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Dear Friends,

When Fr. Paul Wohlwend, C.P.P.S., was in the fourth grade, he was already thinking about becoming a priest. He was a student at St. Joseph School in Randolph, Ohio, near Akron. He could picture his future as a parish priest: serving the people of God, offering them the sacraments, celebrating with them in happy times, and comforting them in sad times. He could see it: all he had to do was get there.

Fr. Paul, 89, now makes his home at St. Charles Center in Carthagena, Ohio, the motherhouse of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. As a school boy, he knew that one road to the priesthood went through Brunnerdale, the Missionaries' high school seminary near Canton, Ohio. Times were hard and Fr. Paul, who was the second of nine children, had to earn the admission fee of \$100. He helped out at a neighbor's celery farm, first dropping celery plants into the ground and later repairing crates. And by the time he was ready to start his freshman year at Brunnerdale, he had the \$100 he needed.

The Missionaries took care of the rest. They made sure his tuition was covered and supported him throughout his formation as a priest. He was ordained in 1954, saying yes to God in a firm voice, and has been saying yes ever since.

Fr. Paul has enjoyed his life as a priest, which worked out much as he imagined. For 50 years, he ministered in parishes: St. Gabriel in Detroit; Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament in Cleveland; Precious Blood in Dayton; St. John the Baptist in Whiting, Ind.; St. Peter in Winamac, Ind.; Sts. Peter and Paul in Ottawa, Ohio; and Mary Help of Christians in Fort Recovery, Ohio.

There's so much more to the life of a pastor than people would ever guess, Fr. Paul said. People rightfully see the church as a place of refuge and the pastor as someone who will help them sort things out, which he tried to do whenever possible. Once in a while, it wasn't possible. "Once, I had a couple come to the rectory because they wanted to get married, right then and there," he said. "I told them that they had to have a license. They said, 'We've got one!' I told them that they'd need witnesses. They said, 'They're out in the car!'" Finally, he was able to convince them that they'd need months of preparation with their pastor before he could perform the ceremony.



Fr. Paul Wohlwend in the doorway of Assumption Chapel at St. Charles.

(Please detach from letter and return with your gift in the envelope provided.)

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

Enclosed is my gift of \$_____.

I would like to pledge _____ *a month* *a quarter*

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All gifts count toward the *Missionary Hearts* Mission and Ministry Society membership levels.

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

Fr. Paul kept his promise to God and the people of God through all those years of parish ministry, and when he retired to St. Charles in 2004, he kept right on serving. Like many of our retired members, he pitched in as a substitute at parishes near and far. Fr. Paul arrived at St. Charles as the former seminary was undergoing a major remodeling to become a senior living center. As a pastor for all those years, Fr. Paul knew a thing or two about building projects—and soon, he was on the committee for phase two of the St. Charles project, serving as its secretary.



Fr. Paul in front of the statue and relic of St. Gaspar del Bufalo, founder of the C.P.P.S., in the St. Charles Chapel.

Fr. Paul's help was invaluable. And he's still helping. (He likes to tell people that he didn't really retire—he just deleted the "re" in "retired.") He continues to help at parishes, and he's nearly always the first person to volunteer to lead tours of St. Charles, where he spent six years as a seminarian. He particularly enjoys showing visitors the chapel, taking them up into the sanctuary where they can get a closer look at the beautiful mosaic with its Precious Blood theme. "If you sit too far away from it, you don't really see all the details," he said.

Fr. Paul enjoys his life at St. Charles, where his apartment on the third floor was carved from four former student dorm rooms, one of which he occupied when he was a deacon. He appreciates that his life has come full circle, like the farm fields he sees from his apartment window. "You see the farmers planting their crops, you see the crops growing and you see the harvest," he said. "You can enjoy the whole growing season without doing any of the work!"

It's all been a gift: God's gift to him, and his gift back to God. At St. Charles, sharing meals and presiding at Masses with his brothers in Community, Fr. Paul appreciates the cadence of his life, the hours of prayer and work and relaxation and rest.

And we appreciate him. We honor all of our retired priests and brothers, who said yes to God's call and served the people of God for many years. Our Community has made a commitment to support them in their retirement—will you help us, as they've helped so many over the years? 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 priests and brothers. 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 our retired priests and brothers, who have given so much. And may God bless all of his sons and daughters, including you and me, as we too continue to live into our commitments—as we all continue to say yes to God's call in our own lives.

Yours in the Precious Blood,

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

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