

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

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Dear Friends,

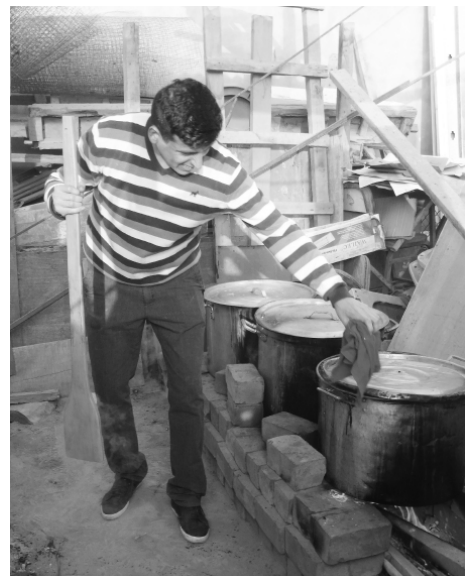
Think about your favorite celebrations at your parish. Whether it's a wedding or a First Communion, a fundraiser like a fish fry, or a big get-together like a summer festival, there's food involved. Sharing a meal is an important part of parish life. I can well remember how my mom fussed over the menu at the reception my family planned after my ordination. We invited practically everybody from the small country parish where I grew up, St. Mary in Philothea, Ohio.

The best feeling, when you're part of the organizing committee for a parish meal, is when the people have all been served and are sitting down, enjoying their food and each other's company. It's a second kind of Eucharist; first we're together at the table of the Lord with him physically present in Holy Communion, then we're together in the parish hall, or outside on picnic tables, eating, talking and laughing with God present through the love and care of God's family.

That's how it was last summer at Nuestra Señora de la Luz (Our Lady of the Light) Parish in Lima, Peru, where our Missionaries are in ministry. The parish celebrated its 36th anniversary on August 26. Thirty-six is probably not a landmark anniversary here in the U.S., but at Nuestra Señora de la Luz, they celebrate every year. I think that is a great idea, especially at a parish that grew out of nothing and now provides so much support for its people.

Nuestra Señora de la Luz was built over a period of many years in a working-class neighborhood in Lima. It grew slowly but steadily, almost stone by stone. The walls went up as money was scraped together; for many years, the church had no roof. The roof and other improvements and advances eventually came about thanks in part to the support of donors here in the U.S.

When there's an event at Nuestra Señora de la Luz, the people pitch in. The pastor, Fr. Máximo Mesia, C.P.P.S., will tell you that Peruvians love to eat, but even more than that, they love to cook and to share a meal. Preparations for the parish's anniversary meal began early on August 26, as volunteers gathered in a building near the church to chop vegetables.



A parishioner stirs the soup before the anniversary celebration.

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

Yes, I would like to be a part of our mission work in Chile, Peru, Guatemala and Colombia.

Enclosed is my gift of \$_____.

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

We will send you pledge forms and envelopes.

Please make your check payable to: **Society of the Precious Blood**

To make a donation by credit card, please use the reverse side of this form.

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.

The parish provided some of the ingredients for the stone soup that would be served that night, and all through the day, parishioners stopped by with their own offerings to add: a pound or two of chicken or pork, a bag of potatoes, a package of pasta. That's the recipe for stone soup, as in the old folk story that some of you may remember: you put a big pot over the fire and invite people to put into the pot anything that they want to contribute. The soup is deliciously meaningful, because everyone had a hand in making it.

That night at the parish, the Mass was well attended by people young and old. It was after sundown when the Mass ended, and parishioners took to the streets in a procession, behind several young men carrying a statue of Our Lady of the Light. The procession made its way through the neighborhood, stopping every so often so that the parish priests and the people could pray together along with all the people who came out of their houses and shops to join in.



Ingredients are ready to be added to the stone soup at the parish celebration.

Finally, the procession turned the corner back into the parish yard, and it was time to eat. Volunteers served up the soup, which had been simmering over an open fire all day. It was warm, hearty and smelled like love. There was music and fireworks; the celebration continued on into the night.

It's so good to see people celebrating in their parishes, thanking God for what they've built, and what they become when they're together. We're stronger when we're together; other people call out the gifts that God has placed within us, gifts that we might not otherwise even realize that we have. When we offer what we have to others—when we place our gifts into the pot of stone soup—the resulting recipe, blessed by God, is amazing.

In Peru and in many of our missions in Chile, Guatemala and Colombia, people step forward to share what they have, to make each other stronger in faith. Will you help them with what you can share? Will you consider a donation to support our C.P.P.S. missions, where we reach out to improve and enrich the spiritual and everyday lives of all of God's children? There as here, the parish is the center of the people's lives of faith. It's where they come when they need strength, consolation or inspiration. Will you become a part of what they have built with your contribution to our C.P.P.S. missions? The people there work hard for what they have built in their parishes and other ministry sites—your contribution will help them reach more of God's children.

After a big meal, it's time to sit back, rest, relax and appreciate all that's been lovingly shared. Some might say that's the best time of the day. My prayer for you is that you enjoy a good meal—in church, with family and friends, or even if it's just you and God at the table. May we all say grace with a thankful heart, for the gifts we have received.

Sincerely in the Blood of Christ,

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

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