

SPRING 2016

C P P S T O D A Y

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

Building On Faith

In La Labor, Guatemala,
parishioners are building
a home for their
faith families.



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**Sarah Franck
and daughter
Maria.**

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

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Making Connections in Mission

I was in Guatemala recently at our San Gaspar Seminary in Guatemala City for a meeting of the directors of all our C.P.P.S. ministry sites in Latin America, which also include Chile, Peru and Colombia. As a Congregation, we've placed a priority on providing opportunities for our priests and brothers in Latin America to get together and get to know one another. The culture and challenges in Chile are very different from Guatemala, which is different from Peru, which is different from Colombia. And yet we are all bound together in charity, and have a lot in common. When we can all sit down in the same room and talk about our hopes and dreams for our Congregation and the people we serve, great things can happen.

Great things are happening in Guatemala, as you'll read in our cover story about the many faith communities in the La Labor region. It is a country that has seen some changes in the past 20 years yet still faces many difficult issues. On my first visit to La Labor, in 2000, the village had just gotten its first phone, and it was the talk of the town (figuratively and literally).

Since then, cell phones have arrived on the scene, so families can communicate with each other much more easily. But many other issues remain. Health care is in short supply. Public education is limited. Many families are broken, with children being raised by single mothers. After a 40-year civil war, violence is very much a part of the culture.

I'm proud of the work done by our Missionaries in Guatemala. I believe that we've really made a difference in the lives of the people.

As we were humbled to learn when her message arrived at our office, we have also made a difference in the life of Sarah Franck, who grew up and still lives in the shadow of our St. Charles Center in Carthagena, Ohio. In this issue you can read Sarah's story and how her life has been interwoven with the C.P.P.S. She wrote us a note of appreciation, which turned into this story, and we in turn appreciate her willingness to be part of our Precious Blood family.

It's our connections that give our lives meaning: connections among and between families, connections with others who live down the road, and, most importantly, connection to the God who created us all. The Precious Blood of Jesus, shed for us all, draws us all near and makes of us one big family.

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



Building on Faith

In La Labor, Guatemala, parishioners are building a home for their faith families.

Juan Carlos Lopez holds the plans for the expansion of San Martin.

(Photo by Jean Giesige)

There as here, it all starts with a plan. A church begins on a sheet of paper, as the faithful scratch out with pencil or pen their dream for a place to gather. Without a church building, they are a family without a home. With a church, with a roof over their heads, all sorts of good works can grow.

In the small mountain village of San Martin in the La Labor region of Guatemala, the faith family of San Martin de Porres

faith community is building a new church. "There are a lot of new families coming into the area, and they need the room," said Fr. Bill Beuth, C.P.P.S., who has been in ministry in La Labor for 24 years.

With this project, the people took the bold, faith-filled step to build a larger church outside the walls of the existing church. The building project, concrete block by concrete block, is enveloping the current church building,

which is still in full use.

It's an ambitious project, but Juan Carlos Lopez, a parishioner who is heading up the construction, is confident. "Here in the parish are masons, welders and carpenters," Juan Carlos said. "The cost of the project will be cut in half because the people are doing a lot of the work."

Juan Carlos estimates that it will take about \$40,000 to finish the project, which will not only enlarge the church but add on a catechetical center. Bit by bit, the money comes in as the parish raises funds through raffles and by selling food after Mass.

"Everybody has donated; everybody is making a sacrifice," he said. "And they know they can come here at any time and look at the books.

"People give five quetzal (about 63 cents) toward the project or whatever they can give. They have confidence and trust in us because our volunteers keep track of everything, every penny they get."

A church building means so much in Guatemala because it's the center of parish life and also a wellspring of hope for the larger community. Often, health care and educational projects, so desperately needed in a country that still struggles to care for its people, young and old, come out of the church, as has happened in La Labor. Underserved by their government, the people often

turn to the church, asking God for the inspiration and courage to improve the world around them.

Leaders Rise Up

Juan Carlos is fortunate, in a way, because of the skill set among his fellow parishioners of San Martin. In the community of El Chan II, farmers are trying to master the precise demands of the building trade as they work on their church, Holy Family.

El Chan II (*chan* is a local term for the seed of a particular tree) is a struggling community, said Fr. Beuth. Many people can't afford to own cars, so without a church, they'd have to walk to the next town to attend Mass. Not only is that a hardship, but it also gives them no sense of community. So they want their own church. Like everyone else in the world. If you don't have a place, a structure, where everyone can sit down together; if you don't have a church where you can celebrate the Eucharist, how are you going to build up a faith family that can in turn reach out to others?

Fr. Beuth says that when a community first comes together to explore ways to build its own church, "leaders rise up within the community. You can always pick them out—and if you ask them, they'll help lead the people."

Lay leaders are essential in rural Guatemala, where parishes

are large and far-flung. In La Labor, for instance, there is a large church, Sangre de Cristo (the Blood of Christ) that is at the center of the parish, but the parish also includes 15 faith communities, many of them along dirt roads that wind through the mountains. Each of them has or dreams to have its own church.

Missionaries of the Precious Blood who live in La Labor, including Fr. Mauricio Alvarez, C.P.P.S., the pastor, and Fr. Rony Diaz, C.P.P.S., the parochial vicar, along with Fr. Beuth, minister to them all, a total of approximately 40,000 people. Assisting the Missionaries is a team of 200 catechists, adult volunteers who help teach the children, preparing them for first communion and confirmation. Volunteers look after the church buildings, which are sometimes broken into and vandalized by Guatemala's increasingly violent gangs. Parish volunteers run programs and step forward whenever they see a need. Just like here.

"Sometimes We Get Tired"

In the small community of El Chan II, the people also have a plan for their church. First they had to obtain the land, and then, with the leadership of parishioner Amilcar Canté and other volunteers, they put up a church, a concrete-block structure with a

metal roof. It shelters them and provides a place to gather for the Eucharist, but it is not adequate, and now they consult the plans drawn up by an engineer as they dream about a church building that will better serve their needs.

Amilcar is a farmer who works on the church after long hours in the field. With help from others in the parish, he was able to construct the existing building. He thinks he has learned enough to start on the new church, once everyone has reviewed and approved the plans. Everyone knows it's going to take a while.

Most of the people in El Chan II have to scratch out a living against great odds. They are farmers, like Amilcar, or day laborers, bus drivers or work in factories in Guatemala City. Those who travel into the city for work have to put up with an onerous, 90-minute commute on a crowded bus through streets and highways choked with traffic. Generally speaking, the farther a village is off the beaten path, the harder it is to find good jobs, good land, and good opportunities. It's tough to haul materials and people up the narrow, rutted road, even in the dry season.

Amilcar's wife, Mirna, is in charge of teaching religious education at the parish. The current modest church has no room devoted to religious education or other parish needs,



Fr. Bill Beuth, C.P.P.S. (back row, center), with the people of El Chan II.

“Sometimes we get tired, but God gives us the strength to go on. We know this is going to take a long time.”

and she can see better things when she looks at the plans for the new and improved church. “It’s important to work for all the people in our community, for the love of God,” she said. “Sometimes we get tired, but God gives us the strength to go on. We know this is going to take a long time.”

Holy Family is a small faith community now; only 20 families from El Chan II play an active part. But Amilcar and Mirna are convinced that if they can build an adequate church, more people will come. Others may be waiting to see the walls rise, to see if there’s enough faith among the small band of believers to make it happen.

“We Just Want to Give Back”

In Las Vados, a small community along a sleepy river (sleepy in the dry season only; in the rainy season it can wash away homes that are built too close to its banks), the people enjoy their church building, San Rafael, but they hope to make improvements to the front entrance that will make it more accessible.

The church building is 35 years old and has some beautiful embellishments, thanks to parishioner Carlos Muralles, who is a skilled carpenter and woodcarver. Carlos and his nephew, an engineer, are working on plans to remodel the church’s main entrance. The people are



Carlos Elias and the church under construction in Canaán.

raising money for the project through raffles and other means; after Mass every Sunday, a number is pulled from a bingo wheel to determine that week's winner.

The new space the project will create will house catechetical classrooms. Parishioner Virginia Lopez is looking forward to the improvement, but in the meantime, she continues to prepare the parish's children for their first communion. Last year's class of 19 boys and girls met with Virginia in her home. "I love working with the children—and no one else wants to do it," she jokes.

In addition to coordinating the church's building projects, Carlos helps with a pre-school religion class. "We receive so much from our church family," he

said. "We just want to give back."

Divine Mercy, Under Construction

Just a couple of miles up the rough road is the newer community of Canaán, where Carlos Elias keeps a thoroughly organized photographic journal of Divine Mercy Church, currently and perhaps eternally under construction.

It's been a tough haul. Canaán is also a community that struggles. Divine Mercy was given a patch of land on which to build a church, but it's down a steep hill. At a recent funeral, the first in the new church, the congregation waited and perhaps said a prayer in sympathy as pallbearers brought the casket
(Continued on page 9)

Parish “Twins” Help with Projects

Much of the progress in the small communities of the La Labor region in Guatemala have taken place with the help of faithful friends in the United States, according to Fr Bill Beuth, C.P.P.S., who has encouraged those relationships throughout his 24 years in Guatemala.

“In his apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis calls for a new missionary spirit. He says that ‘by her very nature, the Church is missionary.’ I think there are many ways to express our Catholic faith in our C.P.P.S. mission in Guatemala. One of these ways is sharing with the less fortunate,” Fr. Beuth said.

Among the parishes and organizations that have a twinning relationship with those in La Labor are:

- Our Lady of Guadalupe, Montezuma, Ohio
- St. Mary Church, Philothea, Ohio
- Mary Help of Christians Church, Fort Recovery, Ohio
- Sts. Peter and Paul Church, Ottawa, Ohio
- St. Gaspar Church, Rome City, Ind.
- Immaculate Conception Church, Celina, Ohio
- Calumet College of St. Joseph, Whiting, Ind.

Other help comes from St. Anthony St. Vincent De Paul in Manteca, Calif., and friends and supporters of Fr. Beuth and the mission.

“As a result of these relationships, many projects have become a reality and dreams have come true,” Fr. Beuth said.

The mission would not have the reach without the help of its donors and volunteers, many of whom have made the trip to Guatemala to see for themselves what their good works have accomplished.

For more information on parish twinning possibilities, contact the Missionaries’ office of mission advancement at 937-228-9263 or mission@cpps-preciousblood.org.



Walkway to San Rafael, twin of Sts. Peter and Paul in Ottawa, Ohio.

Building on Faith

(Continued from page 7)

down the twenty concrete steps into the church and back up after the liturgy.

Carlos shows plans that will, he hopes, lead to a church whose main entrance will be level with the top of the hill. No more steep steps for the old folks. The small congregation did all the preliminary work to the land by hand, digging out where necessary with shovels, including the holes for the 18-foot support beams that are now in place.

The beams don't have much to hold up at the moment. There's a galvanized steel roof over the altar, which sits on a dirt floor. But it is recognizable as a church, or perhaps was to the gang that broke in recently, spray painting the number 18, a gang sign, on the lectern and walls. The people

The people are raising as much money as they can to build the church, but it's slow going. "My grandchildren will probably finish it." Carlos jokes.

cleaned off the paint and went back to work.

An architect has helped them with the plans for a two-story church; like many in the region, one floor will be the church proper, and the other floor will include rooms for religious education and meetings.

"There was no water here, and no electricity at first, so it was tough work," said Carlos. "Now, there is water and electricity."

The people is raising as much money as it can; volunteers sell food after mass, organize garage sales with used clothing and shoes. "My grandchildren will probably finish it," Carlos jokes.

But he doesn't really believe that; he can't. He has the plans in his hands, in his heart. "The people who originally had the idea of building a church here may not have realized how long it was going to take," he said. "We are trying to keep the people motivated. We tell them, 'The money you've raised so far is in every column, every bag of cement.' Every month we say to the people, 'We paid for this.' My sons have grown up here, were baptized here, will get married here—all the important events in our lives happen here."





The Franck family's dairy herd has a cows'-eye view of St. Charles Center. *(Photo by Portrait Identity/Mara Hibner)*

The Haven Next Door

The mom of a farm family receives solace and support from her neighbors, the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

The cows on Doug and Sarah Franck's Carthagenia, Ohio, dairy farm have a great view of St. Charles Center, which is perfectly framed by the barn's east doorway. They seem unimpressed.

But meanwhile, in the nearby Franck farmhouse, Sarah Franck in particular understands the significance. St. Charles is part of her life, as are the Missionaries of the Precious Blood who call

St. Charles home. She recently wrote to the Missionaries about her life story, interwoven as it is with theirs.

"I have a long history of receiving mercy from the Missionaries of the Precious Blood," wrote Sarah, who grew up on what was the Kunkler farm on Carthagenia Road and now is the Franck farm. "On the day I was born, C.P.P.S. Brs. Don Fisher and Nick Renner were

helping my father pour cement on the farm we would one day own." Growing up, she heard stories of Fr. Andrew Kunkler, C.PP.S., who was an ancestor; Fr. Kunkler had ministered to many people during a cholera epidemic in Minster, Ohio, and had taken in and raised the future Bishop Joseph Dwenger when both of his parents died in the epidemic.

Beautiful Examples of Charity

When Sarah began college, she took a job in the kitchen at St. Charles. Fr. Gus Hanchak, C.PP.S., helped pay for part of her tuition that quarter. He believed in her and wanted to help.

Sarah earned a degree in nursing and went to work in

the infirmary at St. Charles.

"There, I benefited from the prayers and the witness of many good and holy priests. I can't overestimate the graces that my family received, in particular the beautiful example of charity that Br. Denis Rumschlag, C.PP.S., gave as he patiently and lovingly cared for the aged, especially the dying. No one will ever know how many times he got up in the middle of the night when someone was dying," she wrote. "He taught me how to give mercy."

In the infirmary, she cared for Fr. Hanchak. "He never once brought up that gift he gave me," she said. "I didn't know him well when I worked in the kitchen. But later I found that he placed a high value on a good education. Many times, he told me that his insulin shots didn't hurt as much when I gave them—so maybe he got a little return on his investment."

And Fr. Ambrose Heiman, C.PP.S., became a sort of spiritual director, caring for Sarah as she cared for him. "Fr. Ambrose took a special interest in me," Sarah said in an interview.

"I had just come back from maternity leave after having our first child, Bradley. He teased me: 'Bradley? Is there a St. Bradley? Or is he named after General (Omar) Bradley?'"

And after that, he'd always ask, 'How is the general?'"

While Sarah was a nurse in the St. Charles Infirmary, Fr. Ambrose Heiman, C.PP.S., asked her, "How is your spiritual reading?" Sarah responded, "My what?" She adds, "Maybe that's when he decided I needed a spiritual guide."



(Photo by Portrait Identity/Mara Hibner)

Franck family portrait, taken on the grounds of St. Charles. “Doug always says, ‘What’s one more pork chop?’”

Early on, Fr. Heiman had asked her, “How is your spiritual reading?” Sarah responded, “My what?”

“Maybe that’s when he decided I needed a spiritual guide,” she said. Fr. Heiman gave Sarah books to read that would enrich her experience of the Mass.

“He’d ask me about Mass, after I’d attended. If I said I didn’t get much out of it, he would say, ‘You have to go and seek your faith. You don’t just have it handed to you. You have to be formed,’” she said.

Growing Family

Sarah and Doug’s family was

to grow and grow; they are now parents of 11 children, ages 21 to 2. “People ask why we kept having children, and I would tell them, ‘Jesus keeps knocking and we keep answering the door.’ Doug and I always felt that we should never close the door on love. God has decided that a big family is what we should have, and I thank God for that,” she said. “And Doug always says, ‘What’s one more pork chop?’

“It’s the greatest grace of my life, to be a mother. I love it. The more children that arrived, the more we could see a plan in it, and the less difficult it became.”

Well, yes. But a family that size can be a challenge, to say

the least. There were times when Sarah needed a little encouragement, times when she was weary. “Once I went to confession griping about natural family planning, and the penance was to thank God for the gift of fertility,” she said. “Later that month, I got pregnant with twins. After that, I told God that I would take as many more as he wanted—but please send one at a time.”

With so many children, she and Doug decided early on that Sarah would give up her job in St. Charles’ infirmary to stay at home. But Sarah stays connected to the priests and brothers who inspire her. “They treat me like I’m their daughter. They ask me about our kids. It’s like we’ve become their kids and grandkids,” she said.

Daily Mass at St. Charles

Daily Mass at St. Charles has sustained her through the most difficult times of her life, including the death of her son, Nick, five years ago. After Nick died, Sarah said, it was difficult to go anywhere outside of the family circle. Her pastor, Fr. Tom Hemm, C.P.P.S., was very kind and supportive to the family. And Sarah turned to St. Charles for spiritual sustenance, attending Mass there among the many surrogate grandfathers whom



Sarah Franck with daughter Maria

she loved.

“Mass at St. Charles was a great source of healing,” she said. “That kind of grief isn’t something you go through, but something that becomes a part of you. Not until we die will we lay that cross down. But God carries us gently and carefully through all of it.”

She had read a quote from Pope Benedict XVI that remains a lifeline to her. He had said, “We know the souls of those who have died are alive in the resurrected body of the Lord. The Lord’s body shelters them and carries them toward the common resurrection. In this body, which we are permitted to receive in Holy Communion, we remain close to one another, and we touch each other.”

“That quote means so much

to me," she said. "The only reason I knew where to go after my son died was because of the witness of those many men I helped in my years at St. Charles. They would get their tired, old and aching bodies up early in the morning to get to Mass. Many would stop in to the chapel during the day. They showed me, by example where their strength came from."

And so, in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, she decided to write it all down in a sort of thank-you

note to the Missionaries who demonstrate God's mercy for her. "I see the priests and brothers at St. Charles as they continue in their old age to care for souls and strengthen them daily," she wrote. "Now, as we are settled on the farm of my youth, as you look through our dairy barn over the heads of many cows, the door perfectly frames St. Charles. We get many compliments on it, and it reminds us that the members of the C.P.P.S. are still there for us."



A Prayer for the Jubilee Year of Mercy

Father of mercies,
who set your people free
from slavery
and walked with them
to the Promised Land,
who brought them back
from exile
and rebuilt their homeland
time and again,
who so loved the world
that you sent your only Son,



not to condemn us,
but to set us free from sin,
who redeemed us
in the Blood of the Lamb,
hear our prayers for mercy:
for ourselves,
for those we love,
for those we ought to love,
and for those we find
unlovable.
Blessed by your
Holy Spirit,
we pray for your mercy
and for your grace
that we may be merciful
as you are merciful.
We ask this in the name
of Jesus the Lord.

Amen.



Missionaries of Mercy: Five Missionaries of the Precious Blood—Frs. Steve Dos Santos, Tim Knepper, George “Yuri” Kuzara, Jayababu Nuthulapati and Kevin Scalf—have been commissioned by Pope Francis as Missionaries of Mercy for the Jubilee Year. There are 800 around the world, 100 from the United States.

In his papal bull declaring the jubilee year, Pope Francis wrote that the Missionaries of Mercy “will be a sign of the Church’s maternal solicitude for the People of God, enabling them to enter the profound richness of this mystery so fundamental to the faith.” (MV 18)

Priests seeking to become Missionaries of Mercy had to apply to Rome. Fr. Knepper said he did so “to show communion with the Holy Father during this year of mercy.”

For Fr. Dos Santos, “it just made sense to request the papal mandate. As Missionaries of the Precious Blood, we are already missionaries of mercy. The two ministries that Pope Francis highlighted in *Misericordiae Vultus* are preaching and celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation in a spirit of mercy. This is part of who we are as Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

“The jubilee year is really another opportunity for us to highlight our spirituality and charism.”

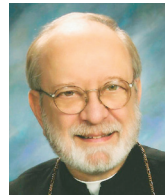
Fr. Scalf also said this was a good way to live out Precious Blood spirituality: “In writing about mercy, Pope Francis said, ‘Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that all are compelled to heed their cry for help . . . and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism!’ That’s Precious Blood spirituality at its best. And I’m eager to share that charism with others who might not experience it, during this Jubilee Year of Mercy.”



Fr. Dos Santos



Fr. Knepper



Fr. Kuzara



Fr. Nuthulapati



Fr. Scalf

Rebuilding: Parish leaders are determined to repair San Sebastian Church in Purranque, Chile, after a February fire that destroyed the interior of the church building.

Since the fire, which investigators suspect was started by an unknown person or persons early on Sunday, February 7, Missionaries in Purranque have been meeting with civil authorities, investigators and representatives from their insurance company in an attempt to learn the cause of the fire and come up with a plan to recover from it.

The church building's exterior support structure was still in place, while the interior had been destroyed by the fire. The parish had celebrated the completion of an interior repainting project in January.

The church is an important focal point of the faith family, which includes the city of Purranque, with a population of 8,000 and an additional 5,000 to 6,000 people in the rural area surrounding it.

San Sebastian, the southernmost C.P.P.S. parish in the world, was inaugurated in 1949. Its first pastor was Fr. Ambrose Lengerich, C.P.P.S. The church building, dedicated in 1952, was damaged by earthquakes in 1958 and 1960.

A special fund has been set up for the project at a bank in Purranque. Donations from the U.S. may be made through the Society of the Precious Blood, Cincinnati Province.

In Memoriam: Fr. John Falter, C.P.P.S., died on January 21, 2016 at St. Charles Center, Celina, Ohio. Fr. Falter was 82 years old.

Fr. Falter was born in Delphos, Ohio, on November 23, 1933 to John and Ida (Hempfling) Falter. He entered the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1948 and was ordained on June 10, 1961.

After his ordination, Fr. Falter served at St. Anthony Church in Detroit and St. Edward Church in Cleveland. In 1965, he volunteered to serve as a missionary in Chile and spent the next 42 years of his life in parish ministry there.

Fr. Tom Hemm, C.P.P.S., who served with Fr. Falter for many years in Chile, said that he was edified by Fr. Falter's prayerfulness: "He spoke with Jesus as a friend and was very docile to the Holy Spirit."

A Mass of Christian burial was celebrated on January 26, 2016, in Assumption Chapel at St. Charles Center. Burial followed in the Community cemetery.

Memorial donations may be made to the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, Cincinnati Province.



Fr. Falter



A Steep Learning Curve

Friends of ours are eagerly awaiting the imminent arrival of two little pug puppies, promised to them from a litter born in late winter. They shared a photo of the puppies with our family, and it gave me a pang. We have a female beagle mix whom we had spayed as soon as possible when she arrived at our home. She never had the chance to be a mother.

Her puppies would have been cute, no doubt. But the joke in our family is that she would have been a terrible mother. She has a somewhat cranky disposition and an enduring, selfish appetite. The puppies' lives would have been in danger anytime anyone entered the room with a hot dog.

Yet we don't really know what kind of mother she would have been. And in a way that's true of most of us. We don't really know what kind of a parent we're going to be until we're several years into it. Recently our niece delivered a beautiful baby boy, and I very nearly wrote in the card to the new little family, "I hope he's a good little boy." We all know what's meant by that: we hope he's sleeping through the night. But what if he isn't? A new mom might wonder if she's doing something wrong.

There's a steep learning curve that comes along with that new little bundle. I remember wrapping our firstborn son into six layers of new blankets and tucking him into his brand new stroller. With a new fully-packed diaper bag over my shoulder, I took him for a little walk and felt like a complete fraud. Anyone could see that I was a rookie. On the next outing, I left the giant diaper bag behind, and he promptly suffered a gastronomic explosion of the type that only newborns can survive with a smile. The diaper bag was necessary after all. At all times and in all places.

I never felt that I had any natural inclinations for the job of mothering, and so I had to work hard to learn it. Gradually I got the hang of caring for babies, then suddenly there were no more in the house. We all had to move on to the next phase.

And the new phase, and the new phase. Whatever I learned before seems to have little bearing on what I need now. And so maybe one does not learn how to be a parent as much as people living together learn to be a family, climbing sometimes confidently and sometimes tentatively toward a future that is an unknown to all. We thank our merciful God that humans mature slowly, because if it happened quickly, none of us would know what to do with ourselves.



**At Our House
by Jean Giesige**



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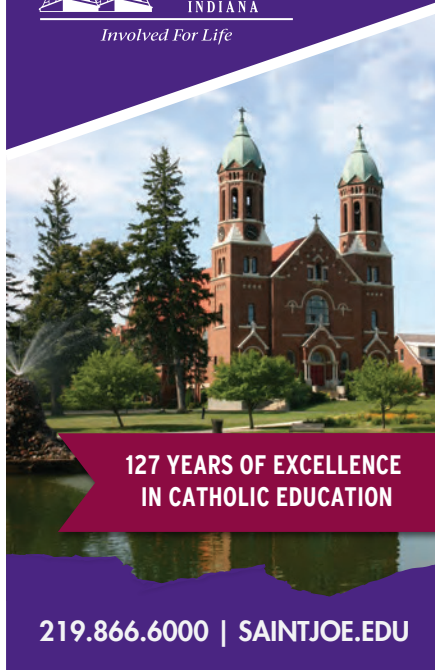
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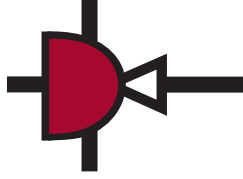
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