



WINTER 2020

CPPS TODAY

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

**We Are
Living Chalices**

In this issue of *C.PP.S. Today*



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

WINTER 2020

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Anointed, Filled and Poured Out

Last September, over 40 Missionaries of the Precious Blood and lay Associates gathered in Poland for the C.P.P.S. General Assembly. The month was devoted to discerning the future direction of the Congregation and the election of leaders who will guide us into that future.

Our time together was spent in prayer, conversation, discernment and decision-making. Fr. Ben Berinti, C.P.P.S., the facilitator of the assembly, worked with the theme of “Becoming New Wine.” We reflected on our call to become “living chalices” for this “new wine.” Each of us is called to become a living chalice, to be anointed, filled, and emptied.

In this issue of *C.P.P.S. Today*, we delve deeper into what it means to become living chalices. Fr. Berinti introduces this concept of living chalices, then we have two concrete examples of how two members of the Precious Blood family have become living chalices in their ministry, and encouraged others to do so as well.

Fr. Jim Smith, C.P.P.S., is the parochial vicar at the St. Henry Cluster in Mercer County, Ohio. He helped local football players pour themselves out in service to others. In this case, they collected clothes and supplies for homeless youth who are served by Covenant House. Each of the team members, in their service to others, demonstrated how they are living chalices. Anointed, filled and poured out.

That same pattern—anointed, filled and poured out—can be seen in the ministry of Deacon Leo Barron from Whiting, Ind. Leo is a long-time Companion (lay associate) of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and was ordained a deacon in 2017. As part of his diaconal ministry, he leads communion services in jails and prisons in Northwest Indiana. Through his preaching, counseling and sharing of the Eucharist, he helps those who are incarcerated realize that nothing can keep God’s love from them. Even in the midst of their difficulties, the love of God is there.

Fr. Berinti provides us with the image of living chalices. Vessels that are anointed, filled and poured out. In this issue, we are presented with clear examples of how people have been anointed and called to service, how they have been filled and fed by God and our Precious Blood spirituality, and finally, how they have poured themselves out in ministry. The question is the same for all of us: as God’s living chalices, how have we been anointed, filled and poured out?



**Between
the Lines
by Fr. Jeffrey
Kirch, C.P.P.S.**





**We Are
Living Chalices**

Fr. Ben Berinti, C.PP.S., pastor, author and preacher, sees the special significance of the chalice in our lives, and hopes that we do too.

It's a perfunctory motion, something we do each day of our lives. We choose a cup, we fill a cup, we drink from a cup.

When the same motion is performed during Mass, says Fr. Ben Berinti, C.PP.S., it is both a symbolic and real representation of our own lives; our faith; our past, present and future.

That's because we are the cup.

When we truly enter into the mystery of Jesus' dying and rising, when we allow ourselves to be filled with his mercy and grace and then go out to share that with others, "We become a living chalice," Fr. Berinti said.

"It's an image I've been using for years as I speak at retreats and parish missions. And I tell the people, 'When this mission is over, you will never look at the chalice in the same way. You will not be able to look at it or receive from it without realizing the significance of it.'"

It's such a powerful message

that Fr. Berinti shared it at the general assembly of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, held in Poland in September. At that assembly, of which he was the facilitator, the Missionaries elected new leadership and set the course for the Congregation for the coming years.

The chalice is a seminal image in our life as a Church, so familiar to us that we sometimes don't appreciate its nuances. "We have all kinds of images of the chalice. A chalice is holy; before it is brought into service, it is anointed. But it's not just a symbol. It's also a tool. If a chalice is not filled and then emptied, it becomes just a museum piece. A chalice isn't always full, because if it is, what good is it? If it's always empty, what good is it?"

There are three steps in the life of a chalice:

- **A chalice is anointed.**
- **A chalice is filled.**
- **A chalice is emptied.**

All of that also happens in our own life, Fr. Berinti said. "A chalice is anointed only once. We then recognize the sacredness of the chalice. We don't keep re-

anointing it," he said. "Similarly, in our lives as Christians, we are anointed in baptism. We are anointed in confirmation, and some of us in the priesthood. And throughout all that, there is the reality of knowing that we are set aside as people of God for a special purpose. The fact that we are anointed does not make us superior to anyone else; there are promises and perils in the life of every Christian. But we live with the sense that we are anointed."

Longing to be Filled

During Mass, the chalice is filled with wine that becomes the Precious Blood of Jesus. "When you look at a chalice, you see that it's wider at the top. It's reaching up; it's longing to be filled," Fr. Berinti said. "It's literally built to be filled up. And so are we. That means we bring along a vulnerability, because there is all kinds of wine that can be poured into a chalice—and into us."

"I often ask people, what sort of wine is being poured into your life today? I hear all kinds of responses: 'I woke up today and I was sick.' 'My husband lost his job.' 'We're going to have a grandchild.' 'I helped three people today.' What is the wine of your life? What are the success, the failures and everything in between? The wine represents everything that's being poured

into your life, whether you ask for it or not."

A chalice can overflow, and so can we. "Every chalice has a limited capacity, so I have to be careful about what I'm taking in. This is different than a purposeful emptying—overflowing can be wasteful. And I realize that sometimes we don't have control over what is poured into our lives, but often we do. What is the wine that is being poured into your life today?"

There's a wisdom in knowing how much we can take on, how much we can take in. "Note that the chalice, every chalice, has boundaries. It can take in only so much. It's the same with us. We have to respect these boundaries. Sometimes in your life you have more capacity than in other times. Growing in the spiritual life means acknowledging that. But we are a living chalice, so we hope to increase our capacity. That's the beauty of the Eucharist: the wine is poured in, the wine is poured out, but something else happens to it. It is transformed. So whatever comes into my life has the capacity to be transformed. It has the capacity to transform me."

Emptying Ourselves Out

That transformation, brought about by God, is critical to the life of the chalice—and to our lives.



“If I’m just stuck with the joys and sorrows of my life and nothing further ever happens with them, then I’m just an ordinary cup.”

“The Eucharistic chalice takes in content, but also a transformation takes place,” Fr. Berinti said.

“God can and does transform this. Regular wine goes into the chalice, and is transformed.

“God can also transform the contents of our life, if we’re open to that. So that when I pour out what is in me, it serves a good purpose. If I’m just stuck with the joys and sorrows of my life and nothing further ever happens with them, then I’m just

an ordinary cup. The difference is that God can work this transformation within me.”

Once transformed, we can pour out what is inside us—what God placed inside us. “The whole purpose of a chalice is the cycle of filling and emptying, dying and rising,” Fr. Berinti said. “It’s the same with us. Our whole purpose lies in emptying ourselves out in service to God and to others. The things I have received, the gifts that have been given to me,

I have to pour them out in some way, because that's my nature."

This can be scary if we worry too much about what's coming next. "There's a danger in being emptied out because we may think, 'How am I going to be filled back up again? Who is going to fill me up?' We worry

if we're going to get anything back that's live-giving and nourishing," he said. "But I can't take on new content unless I pour out what is inside me. If the chalice is always full, there is no room to receive."

Recognizing the endless nature of God's mercy will help

"Ever Before the Lord"

Fr. Ben Berinti, C.P.P.S., has been using his ordination chalice for 34 years. "Often when I lead retreats and reflections, I bring it with me as a visual sign to represent what we're talking about, and also because it has such personal meaning to me—much more than just nostalgia," he said.

The chalice was a gift from his maternal grandparents. At its base is an inscription, "Ever before the Lord, Emma and Albert Cizauskas."

"My grandfather was a tough customer. My grandmother was a saint. The chalice is in memory of both of them. Every time I celebrate Mass, they are forever before the Lord," Fr. Berinti said. "Their names are right there on the chalice, on the altar. It helps keep my connection with them."

Fr. Berinti knew he wanted to be a priest from an early age, and his grandmother was always there, always encouraging. "My grandparents were devout but not over-the-top, so I had a level-headed balance of spirituality growing up," said Fr. Berinti, a native of Pittsburgh. "I was very close to my grandmother all my life. She was always praying for me, always excited about me being a priest. She was a big part of my vocation."



Fr. Berinti's chalice carries a tribute to his grandparents.



“Just look at all that we’ve been given. It’s not just a little bit, that we have to be afraid that it might run out. There is no limit to it.”

us to let go of the love God placed inside us, to share it with others who need it. “We are all living chalices, we all receive and we are all asked to pour out. But each of us is different, as each chalice is different—and that’s not a minor detail. You may have more capacity than I do,” he said. “But I ask people to remember the words of Ephesians (Eph 1: 7-8): ‘In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us.’

“Lavished: it’s my favorite word in the Bible. Just look at all that we’ve been given. It’s not just a little bit, that we have to be afraid that it might run out.

There is no limit to it.”

Preparing for the Next Thing

At the Eucharist, after the chalice is empty it is purified. Again, said Fr. Berinti, this reflects its dual nature as both ordinary and divine. “Chalices are sacred. They are special. But at the same time, they’re useful—and we use them. A chalice is not something to be afraid of. We handle them, we use them, we wash them,” he said. “When I’m giving retreats, I like to share photos of various chalices. Some are quite plain, some are very ornate. Some are chipped or damaged in some way. But no chalice is something that we

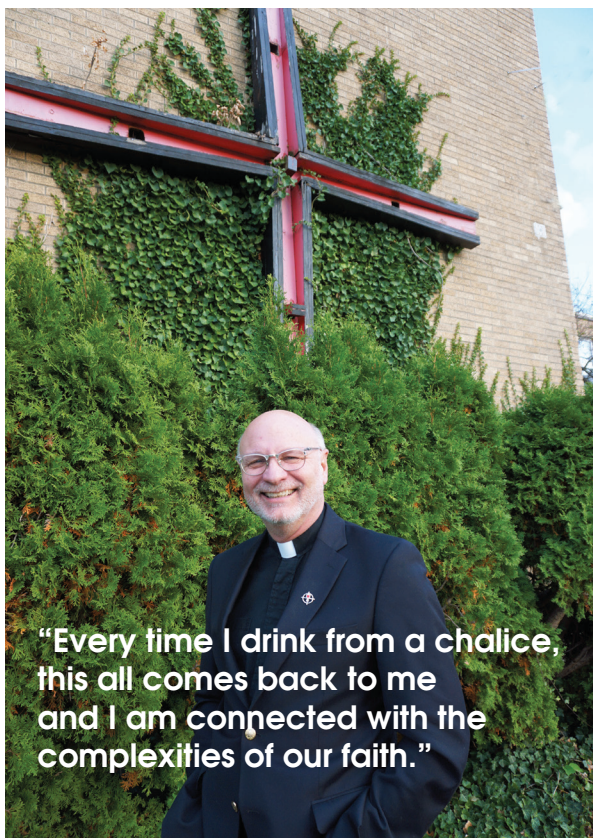
should put in a corner and never touch. We use them: we fill them up, we empty them then we clean them for the next use.”

In the same way, he said, we too are purified after a spiritual experience like the Eucharist. “I like to think about our purification as preparation. It’s something that’s a transitional period. How do I prepare myself for the next thing that God is going to pour into my life?” he said. “The purification is part of the endless cycle of who we are as living chalices.”

A Challenging Image

Fr. Berinti said that thinking of himself as a living chalice has changed his life. “Every time I see a chalice, every time I drink from a chalice, this all comes back to me and I am connected with the complexities of our faith,” he said.

The image of the living chalice speaks to other people as well—he can see it on their faces as he preaches about it at retreats and parish missions. It’s an accessible yet challenging image.



And for Fr. Berinti, it has added appeal because it is such a vivid way to explain Precious Blood spirituality, something he lives out as a Missionary of the Precious Blood.

“This message stirs people’s imagination, and it also promotes our spirituality by connecting people with one of the most important symbols of our faith,” he said. “I hope that it encourages more people to consume from the cup, and for those who do, to think about it in a whole new way.”



Living Chalice: Visiting the Imprisoned

“If Nothing Else, I’m a Good Listener”

When Leo Barron was ordained a deacon in the Diocese of Gary, Ind., in 2017, he knew the ministry would stretch him and take him places where he had not yet been. But perhaps he didn’t expect to go to jail.

Deacon Leo, who is also a Companion, or lay associate, of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, is now involved in prison ministry with a number of other deacons and lay men and women in the diocese. They provide ministry, including communion services and retreats, to Westville Detention Center and Indiana State Prison at Michigan City, as well as jails and juvenile detention centers in Lake and Porter Counties.

Visiting a jail or detention center can be a grim journey. Visitors, who have been through a background check and have passed a TB test, are patted down and go through a metal detector on each visit.

“Every time you go, you’re told not to bring anything in,” Deacon Leo said, although he is permitted to pack a Roman missal, his identification card and a quarter, which he uses to rent a

It’s not easy, but Deacon Leo Barron of the Diocese of Gary says his prison ministry is deeply fulfilling.

locker where he locks up his car keys.

But once inside, Deacon Leo said he experiences not despair but faith, hope and love. “I love it,” he said. “It takes me back to my roots,” his earlier 42-year career with Boys and Girls Club, where he could foster close and nurturing relationships with youth who needed it so badly.

His time in Westville, which he visits most often, is strictly governed by the prison authorities. One Saturday per month, he arrives at 6:15 or 6:30 a.m. and he has to be out by 8:30 a.m. In that time, he and other volunteers visit “the perimeter, basically an auditorium,” where they lead a communion service for approximately 45 men.

“Before and after the service, we can engage with the guys,” Deacon Leo said. They also visit a smaller group of men in R unit, who are due to be released within the next six months; and the WACU pods, “the guys in lockup. We go to their doors because you can’t have direct contact with them. You talk to them through a window, and give them communion—you put it on a piece of paper and slide it through the door.”

During the communion services, Deacon Leo gives a homily. “I approach it this way: I’m not trying to make it all roses and balloons. To the best of my ability, I try to talk about what concerns them,” he said. “I’ve never been involved with the criminal justice system, but through this ministry, you get a feel for who the guys in there really are. A human being is a human being, no matter what they’ve done or how their life got to the point where they’re incarcerated.”

And if the homilies don’t reach them, he said, maybe their conversations will. “If nothing else, I’m a good listener,” Deacon Leo said.

It’s made a profound difference in his life, and he hopes he is helping those he serves. “With some of the guys, you can see they’re maybe just there for a change of scenery. But when I’m with them, I see a deeper



Deacon Leo Barron preaching at a parish in Whiting, Ind.

spirituality in some of the guys than I see in the pews of the church on Sunday. You can see how much it means to them. After they receive communion, they’re kneeling on the floor.

“When you’re there (in a facility), you see their humanity. A lot of people don’t see that; they just think ‘These are guys who are getting what they deserve.’ But they’re still human beings who are struggling with fears and problems, not only in the facility but outside the facility too. So you hope in this ministry that you are sowing seeds. You’re not necessarily going to see the results. But you hope there’s something there, growing.”



Living Chalice: Clothes for Homeless Kids

“This Has Made the Whole Team Feel Good”

When a football coach asks his team to respond to a challenge, the team is supposed to rise up to meet it. And that’s exactly what happened with the St. Henry (Ohio) High School football team this year, only the coach was their assistant pastor, Fr. Jim Smith, C.P.P.S.

Fr. Jim had an idea for the team, that in addition to weekday practices and Friday night games, they take on a community service project, namely collecting t-shirts, underwear and socks for the homeless teens living at Covenant House in New York.

When he brought it up to the seven seniors on the team, “we all jumped on it,” said Jackson Heath, a senior linebacker on St. Henry’s squad. “We liked the idea and thought it would be a good thing for our community to get involved with.”

St. Henry is a small, tight-knit community where many people are related and most look out for each other. It might have been hard for the youth to imagine being lost and abandoned on the streets of New York. But they immediately began collecting

items and were encouraged by the community’s response. Even the youngest football players got involved. On the final night of the town’s fifth- and sixth-grade flag football rec league program, the



Students from the St. Henry cluster of parishes gather for a vigil for the homeless.

(Photos by Sandy Post)



Fr. Jim Smith passes the light to a young family during the vigil for homeless youth.

kids got to play at the high school stadium under the lights. They asked spectators to bring donated items to the game.

On October 30, the youth gathered for a candlelight vigil to pray for homeless youth. St. Henry Church was dark until the flames passed from candle to candle brightened the night. "We pray that all children will find your light," Fr. Jim said.

"We can only imagine how bad it is for some kids," Jackson said. "This has made the whole team feel good, and the whole community supported us."

St. Henry is a sports-minded town, but this particular season ended without any championships. But something even more valuable was gained,

said Fr. Jim.

"In the shadow of team pictures of state championships and trophy cases bursting at the seams with state championship, runner-up, semifinals and conference championships trophies, I think the meaning of a successful season kind of gets lost," he said. "Something as small as a t-shirt or underwear doesn't exactly come to mind as something successful, but even just one of the t-shirts makes a dent in youth homelessness. If we can expand that dent to making a wider impact in the experience of homeless youth, that might be bigger than anything that could fit in a trophy case."



The Shape of Our Chalices

In our cover story, Fr. Ben Berinti, C.PP.S., speaks of the call to become living chalices. This is a very Precious Blood way to talk about the universal call to holiness. Each of us is called to become a consecrated vessel for holding and distributing the grace of God to the world. As a vocation director, I get to sit and talk with young people who are trying to figure out the shape of their chalice.

Every Christian is called to a life of grace and service. That life of grace and service is our vocation. The four vocations (married life, priestly life, consecrated life, and the single life) each represent different ways of both being filled up and being poured out. Vocational discernment is about figuring out what kind of chalice God made you to be.

There are some aspects to being filled up and poured out as living chalices that are unique to each of the vocations.

For the married person, the chalice is shaped primarily by the family. Your spouse and your children are the primary sources of both grace and call in your life. There will be times when family will nourish and excite you, and there will be times when your family faces challenges that seems beyond you. The family also exists to be poured out in service to the community around it.

For the priest, the chalice is shaped by the people he is called to serve. The people with and for whom we celebrate the sacraments provide us with opportunities to be both filled up and poured out. While administration is a part of what we do, it represents for most of us only a pouring out and can exhaust us. We need prayer and the celebration of the sacraments to fill us up again.

A consecrated person's chalice is shaped primarily by his or her community. For religious brothers, sisters and religious priests, their community often defines the parameters of their life. The charism and rule of a particular community provides them with opportunities to be filled up and defines, to a certain extent, how and when they will be poured out.

The single vocation is marked by a certain freedom. The single person's chalice can be filled up in many of the same ways as have been already mentioned, but it is able to be poured out in ways the other vocations cannot. The single person is able to make radical choices for the Lord, and do things that others cannot.

I hope I have given you some new ways to think about vocation. Obviously the Lord is shaping your chalice, but he is also shaping the chalices of the people around you.



**Call and Answer
by Fr. Steve Dos
Santos, C.PP.S.**





5K for Vocations: The Coldwater, Ohio, Knights of Columbus Council 1991 hosted its annual 5K Run / Walk for Vocations on November 9 at St. Charles Center in Carthage, Ohio. Hundreds of runners, walkers and spectators turned out on a brisk morning. After an opening prayer by Fr. Steve Dos Santos, C.P.P.S., director of vocation ministry, the runners and walkers were off, following the course that wound around St. Charles' beautiful campus.



Knights welcome runners to the 5K.

The Missionaries are very grateful to the Knights of Columbus for organizing this great event that draws attention to and raises funds for vocations. We hope to see you all again next year!

C.P.P.S. Candidate Speaks: Greg Evers, C.P.P.S., a candidate in advanced formation, spoke in October at the Religious Formation Conference in Louisville.

Evers spoke about the Missionaries' Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation in Chicago.



Greg Evers

"At Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation, safe spaces are created through talking circles. Within these talking circles, people have the opportunity to gather together with one another and share their experiences of violence, death and trauma in their lives.

"As we open ourselves up to be more welcoming and hospitable to others, the grace of God works through us, grace that works to restore the humanity that was lost. By allowing God's grace to flow through us, we ourselves are transformed by the grace of God, and we become the presence of Christ in our world. . .

"We talk about responding to the Cry of the Blood in our world today. This involves opening the ears of our minds and our hearts to listen to the voices of those who are suffering. It calls us to touch

the ugly and festering wounds left by an unjust society. To restore wholeness to what is broken.”

In Memoriam: Fr. Robert Kunisch, C.P.P.S., 89, died on December 8, 2019, in the infirmary of St. Charles Center in Carthagena, Ohio, where he made his home.



Fr. Kunisch

Fr. Kunisch was born in Toledo on August 19, 1930, to Alfred and Helen (McCann) Kunisch. He entered the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1944 at Brunnerdale, a high school seminary near Canton, Ohio, and was ordained on June 2, 1956.

After his ordination, he served briefly in parish ministry in Detroit before he was assigned to St. Charles Seminary in Carthagena, Ohio, where in 1960 he was named treasurer, later vice-superior. In 1974, he was appointed provincial secretary.

Fr. Kunisch served at Calumet College of St. Joseph in Whiting, Ind., from 1975–81. He then became the pastor of St. Aloysius Church in Carthagena, Ohio, as well as the business manager of Messenger Press in Carthagena, which at the time was owned by the Missionaries. In 1985, he was named pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Montezuma, Ohio. In those years he also continued to serve in the leadership of the Congregation.

Fr. Kunisch became the director of the Sorrowful Mother Shrine, Bellevue, Ohio, in 1992. He retired from that position in 2000, but continued to minister at the shrine. In 2012, he retired to St. Charles Center, where he helped with parish ministry in the area as long as he was able. Even as his health declined, his mind remained sharp and clear, and he retained his lifelong ability with numbers; Fr. Kunisch served on the province’s finance committee until his death.

Fr. Kunisch knew from a young age that he wanted to be a priest. He answered God’s call and remained faithful to that call for over six decades. The life of a Missionary of the Precious Blood “is about service to God,” he once said. “Doing God’s work, wherever God might send you. It’s been a good life and a very interesting life. You can’t get anything more interesting than to see the devotion of the people to God and the Blessed Mother.”

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on December 13 at St. Charles Center. Fr. Timothy McFarland, C.P.P.S., presided and Fr. James Dugal, C.P.P.S., was the homilist. Burial followed in the Community cemetery.

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



In All Things There is a Gift

We own some wooded property outside of town; when I say we own it, I mean we pay the taxes on it. All the creatures there, the frogs and the flowers, the trees and the vines, live by their own immutable rules and pay very little attention to our hopes and dreams for the place.

We are always on the lookout for invaders, and a couple of years ago were found by a doozy: an invasive weed called teasel. Teasel looks like a thistle but it can grow up to eight feet tall. Each sturdy plant can produce up to 2,000 seeds, so if you want to control it, you have to show a little hustle.

It has shouldered its way into our pollinator area. I can't spray herbicide indiscriminately because I don't want to kill the desirable plants. So I go out whenever I have some free time and I carefully clip off the seed heads (which some people use in floral arrangements, one of the ways that teasel spreads), and dispose of them.

Teasel is an enemy that our local extension agent described as "formidable." I know that I am only slowing its spread, if I am even doing that. But I have to do something. Plus, I must confess that there is something therapeutic about being out in God's meadow, snipping away at the teasel, listening to an audiobook, watching the dog carry out her own futile projects. It's better than catching up on the ironing.

There are times when I am tempted to despair. There are so many of them, and none of them seem to have a fertility problem. If I'm careless in handling them, a shower of seeds falls on me and I know I just planted the next generation.

Late last fall I was out in the meadow working on the teasel as the teasel worked on me. The sun was setting and I knew I should head in; nothing had been planned for dinner. Yet I went on to snip a few more seed heads, then a few more, and suddenly I looked up and saw the setting sun, violently orange and sending its rays across the heavens. I paused and stretched and then saw the full moon, gliding up over the hill behind me. I was caught for a moment between the two of them, looming large, a sight you are never going to see inside a house, and I was overwhelmed by the magnitude of the gift. In the midst of battle came this sign of peace, a sense of the order of the universe imposed by our Creator.

In all our struggles we find these gifts, hidden away or blazing forth. Generally, we don't even have to look for them; they just appear. The teasel is my enemy. Thank you, God, for the teasel.

**At Our House
by Jean Giesige**



Join in the Missionaries' mission through the



Missionary Hearts

MISSION AND MINISTRY SOCIETY

The Society provides support to the Missionaries through various annual giving levels. Annual gifts are used to educate and train new priests and brothers; support our retired members; and increase an endowment for our foreign missions. Society members enjoy two events each year at St. Charles Center.

Visit cpps-preciousblood.org to learn more.

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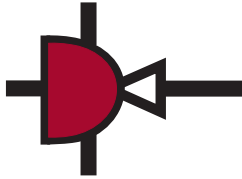
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