

SPRING 2015

# CPPS TODAY



**WE  
ARE  
LIKE  
CHALICES**

Our Missionaries in Chile  
reach out to God's people

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SPRING 2015

*C.P.P.S. Today* is published by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood (Society of the Precious Blood), Cincinnati Province, 431 E. Second St., Dayton, OH 45402  
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# Feeling the Presence of the Holy Spirit

**W**ith this issue of *C.P.P.S. Today*, we invite you to visit Chile. Chile was our very first mission, established in 1947. Fr. John Kostik, C.P.P.S., and Fr. John Wilson, C.P.P.S., were the first Missionaries to arrive, but they were soon followed by six more. The cardinal of Santiago told them, "Put a map on the wall, throw a dart at it, and wherever it lands, we need priests."

The Missionaries decided on parish ministry, which we knew well from our ministry in the U.S. We took on the pastoral care of several parishes in Santiago, which today is a major urban center with all the modern conveniences, as well as rural parishes in southern Chile, an area that you'll visit in our cover story.

The first time I traveled to Chile was in 1999. With our Missionaries, I traveled the countryside surrounding the town of Purranque. In one of the small communities we visited, there was no chapel, so we gathered in the simple home of an elderly lady. It was really cold that day. You may not think of South America as being cold, but Purranque is in southern Chile, not far from Antarctica. The only heat was from a wood-burning stove, which our hostess had stoked for us.

There were about 30 of us in her small living room, packed in there like sardines. Between the wood-burning stove and all those bodies crammed into a small space, you could really feel the heat of the Holy Spirit!

We were all huddled together in that house. Around that table, we were all one family. And I experienced a sense of unity and an intimate assurance of God's presence that we may struggle to feel in the largest cathedral.

We need that sense of unity in our lives. We need to feel connected to God and to each other, which is also the subject of the second story in this issue. Each year, our Congregation encourages and supports our younger members as they gather for a reunion with other priests, religious brothers and sisters with whom they went through formation (religious education and training). While they were together in February, they talked about what it means to live a consecrated life, and we hope you'll get a sense of their dedication and commitment.

We're all in this together. We need each other. And when we invite God into our lives, we can't help but feel the warmth and belonging that is promised us each time that Christians gather in God's name.

**Between  
the Lines  
by Fr. Larry  
Hemmeln,  
C.P.P.S.**







# WE ARE LIKE CHALICES

Our Missionaries in Chile  
reach out to God's people

Serving the people of Chile, the Missionaries of the Precious Blood know that they have to hit the road. "We're not just here," says Fr. Nicanor Azua, above. "We're here to be with the people."

**F**r. Nicanor Azua, C.P.P.S., sometimes travels from the parish where he is the pastor, San Sebastian in Purranque, in southern Chile, to the capital city of Santiago, where he grew up. He remembers being at a Mass at a prosperous parish in Santiago one Sunday when the pastor made an appeal for funds to replace the floor of the church building. The amount needed was \$20,000.

"After Mass, a couple of people wrote checks to cover the full amount," Fr. Azua said. Santiago is a city of six million, and like most urban centers it has parishes of every size and economic condition.

"When I was talking with the pastor about it afterward, I told him, 'I am happy for you and sorry for you. Where I am in ministry, it would take us two to three years to save up that much money, and we would have to earn it peso by peso. But I would much rather have many of our people put in what they can, so that when they finally raise enough, it's their floor.'"

### **From Chapel to Chapel**

Fr. Azua has seen that people appreciate the value of working for what they treasure. San Sebastian parish of Purranque, where he ministers along with Fr. Jorge Gomez, C.P.P.S., the associate pastor, is in the heart of southern Chile, a verdant

region known for agriculture and lumber production. The climate in Purranque is temperate, with temperatures normally ranging from 70 degrees in the summer to 40 degrees in the winter. (Since Chile is south of the equator, its seasons are the opposite of ours in the U.S. They celebrate Christmas in the summer, and Easter in the fall.)

Purranque has a population of more than 20,000, and San Sebastian has a spacious church building in town that is next to the rectory where Fr. Azua and Fr. Gomez live. But they also minister to 19 small faith communities scattered in the hills around Purranque, covering an area that extends to the Pacific Ocean.

Most of the small faith communities have and maintain their own chapels, where the priests visit from time to time to celebrate Mass with the people, usually once a month. At others, there is no chapel, so the priests celebrate Mass with the people in a home or school. It's daunting to think of their schedule, especially the travel time to each little chapel along winding, narrow roads. But that's only if you focus on the time.

Getting out into the countryside and among the people is freeing, said Fr. Gomez. "If I have a bad day or a bad week, all I have to do is go out into the countryside. I see the beauty of it, I spend time with the

people, and everything is okay," he said.

## **The Grace to Be With Them**

Fr. Gomez, as he took visitors on a tour of the parish boundaries, jounced along a bumpy road in his dusty gray pickup truck. When he stopped at a rural chapel, he first had to find the neighbor who is in charge of the key. Some of the country chapels do not hold tabernacles because there is no one on hand who will watch over them. But most do; usually there is a woman nearby who keeps an eye on the chapel and helps coordinate the prayer services and other activities that take place there.

Each small chapel tells the story of the faith and commitment of the people who built it. One held a poster in memory of a parishioner who recently died. He was a steadfast man, a pillar of the faith community, a strong father and prayerful person who will be sorely missed. Another chapel was next to a soccer field carved out of a hillside. There, the people hold picnics and soccer games that benefit the parish.

As Fr. Gomez followed the winding road from chapel to chapel, he talked about the parish. In addition to Fr. Azua and him, there are four permanent deacons in ministry there. While the priests rely

on their help, they try not to overburden the deacons, who also have families to care for.

Meanwhile, the parish family, as with any family, always has people who are sick, people who are suffering. "Our Precious Blood spirituality brings me the grace to be with them when they need me, in all situations," Fr. Gomez said. "When I can listen or give my compassion to the people: that is, for me, my happiness."

At the farthest chapel, the sun and the wind find their way through the tall pines. It's a long drive, but Fr. Gomez rejected the notion that the people here could find their way into town, into Purranque, to worship at the much larger San Sebastian Church. He estimated that while 80 percent of those living around this chapel are Catholic, only 20 percent are active in the faith life of the community. For those 20 percent, he said, he'll continue to make the drive.

## **"We Are Like Chalices"**

Traveling is also a fact of life for Fr. Azua, 48. In addition to his duties at the parish, he is the director of the Chilean Vicariate of the C.P.P.S. The Missionaries of the Precious Blood first came to Chile in 1947, when the C.P.P.S. in the United States followed Pope Pius XII's call for religious congregations to send missionaries to Latin America.



Now in Chile for over 60 years, the Missionaries minister in schools and parishes in Santiago, Purranque and Valdivia.

Once a month, Fr. Azua makes the 12-hour bus ride to Santiago, where he meets with other C.P.P.S. members in ministry there, and carries out the business of the vicariate. It would be a lot faster to take a flight to Santiago from the nearby city of Osorno, but, he said with a shrug, flights are expensive and the money is better spent elsewhere.

"We know that we struggle, but that's part of the challenge," he said. "We are like chalices. We collect the people's pain and joy, and we offer it back up to God. We are vessels that people can use; we bring hope to them. We (the C.P.P.S. in Chile) are small, but because we are here with the people, we can really say that we know the reality of their daily lives. We're not just here; we're here to be with the people. We don't just preside at Mass and

**Above, Fr. Gomez with a parishioner. Right, with his grandfather at a family picnic.** "When I can listen or give compassion to the people, that is, for me, my happiness," he said.



then disappear. We eat with them, we work with them. It's like Pope Francis has said: the shepherd should smell like the sheep."

A typical day at the San Sebastian rectory begins at 8 a.m. when the two priests gather for prayer then breakfast. It can be cold in the house in the mornings (southern Chile is close to Antarctica) until someone gets up and starts a fire in the rectory's second-floor woodstove.

Fr. Azua then goes into his office to attempt to get through the gathering mounds of paperwork, including the administrative work he performs for the Missionaries. Twice a week, he teaches a class at the high school in Purrانque. He celebrates Mass on weekdays as well as weekends, and, as with pastors everywhere, he adds to his daily schedule "funerals and whatever else comes up."

### **"God Continues to Call Me"**

Fr. Gomez, who is 38, says that on his days off, he likes to ride his bicycle, or visit family and friends. Sometimes he goes back to Valdivia, a city farther south, where he grew up, and where Missionaries also minister. But always, he draws strength and hope from the people he serves.

One weeknight after a long day traveling to several chapels, Fr. Gomez put on his vestments and prepared for an evening



**Fr. Azua and Fr. Gomez clean up the dishes after a late supper at the San Sebastian rectory.**

Mass at San Sebastian. There, a lively youth group played music; the lyrics were projected on a PowerPoint screen above the sanctuary so everyone could join in the singing.

After Mass, he stood by the door to greet all the people: all his people. His service to the people energizes him; being around the people, he said, confirms his vocation. "God has given me a calling and continues to call me. It's central in my life," he said. "It's gratifying to be present to the people. And every day, there are surprises."







## Join us for a celebration of the C.P.P.S. Bicentennial

This year we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

We are marking the jubilee in a number of ways, but we ask you to save the date, Saturday, August 15, 2015, for a public celebration at our motherhouse, St. Charles Center in Carthagen, Ohio.

This day will include:

- A presentation on the C.P.P.S. Missionary spirit, 1 p.m. in the auditorium of St. Charles. This presentation will explore the missions and ministries of the C.P.P.S. and celebrate the missionary spirit that the C.P.P.S. hopes to encourage in its parishes and mission sites.
- An outdoor Mass at 4:30 p.m. Archbishop Dennis Schnurr of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati will preside. All are welcome at this liturgy, which will take place on St. Charles' spacious front lawn.
- A picnic dinner at 6 p.m. All are invited, but space is limited; registration is required and is limited to the first 1,000 guests. More details coming soon.

Also part of the C.P.P.S. jubilee year is ***Jubilation***, a day of praise and service for youth and their families, on Sunday, August 9, 2015, at the Spiritual Center of Maria Stein (Ohio) and the Maria Stein Shrine of the Holy Relics. It begins at 1 p.m. and ends with an outdoor Mass that evening.



**Left to right, Sr. Hang Pham, ASC; Fr. Vince Wirtner, C.PP.S.; Br. Juan Acuña, C.PP.S.; Sr. Angela Laquet, ASC; Fr. Timothy Armbruster, C.PP.S. Not pictured: Sr. Joni Belford, C.PP.S.**

## A Chance to Talk

The Year of Consecrated Life gives religious sisters, brothers and priests an opportunity to talk with others—and amongst themselves—about the lives they have chosen.

By Fr. Vince Wirtner, C.PP.S.

**W**hen Pope Francis declared 2015 the Year of Consecrated Life, many of us who are priests, religious brothers or sisters who are also members of religious communities were both

energized and humbled. Certainly, it has given us an opportunity to reflect on our lives and our vocations. The pope's declaration put us all into a position to explain our life choices to people in a way

that they would understand; maybe, we could even inspire young people to think about the consecrated life. It all depends on how well we can convey the joy in our hearts.

Recently, a group of us discussed the Year of Consecrated Life at a gathering of priests, brothers and sisters from Precious Blood communities. Priests, brothers and sisters from congregations devoted to the Blood of Christ, we all went through religious formation at the same time, and we now get together for an annual reunion to check in with each other about our lives and ministries.

All of us find these weekends both relaxing and energizing. It's always good to be with peers but frankly, with the current realities in our Church, it can be hard to find peers when you are a priest, brother or sister under the age of 50. The time that we spend together in prayer, conversation and sharing meals always goes quickly and is filled with laughter, empathy and affirmation.

## **The Year of Consecrated Life**

We gathered at the home of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ (ASC sisters) in Ruma, a small town in southern Illinois not far from St. Louis.

There, we talked about how we are celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life and what it means to each of us.

Consecrated (or religious) life is a unique vocation in the Church in which a man or woman dedicates his or her life to the service of God and the Church as a religious brother, sister or priest. Most people—or certainly most Catholics—have an idea of what a priest is and does. But the Year of Consecrated Life has brought positive attention to the roles of religious brothers and sisters.

“For religious brothers, the Year of Consecrated Life has helped draw attention to a vocation that is becoming rather rare,” said Br. Juan Acuña, C.P.P.S.

Br. Juan said he was gratified recently when Archbishop Blase Cupich, the newly appointed archbishop of Chicago, scheduled a time to meet with the religious brothers and sisters in the archdiocese and posed for pictures with each of them.

Dioceses and religious congregations, including ours, have been working hard to heighten an awareness of the critical need for more vocations in our Church. But one of the sisters in our group, Sr. Angela Laquet, ASC, said that the Year of Consecrated Life has given those efforts a wider focus.





I find that because I have the title of sister, because I have chosen that role to serve God, people place their trust in me more easily.

Sr. Angela Laquet, ASC

"I was very happy when the pope declared the Year of Consecrated Life because in some areas, the vocation focus has been on the priesthood only, and there's not as much emphasis placed on the sisters," she said. "The beauty of our lives, that we have found peace in a closer relationship with God: some of that has gotten lost. The Year of Consecrated Life has brought it to the forefront. Now we need to take the ball and run with it, so that people understand the role of sisters in our Church."

### **As Wide as God's Invitation**

And what is the role of a religious brother or sister? It is nearly as wide as God's imagination, God's invitation. In their consecrated lives, religious brothers and sisters can fulfill many ministries in the Church and in the world. Brothers who

are Missionaries of the Precious Blood teach in schools or colleges, minister in parishes, are musicians or writers, and help support our Congregation in countless ways.

Religious sisters have a similarly wide reach in their ministry. Sr. Angela, who lives in Taylorville, Ill., is an occupational therapist. "I find that because I have the title of sister, because I have chosen that role to serve God, people place their trust in me more easily," she said. "My patients will share things with me that they wouldn't share with another therapist because I am a sister. That's a blessing for me. I hear a lot of confessions, but I don't give absolution!"

People often ask questions about her vocation when they learn she is a sister, she said. "They're curious about it. Some aren't Catholic, or even if they are, maybe they don't

know a sister personally. When I'm headed to their house for a therapy session, they say, 'But I don't have my house all straightened up!'" she said.

### **The Same on the Inside**

Yes, we have made a life choice that tends to set us apart from the general population. But we all agreed that we're the same on the inside. Sr. Joni Belford, C.P.P.S., said that "my family and friends think I'm just Joni. To them, nothing has changed since I became a sister, and I think that's a good thing! I'm part of their lives, and they're part of my life."

Br. Juan was born and raised in Santiago, Chile, and became a religious brother here in the United States. His friends are sometimes unsure of his new role. "They'll ask me, 'Can we invite you to go with us to a bar?'" (Answer: yes.)

"The perception of people

changes because you are a religious. They'll ask you to lead the prayer," he said. "A friend asked me to bless his house. I said, 'Okay, I can do that—but we can hang out, too.' There is an expectation from people that you will take care of their spiritual needs. They may say things to you that they would not share with other people. There's a responsibility there."

All of us agreed that it's important for us to tell others about our vocation: why we became a priest, brother or sister, and what that has meant in our lives. For those of us who are vocation ministers, this is a large part of what we do. Fr. Timothy Armbruster, C.P.P.S., noted that we need to be sure we are presenting the whole picture of a complete, balanced and happy life.

"When the Year of Consecrated Life was announced, the National Religious Vocation Conference



The perception of people changes because you are a religious. They'll ask you to lead the prayer. A friend asked me to bless his house. I said, "Okay, I can do that—but we can hang out, too."

Br. Juan Acuña, C.P.P.S.



This is the year to pray for people who chose this calling, who have dedicated their whole lives to God's mission in this world.

Sr. Hang Pham, ASC

asked us all what we would be doing to promote it. In vocation ministry, in a sense, we wouldn't be doing anything different: we're always telling our Community's story, sharing who we are.

"But I was sitting with a group of eighth graders not long ago. One of them started talking out of the blue about the pope, life in the Church, and wanting to make a trip to Rome. Another kid asked him, 'So you want to be a priest someday?' At that point, I stepped back and let them do the talking. Soon another kid said, 'Well, priests just say Mass.' And someone else popped up with, 'Fr. Timothy doesn't just say Mass all the time, he does other things.'

"That conversation was a challenge to me. What kind of an image are we promoting? What of our lives is really getting across to the kids? If I am a priest, is it just that I say the Mass, or are the kids seeing us in

other ways, too?"

### **Please Pray for Us**

All of us in that conversation, whether priests, brothers or sisters, wanted to be known and accepted both in our lives of service, and as people who struggle and sin and pray and reach out, the same as every other Christian.

After all, we are all here to help each other, pointed out Sr. Hang Pham, ASC. "This is the year to pray for people who chose this calling, who have dedicated their whole lives to God's mission in this world," she said. "But we follow the example of Pope Francis, who always asks people to pray for him. That's important: we're not only here to serve. We ask others to help us, as well. It's mutual. We pray for each other. We serve each other. We bring each other closer to God."







**A Special Sacrament:** Our Fr. David Kelly, C.P.P.S., and his fellow staff members of the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation (PBMR) on Chicago's south side, were part of a moving ritual of confirmation on March 7, when Archbishop Blase Cupich confirmed five young men who are detained at the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center. Fr. Kelly writes the following:

"It is believed," the archbishop of Chicago said, "that wherever the bishop is, there is the Church." He said that as he spoke to five youth of Cook County Juvenile Detention Center. "Over two million Catholics are with you at this moment; tonight we are the Catholic Church of Chicago."

Archbishop Cupich came to Cook County Juvenile Detention Center to celebrate the Confirmation of five young men—16 and 17 years old. Jovany, Joshua, Marvin, Pedro and Joseph are being tried as adults. Amidst the strain and stress of the possibility of spending many years in prison, they wanted and worked hard to better understand their Catholic faith. Through the guidance and teaching of Mike Donovan, a PBMR volunteer, they were confirmed by the archbishop of Chicago. As one of the kids said, "Pretty cool, huh?"

Archbishop Cupich's presence and his pastoral and open attitude won the hearts of everyone. He greeted the law enforcement officers as he came into the facility, stopping to speak with each one. As he went upstairs to the visitation area, he stopped to speak to the families who were waiting to visit their children. Making his way through the facility and into the chapel area, even before he took off his coat, he immediately went over and introduced himself to the youth and their families who were grateful and overwhelmed that the Church had not forgotten them.



**Archbishop Blase Cupich with staff members and volunteers from the PBMR.**

In his homily, he explained the sacrament of confirmation. He told the youth that he was going to mark their foreheads with the sign of the cross using the holy chrism. He told them that the cross that he placed on their forehead wasn't the cross of Christ, but it was their cross. It was the pain and hurt that they carried. He said the holy chrism is used because Christ meets us precisely in those moments of pain and disappointment.

He spoke of the Samaritan woman at the well, which was the gospel of the day. He said that she came out in the heat of the day, not early in the morning when it was cool, because she was not accepted by others. She couldn't join the other women as they came to the well because of how she was looked upon. "She believed what they said about her," he said. "She believed deep in her heart that she was not worthy, that her sin had made her a bad person, worthless."

He went on to tell these five young men, dressed in their jail garb, that neither should they believe the hurtful or harmful things that people might say of them, that they should not believe that they are bad people. "God the Father and Son comes to you in the Holy Spirit because of his love for you. Believe it," he said. "This sacrament is a gift because it relieves you of the burdens you carry and calls you a son of God. You receive, in this sacrament, a love that no one can take from you."

Tears flowed from mothers and family members as they heard their children being called good, something they hadn't heard for a long time. As much as this sacrament and the visit from Archbishop Cupich meant to the kids, I think it meant even more to the families gathered there. They needed to hear that they were still a part of the Catholic family.

It is said that the worse form of torture is isolation. The visit by the archbishop of Chicago broke through that isolation and darkness and, if what the archbishop said is true, for that brief time the whole Catholic Church of Chicago was celebrating as the Holy Spirit dispelled the overwhelming darkness and ignited the light within these five young men and their families. And, as we know, that fire will never be extinguished.

In the once dark detention center, a light broke through the darkness and the archbishop said, "I needed this, we, as Church needed this, and none of us will be the same." He spoke of how this is where the Church needs to be—with the forgotten, the thirsty, the hurting, our children.

After the celebration, Archbishop Cupich took pictures with the youth and their families, as well as the many staff members who

wanted to have their picture taken with him. He stayed long after and shared a meal with the kids, their families, staff and volunteers. He remarked to one of the youth that he was really looking forward to being here with them and how he wanted to do a good job, and quipped “you know jobs are hard to come by these days; I don’t want to lose mine!”

(Fr. David Kelly is the director of the PBMR, which offers reconciliation and respite to youth and families in a violence-torn neighborhood on Chicago’s south side. Also in ministry there are Fr. Denny Kinderman, C.P.P.S.; Br. Juan Acuña, C.P.P.S.; Sr. Donna Liette, C.P.P.S.; and Sr. Carolyn Hoying, C.P.P.S.)

**Fr. Flaherty to Be Honored:** Fr. Leon Flaherty, C.P.P.S., will be honored with the *Lumen Christi* award by the Diocese of Superior, Wisc., at an awards ceremony on May 22 at the University of Wisconsin-Superior.

The award is presented each year to someone who lives the values that Superior’s Cathedral School strives to instill in its students. *Lumen Christi* means “the Light of Christ,” and it refers to Christ as the source of truth, faith, knowledge and character.

Award recipients demonstrate through their lives a commitment to these values, and they show a willingness to share the light of Christ with others.

Fr. Flaherty, a native of Superior, was ordained in 1961. After his ordination, Fr. Flaherty served as an instructor at Brunnerdale, the Congregation’s high school seminary near Canton, Ohio. In 1970, he was named director of vocations, and later became director of formation. In 1978, Fr. Flaherty was assigned to the retreat team at the retreat center in Maria Stein, Ohio.

During that time, he was also elected to the leadership of the Congregation. In 1982, he was elected vice provincial director of the Cincinnati province, and to the general curia of the worldwide congregation from 1983 to 1989.

Fr. Flaherty continued his retreat and renewal ministry, moving to Columbus, Ohio in 1989. In 2000, he entered parish ministry in the Diocese of Superior WI, where he served for nine years.

He is now in ministry at the Cathedral of Christ the King in Superior. He is also active in The Twin Ports Ministry to Seafarers, an interdenominational service to the sailors working on Great Lakes freighters.



**Fr. Flaherty**





# Delivered Into the Right Hands

**M**y mom is my partner in my job. Admittedly, she doesn't do much of the editorial heavy lifting. But she prays steadfastly for me, especially when I am traveling. She watches the weather forecast in the winter so she knows what I am up against. She remains on red alert until she knows I am home again.

When my mom says she is going to pray for you, she prays for you. It is not a passive stance. She keeps a long and thorough list of all the people who need her prayerful support, and she updates it daily.

I don't know exactly how she goes about the actual praying, because that's between her and God. But there is a gold-bond security in her promise. Often have I said to people, "you are in my prayers," but it is just a wisp, meaningless. That's mostly because I lead a haphazard life, but also because I'm not convinced I can sway the thoughts of God. Who am I to tug on God's robe?

With my mom, I have the sense that it is more of a long conversation that goes on throughout her day, and as she drifts off to sleep at night. She brings all her people—the hurt, the sick, the heartbroken, those who are weakening or in danger—into that conversation with her. She and God talk it all out.

I have a friend who is a nurse. When she worked the second shift, she would clock out and then call her mom, a night owl who lived halfway across the state. They would talk about their days as the daughter drove home.

On through the night, the daughter traveled, her mother's soothing voice and animated questions keeping her alert and engaged. She could talk about her troubles, her triumphs, or how she was doing with her laundry; it didn't really matter. It was as if her mother was in the passenger seat. As she drove into the garage, her mother said good-night.

I imagine that's how it is with my mom and God. God says, "How was your day, Katie?" And she tells him all about it. He says, "What's troubling you?" and she tells him. This is where we come in. She mentions us, one by one, with all our neediness, and God nods. "I'll look into it," he says. At that point, she can relax, having delivered her people into the right hands.

I don't know if I will ever be able to pray like her. She has a special gift. However, I never thought I would be able to bake bread or get my strawberry jam to set up, and both those things have happened. She probably prayed for that, too.



**At Our House  
by Jean Giesige**



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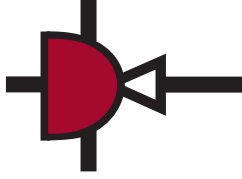
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