



MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

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April 2, 2020

Dear Friend,

For all of us, Lent 2020 turned out to be quite different than we expected, and maybe different than anything we've ever experienced before. The effects of the coronavirus and how it has brought the human world to halt on some levels, and ramped up human planning and ingenuity on other levels, has been amazing to watch. And we're more than just watching it: we're all participants in it. I hope that you and your family are able to stay healthy and keep your footing during these days of uncertainty. During Lent and Holy Week, our focus is drawn to the cross and to the hope of the resurrection. That's especially true this year; the love of God is a truth that can sustain us.

One thing that can help is to realize that we're all in this together. Not just the people of our own community or country, but all the people in the world. In our day-to-day lives, we can sometimes forget that we're all brothers and sisters. Our Church, with its arms that stretch across every border to encircle us all, is a living example of that. When you reflect on the Sunday Gospel, others are hearing the same sacred message, spoken in Croatian or Portuguese or Vietnamese. Their sorrows, fears and joys are the same as ours, and like us, they pray and grow together as a faith family.



Musicians lead the singing at Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel.

One Sunday morning in February, Fr. Bill Beuth, C.P.P.S., traveled to celebrate Mass in the village of El Chan I in the La Labor region of Guatemala. He was greeted by a handmade archway decorated with balloons. The village was celebrating the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, the patroness of its chapel. The night before, almost everybody had been up late taking part in a procession through the narrow streets of the village. There was music, followed by fireworks, followed by more music. The music carried to all the little villages in the surrounding hills, and it sounded like fun. You probably would have loved it.

The next morning, the chapel was full as Fr. Bill proclaimed the Gospel, preached, and invited all to the table of the Lord through the Eucharist. Maybe at the same time, you were receiving the Eucharist in your own parish. The Lord was inviting us all, regardless of our language, our culture or our station in life. Come to the table, God said, and partake of the feast.

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

Yes, I would like to help C.P.P.S. Missionaries in Latin America.

I would like to make a gift of \$_____

ACCOUNT:

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We will send you pledge forms and envelopes.

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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.

It's heartening to see our Missionaries serving the people of God here in the U.S., and it's also instructive for me to see Missionaries of the Precious Blood in Guatemala, Chile, Peru and Colombia in their ministry. Much of what they do looks familiar to me: they write homilies, hold office hours, hear confessions, preside at Mass, console those who mourn and encourage those who step up to take on roles in parish life. But much of what they have to do is different than what I encounter in my daily life. Guatemala, for instance, continues to struggle with widespread issues like illiteracy and malnutrition. People try to get by on an average per capita annual income of less than \$3,600.

When Fr. Bill drove into El Chan I on the weekend of its fiesta, he went past a new part of village that had sprung up, simple houses put together from pieces of salvaged corrugated steel tied to trees or fence posts. These houses are crowded together at the very edge of the hillside. With the next heavy rain, Fr. Bill worries that they will slide down the hill and leave many families with nothing.

It's easy to feel powerless in the face of such poverty, but our Missionaries choose another way. In La Labor, they have helped to establish schools, clinics and a nutrition project that can give the people an opportunity for a better life. The main parish, Sangre de Cristo in La Labor, ministers to 40,000 people, many of whom worship in 14 rural chapels like the one in El Chan I. Their faith offers them support and gives them a place to come together as children of God, to pray and learn and yes, to celebrate far into the night on their special feast day.



Fr Bill Beuth greets the people after Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel.

Will you help your brothers and sisters in Latin America, who pray like you do, who listen to the Word of God like you do, who cry and mourn like you do, who sing and celebrate like you do? Will you consider sharing your resources with our Missionaries there, who minister among the people without giving up? Will you help shore up the universal Church in places where people are struggling and suffering? Will you help be their foundation?

In January, we celebrated with our Missionaries in Latin America as they formed their own province, the Latin American Province of the C.P.P.S. We have pledged our continued support to them as they go forward in faith.

May God bless all of us in this holiest time of the year. May the Holy Spirit protect us and guide us into an Easter season that sustains our hope and brings us new life. Despite all that is happening in the world, may we feel a real joy in being a part of the Church that Christ established with his own Precious Blood. And may that Precious Blood unite us all as brothers and sisters who carry on the mission of Christ.

Sincerely in the Blood of Christ,

V. Rev. Jeffrey S. Kirch, C.P.P.S.
 V. Rev. Jeffrey S. Kirch, C.P.P.S.
 Provincial Director

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