

SUMMER 2015

C P P S T O D A Y

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD



Faith



Family

Families support and sustain those in religious life

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



**Br. Jerry Schulte,
C.P.P.S., and some
of his siblings.**

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We are born into one family, and acquire other families along the way. *Between the Lines* by Fr. Larry Hemmelgarn, C.P.P.S., provincial director of the Cincinnati Province.

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The Schnipke family (whose story begins on page 4) and the Schulte family (beginning on page 9) have found many ways to support their brothers, who are Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

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Okay, so we can't all dunk a basketball or win a race. But we all have something excellent to share with the world, thanks to our generous God. *At Our House* by Jean Giesige, editor of *C.P.P.S. Today*.

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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Families are Overlapping Circles

My extended family took a vacation together this year. There were seven of us. My brother, Rick, and I came up with the idea, but my sister-in-law, Donna, did the majority of the work to pull it all together. (She's good at that!) We celebrated mom's 82nd birthday during the week, so it was perfect timing. My brother and I took full advantage of it, trying to get as much time with mom as possible, but you could tell she liked it best when the whole crew was together. That's just how moms are.

As a Missionary of the Precious Blood, I belong to a number of families: my birth family, families I have become part of through my ministry, and my "Blood" brothers in Community. Each family is very important to me, and is supportive of me and my other families.

In this Year of Consecrated Life, as proclaimed by Pope Francis, we wanted to share with you the stories of two families that have faithfully supported their sons and brothers as they said yes to their vocations. The Schnipke and the Schulte families, both of Putnam County, Ohio, have been around the Missionaries for so long that they seem like family to us all. Their unwavering support has helped their family members—Frs. Gene and Ken Schnipke, and Br. Jerry Schulte—remain true to their calling as priests and religious brothers.

Sometimes parents worry that to encourage a son or daughter to pursue the consecrated life as a priest, brother or sister means giving them up to the Church and/or a religious community. The Schnipke and Schulte families demonstrate that their sons and brothers are still very much a part of the family circle and always have been, even when their ministries take them far from home.

We encourage our members to stay close to their birth families, and to spend time with them whenever possible. As he celebrated the 25th anniversary of his ordination this year, Fr. Ken Schnipke put together a list of things he's learned along the way. One was as follows: "From young and old alike, one of the top ten sins in confession is, 'I fought with my brothers and sisters.' I counsel people to hang in there and don't give up, because family is worth fighting for. We all come into this world welcomed by blood relatives and most of us will leave this world surrounded by blood relatives. Be good to them and love them always. This includes blood family and those united in the Precious Blood of Jesus."

I say amen to Fr. Ken's words of wisdom. May God bless all of our families and keep us close!

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





Thru My Eyes Photography

Faith & Family



Family is where many vocations begin. In this Year of Consecrated Life, here is a look at how two families' unfailing support has encouraged their brothers, who are Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

The Schnipkes

Mom & Dad set an example of expansive love

On Gene Schnipke's last morning in his hometown of Glandorf, Ohio, the family went to Mass together, as they always did, at St. John the Baptist Church.

Ott Schnipke, Gene's dad, looked over and saw that 14-year-old Gene was crying. "What's the matter?" he asked.

"I'm not sure I want to go," Gene replied.

He was about to head to Brunnerdale, the high school seminary of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood near Canton, Ohio. Gene had thought about being a priest since he was four years old, and had talked it over with his pastor and other priests in the Diocese of Toledo, but when the day came to take that first big step, he suddenly was not so sure.

There always comes that moment, tears or no tears, when it's time to go. So along with Gene's mother, Delores, Ott supervised the piling (some might say stacking) of Gene's numerous little siblings into the family station wagon, and they set off on the four-hour drive across Ohio for Brunnerdale. There really wasn't any

alternative, Delores said. "We already had his name tag sewn into every piece of clothing."

And, with the support of his family, Gene was ready to face his great adventure. Little did the Schnipkes know that it would become an adventure for all of them.

They were a family that was well suited for what was to come next. Ott was open minded with a generous spirit. His kids say they saw him literally give away the shoes off his feet. Raised in the small town of Cloverdale, he was drafted into the army in World War II. "He wanted to be a cook, but they put him in the infantry," Gene said. During his infantry training, Ott broke his foot, and while he was recuperating, the army trained him as a cook. And so he got his wish and attained a skill he would use for the rest of his life; later, he became famous for the outstanding chicken and ribs that he grilled for everyone lucky enough to be around him.

Once out of the army, Ott married Delores in 1952. She was supportive when Ott started his construction business, Ott Schnipke Builders, and helped as much as possible all his

other projects. They soon had a houseful of kids, four boys and five girls: Gene, Marilyn, Ruth, Janice, Ron, Ken, Larry, Mary Kay and Chris.

“Ott used to say that every time he came home, either the washer was running, or the dryer,” Delores said. “But I tried hard to keep up.”

When Gene, their oldest, announced that he’d like to give Brunnerdale a try, no one was surprised. He’d been the kind of kid who would drag his siblings along with him into the basement to participate when he played Mass. Parish priests who were Missionaries of the Precious Blood helped him with the decision, and once he’d gotten adjusted to his new surroundings, he enjoyed his years at Brunnerdale.

The rest of the kids always looked forward to visiting Gene at Brunnerdale. “We stayed at the Sunset Inn, in two adjoining rooms,” remembered his sister, Janice Schnipke von der Embse. “For us it was always fun to go see him. Mom and Dad always took the whole family; we just got in the car and went.”

It was Ott’s firm belief that the family should stay together at all times, whenever possible. When he made a little extra money, he invested it in a property along the Maumee River where they could all go to

swim, fish and relax as a family. He once bartered for a second-hand boat that was barely big enough for all of them. “He had us all on the boat and he brought his grill along, too,” said Marilyn Schnipke Bohrer. “We had to be really careful when we were moving around on that boat.”

Because it’s not possible to keep a family of nine kids together at all times, the Schnipkes were supportive when their other sons, one by one, also decided to attend Brunnerdale. “Dad told the story that when (the next oldest brother) Ron went, people would say to him, ‘Wow, two sons at Brunnerdale, you must be doing something right.’ Then when Ken went, they would say, ‘Three sons at Brunnerdale! That’s great!’ But when our youngest brother, Larry, went, people said, ‘All your boys went off to Brunnerdale! You must be hard to live with.’”

Things were far from terrible at the Schnipke house, where the kids grew up with the example of expansive love that was modeled every day by Ott and Delores. Ott’s cooking skills were legendary; he grilled chicken for the whole town of Glandorf, or anybody who happened to be at the Schnipkes’ place at the river.

And with the boys enrolled at Brunnerdale, the Schnipkes adopted the school. Ott and Delores helped found

a Brunnerdale parents' guild, and invited the boys' classmates to weekends on the river. Anybody who was a friend to one of them became a friend to all, and vice versa.

Gene graduated from Brunnerdale and went on to college and theological studies. He was ordained in 1980 as a Missionary of the Precious Blood. Ken, too, completed his studies at Brunnerdale and went on to ordination in 1990. (Ron and Larry graduated from Brunnerdale, but followed a different path; both are now married. Ron operates the family construction firm and Larry is a foreman at a local factory. They and all the Schnipke daughters live in the Glandorf area with their families.)

Just as in those Brunnerdale days, wherever Fr. Gene and Fr. Ken were in ministry, the family would come visit. When Fr. Ken was assigned to St. Andrew Church in Orlando, the whole family arrived. Mary Kay Schnipke Durliat remembers that the then-associate pastor, Fr. Dennis Chriszt, C.P.P.S., called it "the invasion of the Schnipkes."

When Fr. Gene enlisted as a chaplain in the U.S. Air Force, the visits took on an international flavor. Ott promised



Above, the Schnipke brothers, from left, Ron, Fr. Ken, Fr. Gene and Larry. Below, the Schnipke sisters, from left, Marilyn, Janice, Chris, Ruth and Mary Kay, with their mom, Delores (upper left).



Thru My Eyes Photography

Delores that wherever Gene was stationed, they would visit him. Accompanied by Fr. Ken, Ott and Delores traveled to Korea and Germany twice.

"We were always made to feel welcome, wherever we went," Mary Kay said.

And the family welcomed the Precious Blood priests,

brothers and candidates who visited. Ruth remembers that on the day she married her husband, Don Blankemeyer, Gene was home from school and so were many of his friends. They pitched in at the crowded Schnipke house and helped the family get ready for the wedding.

Becoming a part of that second family of the Precious Blood made their big, close family even bigger and closer, Janice said. "People get the impression that when your brothers become priests, they go away from the family. But our brothers didn't go away and disappear — they went away and came back, bringing a big bunch of people with them. Our world got so much bigger because of all the people we met and the places we visited."

Mary Kay agreed. "We've met so many great people through the Precious Blood, and we've made so many good friends. It has made our circle much wider, and it's been a real blessing to our family."

The family has grown and changed in the passing years, as families do. There are 28

grandchildren (one is deceased) and 12 great-grandchildren. Fr. Ken and Fr. Gene baptized many of them and have presided at many family weddings. Fr. Gene is now the pastor of the Marion Catholic Community of five parishes in and around Maria Stein, Ohio. Fr. Ken is the pastor of Immaculate Conception, Celina, Ohio, and St. Teresa in Rockford, Ohio. With assignments closer to Glandorf,

they can see and spend more time with the family.

But all the Schnipkes have had to learn to live without Ott, who died in 2011. His memory stays with them; his influence is felt in the family every day, and by extension, in the larger Precious Blood family. He and Delores remain

"Our world got so much bigger because of all the people we met and the places we visited."

at the center of the family circle, the parents whom the kids had heard praying together each morning when they woke up. "They taught us how to take care of others," Fr. Ken said.

"It was incredible to grow up having Mom and Dad as role models," Marilyn said. "They lived their lives in service to others."

For Schnipkes, Chicken's on the Menu



Larry and Ron Schnipke turn the chicken on the grill. Grilling is a skill they learned from their dad, Ott Schnipke.

When the Missionaries of the Precious Blood host their bicentennial celebration at St. Charles Center in Carthagen, Ohio, on August 15, it's the Schnipke brothers who will be cooking dinner.

Brothers Ron and Larry Schnipke have carried on their dad's tradition of grilling chicken for family gatherings, tailgates, and festivals in their hometown of Glandorf, Ohio.

When they (and a small army) kindly offered to grill 1,000 chicken halves for the Missionaries' bicentennial celebration (see page 15 for more details), the Missionaries quickly said, "Yes, please!"

Growing up, the Schnipke siblings watched their dad, Ott Schnipke, share a meals with everyone around him. He always grilled when the family got

together for relaxing weekends at their place on the Maumee River, and, on the way home, he never failed to drop off a chicken dinner, carefully wrapped in foil, to an elderly neighbor who lived alone. "Dad would hang the chicken dinner from his mailbox, blow the horn and drive on home," Ron said. Ott once cooked 2,800 chicken halves at a benefit for a friend who was waiting for a heart transplant.

When the Schnipkes are grilling, the grill, with charcoal smoking and chicken steaming, becomes a place that pulls people together. Friends and family around Glandorf always lend a hand. Brother-in-law Dan von der Embse notes that "it was always a privilege for an outlaw (the Schnipkes' affectionate term for any inlaw) to turn the chicken. It's always a big deal."

The Schultes

Everyone pitches in to create a great family

The white barn rises up over a wide expanse of green lawn, tended lovingly; it's easy to tell when a farm is in good hands, as this one has been for over 100 years. On that lawn, generations of kids have played softball and football and kickball and every kind of game. They've crossed the lawn to go to the barns and tend to the animals; they've turned into the lane after being away and been greeted by the site of the big white barn with its sign that reads "The Schultes."

It's the home place of Brother Jerry Schulte, C.P.P.S. The farm, outside of Kalida, Ohio, remains home to him though he has traveled far from it in his 60 years as a Missionary of the Precious Blood. He was raised here, the oldest of seven boys and four girls, all born two years apart to their parents, Alphonse and Frances Schulte.

Brother Jerry was born Eugene Schulte. He was given the name Jerome when he became a brother in 1955, but his family still calls him Gene or Genie. That's because, though he left the farm when he was 14 to attend Brunnerdale High School, the Missionaries' high school

seminary near Canton, Ohio, he is, was and has always been an important member of the family.

When the Schultes get together, which is as often as possible, the talk turns easily to the happy, busy days when they were growing up on the farm. They raised nearly everything the family needed: sweet corn, beans, tomatoes and over 1,000 pounds of potatoes every summer. Their mom oversaw the canning of all that garden goodness.

"You name it, we canned it," said Brother Jerry's sister, Janet Schulte Hovest. "It was normal for us to can 100 quarts of peaches or green beans." They canned sauerkraut and vegetable soup; the Schultes made their own sausage from the hogs they raised and butchered.

In addition to the hogs, the Schulte children also helped raise chickens, cows and sheep; Brother Jerry remembers farming with a team of horses, before tractors took over all the field work.

So self-sufficient were they that they didn't need many groceries. "Dad did all the grocery shopping, but we didn't need much," Janet said. "He



The Schultes line up at a family picnic in 2014. Row one, left to right, Janet, Ruth and Brother Jerry. Row two, Bill, Dick and Rita. Row three, Carl, Nick and Ron. Row four: Ceil and John.

(Photo by Deb Kessler)

would buy bananas, when he could get them—they were pretty rare in Kalida. He'd walk into the store and say, "Give me five slices of baloney." And everybody would get a taste of one of the few things they didn't make or grow for themselves.

The Schultes were raised to pitch in, even though they claim to this day that one sister would disappear whenever it was time to start in on the pile of dirty supper dishes. (We'll never tell which one). "Our parents were busy, hard-working and dedicated people," said Brother Jerry, and those traits were passed along to all the children.

They were also raised to be hospitable. Because they lived on the home place, first farmed by Brother Jerry's grandfather, Anton "Tony" Schulte in 1914, the extended family came to them every Sunday afternoon to spend time with Grandma

Mary Ann Schulte and their Aunt Agnes, who also lived with them. Every Saturday, Frances and her daughters would bake chocolate cake with caramel icing for their anticipated Sunday company. On Sunday, they'd put out a supper of roast beef sandwiches, sweet pickles, Jell-O with fruit cocktail, and the marvelous cake.

"There would be a whole yard of people, and Grandma Schulte was the magnet that drew them all here," Janet said.

There were so many people in and around the house at all times that the family jokes they didn't really miss Brother Jerry when he left for Brunnerdale. It just freed up a little space in the crowded bedrooms, his brothers said.

But they didn't let him forget where he came from, not that he ever would. Frances made time during her busy days to write often to her son. "I remember her



Our parents were busy, hard-working and dedicated people,” said Brother Jerry, and those traits were passed along to all 11 children.

Frances and Alphonse Schulte relax on the porch, circa 1965. (Photo by Br. Jerry Schulte, C.P.P.S.)

saying, ‘I have to get this letter in the mail,’” said Brother Jerry’s sister, Rita Schulte Siebeneck.

“Those letters couldn’t have been too exciting – not much changed from week to week,” added another sister, Ruth Schulte Hovest.

Alphonse and Frances would take half the kids at a time on trips across the state to Canton to visit their oldest son. “It was the only place we ever went, outside of visiting our cousins,” Rita said. “But it was kind of a boring drive. We would count the telephone poles to make the miles go faster.”

The tradition of visiting Brother Jerry continued throughout his years as a Missionary. Wherever he was in ministry, the family would come see him. That was whether he was working on Community farmland at St. Charles Center (then a seminary) in Carthagena, Ohio; at the St. Mary’s Novitiate

in Burkettsville, Ohio; or on the Brunnerdale farm.

In 1988, he traveled as a Missionary to Peru, returning home just in time for the wedding of his brother, Carl. He served as a hospital chaplain in Canton and then in East Chicago, Ind. In 1998, he was named director of initial formation and moved into the Community’s formation house, first in Dayton then in Chicago. His brothers and sisters were always on hand to help him move, and they supported the C.P.P.S. in other ways as well, often pitching in with chores at Community houses the way they always did on the home farm outside of Kalida.

Brother Jerry remembers one time in particular, when he was still at Brunnerdale working on the Community’s farmland with Brother Adrian Barga, C.P.P.S. “I was supposed to attend a workshop in Rome, but the wheat was coming ripe, and it would

have meant leaving Brother Adrian alone with the harvest," Brother Jerry said. "I told my brother Ron about it and he said, 'If that's all that's holding you back, get out of here.'" Two of the Schulte brothers made the long drive across the state to Canton to help Brother Adrian harvest the wheat.

"They did it for me," despite having plenty of work to do on their own farm, Brother Jerry said.

The family farm is now owned by Brother Jerry's brothers, Nick, Carl and John. Nick and his wife, Deb, live in the home, which is the site of an annual family reunion held in early August, which also happens to be right around Brother Jerry's birthday. Brother Jerry's brothers and sisters all live nearby; if you draw a 30-mile circle around the home farm, you would take them all

in. But the 40 grandkids and 56 great-grandkids are spread far and wide. As many of them as possible come to the home place for the annual reunion. The kids run around on the lawn and camp out in the barnyard. They take canoe trips together (last summer it took 24 canoes to hold them all) and play ball. They share meals and memories.

These days, it's an easy trip for Brother Jerry to get to the farm. He is now the senior pastoral associate at St. John the Baptist Church in nearby Glandorf, Ohio. It's wonderful to be so close to the family that means so much to him. "Their homes are always open to me, whether it's for a short visit or to stay for a while," he said. "We may not always talk about it, but there's a lot of unspoken support among us, and I know they're there for me, all the time."



Brother Jerry offers a prayer of thanksgiving at the family farm outside of Kalida, Ohio.

Frequently Asking Questions

Catholic students
are given a chance
to ask a priest
about whatever is
on their minds

The height of summer may not be the best time to bring up the classroom (sorry, kids) but Fr. Steve Dos Santos, C.P.P.S., and I are still energized by a visit we made to a high school religious education program last spring.

We were invited to speak with the freshmen and sophomores at St. Henry Parish in St. Henry, Ohio, where Fr. Tom Hemm, C.P.P.S., is the pastor.

Linda Thieman, who is a Companion of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, and Mike Eyink teach the classes. They wanted us to talk about our lives as priests and Missionaries.

This is one of our favorite things to do as vocation ministers. We get to talk with young people in their own environment, where they feel comfortable and we feel welcome. As visitors to a classroom, our presence creates a positive buzz—not because we’re rock stars by any means, but because it’s a break in the regular educational routine. What kid doesn’t love that?

The key to our visit was that the teachers asked the kids to come up with a list of questions ahead of time. The students knew they’d have the chance to ask follow-up questions once we were with them.

“That works better than asking kids to come up with questions on the spot,” said Fr. Steve, who has experience in parish youth ministry. “They might be afraid to ask a question in front of their peers.”

Linda sent us the questions ahead of time. They ran the gamut from funny (“Why do you wear a toga at Mass?”) to profound. There were questions that we’ve answered often, and unique questions that we had never heard before.

We wanted to make it fun for the students, so we assigned a number to each question,

Call and Answer
by Fr. Vince
Wirtner, C.P.P.S.



but the students didn't know what number went with what question. Once in the classroom, we asked the kids to shout out a number. A student would yell, "Five!" and we'd toss him or her a piece of candy.

And then Fr. Steve and I went to work answering the questions. They weren't just superficial questions. They were far deeper than "What is your favorite color?" One was, "Are fallen angels a real thing? Is God the reason for Satan going to hell? Why not let everyone go to heaven?" I deferred to Fr. Steve on that one!

It was a meaningful day for us, and we hope for the students as well. Fr. Steve and I have done several sessions like this, and we know that there are some questions that he handles better, and some that I should answer. We hope that this teamwork shows the students a little bit about life in a religious community, that by ministering together we can play to each other's strengths.

We'd be happy to visit your parish's high school religious education program for a similar question-and-answer session. (We find that high school is the right age for a session like this.) If you are a DRE or catechist preparing

for the coming school year, we hope you'll keep us in mind.

We hope that it gives the students an up-close look at the life of a priest. We want to add a religious brother to our team so that the students can learn more about that vocation too. We even like it when students stump us—there's a perception sometimes

To arrange a visit from the Missionaries' vocation team, contact Fr. Vince at 937-228-9263.

among Catholics that the priest knows everything. It's good for the students to see that we don't have all the answers.

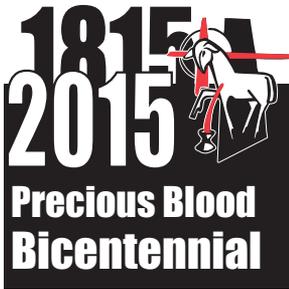
These sessions give us a chance to tell our story in a way that we hope is meaningful and memorable. If

they're feeling a call toward religious life, we hope that a session like this will give them the nudge that they need to take the next step and talk about it with someone.

"We hope that it helps to make priests and Missionaries of the Precious Blood a little more human to them," Fr. Steve added. "A session like this is like a witness talk about our community life, even if we don't say a word about it."

So keep us in mind as you think about launching another year of religious education. We're all working together to help students see how valuable they are to a God who loves them.

Two Events to Celebrate 200 Years



The Missionaries of the Precious Blood will celebrate their 200th anniversary with a public event on Saturday, August 15, 2015 at St. Charles Center in Carthagena, Ohio.

The day begins with a *Celebration of the C.P.P.S. Missionary Spirit*, at 1 p.m. in the St. Charles auditorium. Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S., former moderator general, will be the keynote speaker. The day will also include witness talks from local parishes about their missionary work.

We will celebrate an outdoor vigil Mass on St. Charles' spacious front lawn at 4:30 p.m. with Archbishop Dennis Schnurr presiding.

A picnic meal will follow. Registration is required for the meal and seating is limited. Visit cpps-preciousblood.org for details.



Also part of the C.P.P.S. jubilee year is ***JubilatiON!***, a day of praise and service for youth and their families, on Sunday, August 9, 2015, at the Spiritual Center of Maria Stein (Ohio) and the Maria Stein Shrine of the Holy Relics.

It begins at 1 p.m. and includes games, live music, service projects, Eucharistic adoration and more. An outdoor Mass will be celebrated at 7:30 p.m., Bishop Joe Binzer presiding. Fireworks will follow the Mass. This event is free and open to the public.

Glory to the Blood of Jesus — Now and forever!



C.H.A.P.T.E.R and V.E.R.S.E



Goals Exceeded: We are happy and grateful to announce that—with the help of many of you—we have surpassed our goal of 1,000 units of blood donated in honor of the C.P.P.S. in our bicentennial year.

This doesn't mean we want this effort to dry up, figuratively or literally! Please do continue to participate in blood drives in honor of the C.P.P.S.

Thanks to all who donated with us in mind, whether at a C.P.P.S.-sponsored blood drive or at a blood drive in their locality. Special thanks go out to those who organized these drives at our parishes and ministry sites, and to Fr. Angelo Anthony, C.P.P.S., who spearheaded this effort.

Also please note that we have long since surpassed our goal of 1,000 community service hours. Thanks to Fr. Dennis Chriszt, C.P.P.S., for heading up this initiative.

The goals were set with St. Gaspar's quote in mind: "Would that I had 1,000 tongues to endear every heart to the Precious Blood of Jesus."

In Memoriam: Fr. Ronald Schiml, C.P.P.S., 85, died on May 24, 2015, at St. Charles Center, Carthagena, Ohio, where he made his home.

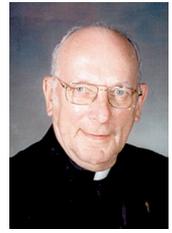
Fr. Schiml was born in Dayton on January 15, 1930, to Terence and Olga (Trentman) Schiml. He entered the Society in 1943 and was ordained on June 11, 1955.

After his ordination, Fr. Schiml first entered parish ministry, serving at St. Anthony Church in Detroit; St. John the Baptist in Whiting, Ind.; and Holy Angels in Dayton. Beginning in 1966, he was instrumental in the founding of a college that is sponsored by the Community, Calumet College of St. Joseph in Whiting, Ind. He served at the college for over 20 years, as its director of development and later as the college president and longtime member of the board of trustees.

In 1989, he became pastor of Precious Blood Church in Dayton, Ohio, and also served briefly at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Cleveland. From 1993 to 2013, he served as pastor of St. Joseph Church in Pulaski (Star City), Ind. In July 2013, he retired to St. Charles Center.

A Mass of Christian burial was celebrated on May 28, 2015, at St. Charles. Burial followed in the Community cemetery.

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



Fr. Schiml



The Creative Genius of God

When American Pharoah won the Belmont Stakes in June, I texted my youngest son, “We have a Triple Crown winner!” Our family has been watching the Triple Crown of horse racing—the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness and the Belmont—since the kids were little.

Seconds later I got a message back from him: “This news has no effect on my life.”

Strictly speaking, that was true. It is a point that I ponder often when my heart rate spikes during the final moments of any game into which I, as a spectator, have invested too much. I tell myself: if my side loses, the sun will come up tomorrow, human endeavors will go on, and every aspect of my life will be exactly the same.

Except, if my side wins, life gets a little bit better.

What is transcendent about excellence in others is that it gives us a glimpse into the infinite possibilities of the mind of God. When a horse is born with the physical traits, health and drive that make him churn down the track faster and with more verve than any other three-year-old horse in the nation or maybe the world, it’s good to marvel at such gifts.

We see it in horses; we see it in humans. Some were born then raised with the special combination of bone, sinew and heart to out-perform all others. Sometimes these children of God band together and mold their talents in such a way as to make an alley-oop possible. Is that something that all of us can do? No, it is not.

So when we see it, in an individual or in a team, it seems appropriate to me that we celebrate it (as long as we’re not burning any couches in the street). It’s an opportunity to be buoyed by the creative genius of God. It can ignite in even the slowest and least agile of us an extravagant hope, because our God is a lavish giver who does not neglect any of us. Even the least of God’s beetles has been given everything that a beetle needs to grab hold of a leaf and grow.

Therefore, there is in us too something that was given to us by the Creator, something that is extraordinary, a talent or gift that is ours alone. Our life is a partnership between God and us, or maybe God, us and the rest of the human race, to draw out and foster and develop that spark which God planted in each of us. God’s glory is reflected in all creation.

We yell, “Go, go, go” as American Pharoah crosses the finish line, and in our imagination we match his stride—not because we’re just as fast, but because we were made by the same God, and, as the old saying goes, God don’t make no junk.



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by Jean Giesige



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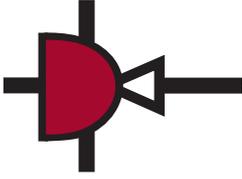
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