members checked the weather forecast with an intensity bordering on obsession.

It didn't look good. A storm had blown through

the night before, depositing rainwater on some of the chairs in the picnic tent. There was a 50 percent chance of thunderstorms predicted for August 15, increasing as the day went on and peaking at 3 p.m., just as people would be walking up the main lane at St. Charles toward the liturgy tent. Amy Day came up with an emergency weather plan that required the Missionaries, who would be seated at the front of the tent nearest St. Charles' main entrance, to lead the congregation into the building if necessary.

The day dawned with an angry red sky in the east. But by 11 a.m., the sun broke through and the clouds dissipated. The prayer warriors at St. Charles had filed their request, and the answer came in the form of favorable weather. Angela Hamberg and the rest of the committee could relax, at least about the weather.





Above, Archbishop Dennis Schnurr blesses the congregation. Below, standing room only as Fr. Barry Fischer, C.PP.S., speaks on August 15.

"I was continually amazed at the small and large blessings that were given to us over the course of the prep days and the day of the event," she said. "While I'm an optimist, I have a realist's sense that something will not go as planned and we'll have to improvise. But with this event, it seemed that whenever something unexpected arose, there was an easy fix or the right person appeared at the right time

to resolve the matter. I found it simply amazing that such a big event didn't have any major hiccups."

So many things went right that day. The parking went smoothly. Buses arrived on time from C.PP.S. parishes in Dayton (on a bus normally used by the Dayton Dragons minor league ball club), Columbus and Cincinnati. A standing-room-only crowd came for the afternoon mission presentation. C.PP.S. members, bishops, Knights of St. John and Knights of Columbus processed into the liturgy tent as the combined choirs led the congregation in song.

Hamberg said that while she walked the grounds as Mass was underway, she was blessed to "witness the joyful celebration of the Schnipke family's chickengrilling setup in the St. Charles barnyard, and the humbling moment of seeing all of them in a circle around the radio, listening to the Mass via Radio Maria."

A Homecoming Celebration

For Fr. Anthony, inside the Mass tent with the rest of the Missionaries, "it was a homecoming celebration. We felt that we were at home together as a Precious Blood family—and we had defined family really broadly, because that's what the Blood of Christ is all about. It doesn't distinguish between family bloodlines; we're all part of the body of Christ.

"You could tell that our parishioners felt at home, even if it was their first time at St. Charles. It felt like they had come home and could understand us a little better through that experience of community. And that's what I imagine the kingdom of heaven is all about: the image in Revelation of people streaming from all directions toward the throne of God. Not that Carthagena is the throne of God: but whether you were riding on a Dayton Dragons' bus or riding in your own car or coming out of your room at St. Charles, we were all there together to praise God, true to St. Gaspar's vision."

For Fr. Larry Hemmelgarn, who had to move fast to get from one obligation to another that day, "It was so fleeting!" He climbed the steps of the altar platform in the Mass tent and stepped up to the lectern at 3:55 p.m., just before Mass was to begin, to welcome the congregation.

"Standing up in the sanctuary looking out over the crowd was just incredible," he said. "How it all came together was incredible."

And he echoed the thought of anyone who has ever organized



Guests enjoy the picnic meal after the Mass at St. Charles Center. Thanks to our photographers: Anthony Dugal, Claire and Jean Giesige, Vitas Kasragys and Kelli Waterman.

Visit **cpps-preciousblood.org** to view more great photos; videos of the Mass and Fr. Barry Fischer's keynote address; the text of Fr. Bill Nordenbrock's homily and more, as well as pictures from *Jubilation!*, our event for youth and families on August 9.

a wedding, graduation party or family reunion: "All of us were so occupied with different pieces of the celebration, we didn't necessarily have time to take it all in. At about the time I got my second wind, it was done. I felt like I didn't get around to talk to anybody!"

And yet, people had heard the story of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, of St. Gaspar, and of the Blood of Jesus that redeems us all. "That was Gaspar's work: to build a community," Fr. Anthony said. "Through the Precious Blood, 'those who were once far off are brought near' [Eph 2: 13]. St. Gaspar did that in Italy after

the Napoleonic Wars. Fr. Francis de Sales Brunner did it here in the United States, building communities of faith among the immigrants. We're continuing in that same mission.

"At our celebration, the many felt included. They felt honored to be a part of our family, and they want to walk with us some more. And now we need to continue the celebration, continue to build on that experience. We need to invite people to consider becoming Companions, to look at joining our Community. That's the next step, so that the Precious Blood Bicentennial wasn't just a one-time event."

Faith and Fun at Jubila ion! at Jubila ion! a day of praise and service Marking 200 years of the C.PP.S.

August 9 was a great day for youth and families in the northern parishes of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, as the Missionaries of the Precious Blood hosted *Jubilation!* at the Maria Stein Shrine and the Spiritual Center of Maria Stein.

The event, held in honor of the C.PP.S. bicentennial, included service activities, prayer, games, food and an outdoor Mass where Bishop Joseph Binzer of the Archidiocese of Cincinnati presided. Fr. Gene Schnipke, C.PP.S., was the homilist.

Jubilation! ended with a fireworks display. "We were happy to host an event that young people and families could enjoy together," said Fr. Steve Dos Santos, C.PP.S., who chaired the event.







Top, one of the games at Jubilation! Center, a family presents the gifts during the offertory during the outdoor Mass. Bottom photo, Missionaries in the procession at Mass.



IN THE FOOTSTEPS

ST. GASPAR

Over 750 C.PP.S. pilgrims from around the world converge on Rome to celebrate their bicentennial.

When the Missionaries of the Precious Blood around the world were to celebrate their 200th birthday last summer, their worldwide leadership team very much hoped that Pope Francis would attend the party.

"We wanted people to come to Rome for the major celebration" on July 1, 2015, said Fr. Emanuele Lupi, C.PP.S., the vice moderator general. Italianborn Fr. Lupi is a part of the general council, which leads the worldwide Congregation of 500 Missionaries and thousands of lay associates, who are in ministry in 20 countries around the globe.

The general council, which is headed by the moderator general, Fr. Bill Nordenbrock, C.PP.S., and its bicentennial committee, chaired by Fr. Barry Fischer, C.PP.S., knew that each unit (such as the Cincinnati and Kansas City Provinces in the U.S.) would plan its own celebration. But the council and committee also wanted to organize a celebration in Rome. They wanted it to be big, and they wanted it to be memorable.

Fr. Lupi, who speaks Italian, Spanish and English, assumed many of the day-to-day responsibilities in planning the celebration, which began back in 2013. "It was clear in our minds that the major celebration would be on July 1," the feast of the Precious Blood, he said. Having settled on that, there were three important steps to take.

"The first step was to contact Opera Romani Pellegrinaggi," a Roman travel agency that would coordinate transportation, lodging and meals for hundreds of pilgrims during the week-long pilgrimage. The second was to contact the Basilica of St. John Lateran, the pope's church in Rome, where the council hoped it could celebrate the July 1 liturgy. The third was to send a letter to the pope.

Fr. Nordenbrock set to work on the letter. "We made our request through the proper channels," he said. "To do that, I had to consult the rules of protocol; writing to the pope is not a frequent part of my duties! And then we asked a cardinal friendly to our Congregation to

present the letter to the papal household, with the hope that our request would gain a little weight from his assistance."

The Real Work Began

Once those three tasks were completed—and the committee had received a yes from two out of the three, the travel agency and the basilica—the real work began. "Slowly, it started to build," Fr. Lupi said. The Missionaries also contracted with a production company that would produce a 45-minute movie about the Congregation, its founder, St. Gaspar del Bufalo, their history and their present ministries.

They also studied their past. "In the general archives, we have reports of the celebration of our first 100 years, in 1915, and of our 150th anniversary in 1965," Fr. Lupi said. "We saw this as something that was happening on a continuum. We are a part of

Pilgrims from the U.S. in front of the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome, where a liturgy was held on July 1, the Feast of the Precious Blood.



this history, and we are following what our predecessors have done."

The celebration in 1915 included a papal audience, but since it took place in the midst of World War I, it was somewhat muted, Fr. Lupi said. "It wasn't possible to celebrate in a big way."

An Answer from the Pope

For the 2015 celebration, Fr. Lupi began to work with the individual groups of pilgrims who were coming from around the world: Peru, Chile, Colombia, Tanzania, Poland, Croatia, the United States and Canada, among other countries.

"Each group had its own individual character," Fr. Lupi said. "Some people were very experienced travelers, some not. Some groups had trouble getting their visas, so we worked with various embassies on that. There were also cultural differences. I worked a lot with emailing and Skype to push people to respect our deadlines."

There was also one person above all others whom they hoped to hear from, but they did not. Rather, they did hear, but it was not the answer they wanted: the pope would not be participating. That was disappointing, but not a complete surprise, said Fr. Nordenbrock.

"Unfortunately, the Holy Father has to limit his schedule and does not routinely participate in the anniversary celebrations of religious congregations, which is understandable." If they couldn't have a private audience, the Missionaries still hoped to take their pilgrims to a general audience with the Pope on the morning of July 1.

And the planning went on. It was decided that Bishop Joseph Charron, C.PP.S., of the Kansas City Province would preside at the July 1 Mass; Bishop Erwin Kräutler, C.PP.S., in ministry in Brazil, would be the homilist.

Buses Run on Time

They planned other events for the pilgrimage as well. There was a reconciliation service, held at St. Gaspar parish in Rome, where Missionaries minister; a walking tour of places in Rome where St. Gaspar lived and ministered, including a visit to the Church of Santa Maria in Trivio, where St. Gaspar is buried. Buses took tourists to sites in rural Italy, including Albano, the home of the Italian Province and one of its original ministry sites, and Giano, where the Congregation was actually founded.

The tour buses, carrying pilgrims organized by language groups, were all about motion. Yet they were a big immovable

piece of the puzzle, said Fr. Jeff Kirch, C.PP.S., a member of the Cincinnati Province who serves as general secretary. Organizers hoped that the pilgrims could enjoy a deeply spiritual experience at every stop, but "we always had to keep our mind on the bus schedule," Fr. Kirch said.

All those road trips were coordinated with tour guides who could speak to the pilgrims in their own language. And of course, everybody had to eat. The committee had planned a picnic at Albano, 14 miles south of Rome, for all 750 pilgrims. "For the picnic lunch at Albano, we talked about what to put in the box lunches to feed the people," Fr. Lupi said. The menu had to please many palates from around the world.

Not that he could enjoy the lunch once it arrived. "You're so involved in so many things, you don't always get to see it all as it happens," Fr. Lupi said. "It was hard to be in the moment. At the morning events, I was thinking about the afternoon events."

How To Make it Memorable?

And most of all, Fr. Lupi was thinking about the liturgy at St. John Lateran. The general council had received more bad news about the pope's summer schedule: general audiences had been cancelled for July. They had

to give up any lingering hope that Pope Francis would be part of the celebration. How could the committee make it memorable for the pilgrims, who had traveled from around the world to be there?

And then two weeks before the liturgy, he fielded a suggestion from the seminarians from the Italian Province. They suggested that St. Gaspar attend the Mass at St. John Lateran.

"They asked, 'why don't we carry the relics of St. Gaspar in the procession at St. John Lateran?' At that point, I hadn't even thought of that," Fr. Lupi said. The relics had been traveling around Italy in the bicentennial year, much as St. Gaspar had in his lifetime. They were in a life-sized replica of St. Gaspar's sarcophagus, which is a bronze image of St. Gaspar in repose.

"Why not let them be part of the celebration? I brought it up to the general council, and we all said, 'Why not?""

That led to Fr. Lupi's favorite moment in the weeklong pilgrimage. It was the evening of July 1. The pilgrims were all assembled in the beautiful basilica, which though huge, was filled with members of the Precious Blood family from Italy and around the world. Priests and bishops of the Precious Blood, the moderator general and his general council, were





Above, Missionaries from around the world process into the Basilica of St. John Lateran on July 1. At left, a replica of St. Gaspar's sepulcher, with his relics inside, at the Mass.

all waiting outside the basilica for the opening procession. And among them were the seminarians from the Italian Province, carrying the image of St. Gaspar, which came as a complete—and completely delightful—surprise for the pilgrims, who burst into applause, song and tears.

"When I entered, I saw that the basilica was packed. And when they saw St. Gaspar, there was such a reaction. It was such an emotional moment. I turned to the provincial director of the Italian Province and gave him a thumbs-up. Even though the pope did not join us, we were still able to give something memorable to the people. To use football language, we had scored a goal."

It was a goal that can carry the Precious Blood family forward into its next century of service to the Church. "When we finished the pilgrimage and it was time to say goodbye, as a joke I said to the pilgrims, 'See you at the 300th anniversary," Fr. Lupi said. "It was right that we took that time to celebrate—but it's also a time to look forward, because the dream continues."

Even Michelangelo Messed Up

y husband and I were privileged to be part of the Precious Blood pilgrimage to Rome and other sites special to St. Gaspar del Bufalo, the founder of the C.PP.S., last summer. We enjoyed the time spent with other pilgrims—it was a remarkably congenial group, as Precious Blood people tend to be—and we enjoyed the sites. A highlight was the opening procession at the Mass on July 1, the Feast of the Precious Blood, at the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome, especially when we saw that St. Gaspar was taking part in it (see story on page 12).

For me, another highlight happened earlier in the day when our group went on a tour of the Vatican museum. Our tour guide was a sprightly, articulate Roman who spoke excellent English and had the patience of a saint. A tour guide at the Vatican has a very difficult job. He or she must shepherd a group of tourists through one of the world's largest churches, answering the same questions (mainly, where are the restrooms?) over and over, being wonderously kind to people he or she will never see again.

As we were about to enter the Sistine Chapel, where Michelangelo spent four years painting the famous ceiling (standing up, and not, as the old myth would have it, lying down), she warned us that all were to remain silent once inside, as it is a place of prayer. She used a large diagram of the ceiling that was in the Vatican's tourist reception area to point out some highlights that we could look for once we were inside.

Among these was Michelangelo's fresco of Noah's flood, one of the first that he completed on the ceiling. He didn't like it, our tour guide said. When he went down to the floor to take a look at it, he saw that the figures were too small to be easily seen. It was inadequate to the scale of the room. From then on in the project, he painted much larger figures in his frescos.

This reminded me of all the times back at Fort Recovery High School when we were making posters for spirit week and would get most of the way through "Our Indians are the best!" in black Sharpie across the top of a poster before we realized that we were almost out of room. It was inspirational to learn that even Michelangelo could make such a mistake.

This story, perhaps apocryphal, has not made me stop proofreading. But it does help me relax a little in the knowledge that our perfect God has created no perfect humans. Even the geniuses among us can miscalculate. And for the rest of us, that's a real sign of hope.

At Our House by Jean Giesige



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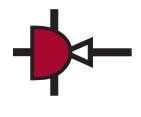
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