

SPRING 2020

C P P S T O D A Y

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

ONE CHURCH



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



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at SJB.

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One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic

Near the conclusion of the Creed that we pray during Mass comes this sentence: “I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.” If we recite it too quickly, the words might run together and lose their significance. Yet this definition, called the four marks of the Church, is lived out in parishes around the world. We are one Church. We strive to be a holy Church. We are a catholic Church, meaning universal. We are an apostolic Church, meaning the Church’s authority can be traced back to the apostles, and, further, to Christ.

These four marks of the Church apply to your parish, and to parishes in Africa, India, Latin America and all over the world. They bind us to our brothers and sisters, wherever they might live. Beyond that, as our cover story in this issue illustrates, we’re bound by love. “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (Jn 13:34).

I hope you’re heartened by the great love that has grown among the people of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Montezuma, Ohio, and the people of Sangre de Cristo Parish in La Labor, Guatemala, which you’ll read about in our cover story. Their relationship spans nearly 30 years. Most of them have never met each other — yet they are a very real presence to each other. It’s easy to get bound up in our own parish. When we see ourselves as the Church that Jesus established, far beyond our parish boundaries, we claim our true identity as a catholic, or universal, Church.

Among the parishes where our Missionaries are in ministry, I hope this feeling of unity and kinship is fostered. As Fr. Tony Fortman, C.P.P.S., the pastor of St. John the Baptist Parish in Glandorf, Ohio, says in our feature on Lent and parish life, “We’re on this journey together, like the Israelites. We are the body of Christ.”

Many of our Missionaries serve in parishes, and accompany the people of God in good times and bad. Parish life has a certain rhythm but it also comes with surprises—you can ask any pastor or anyone on a parish staff how an unpredictable event can cause everyone to pivot in the way they serve the people. I admire our pastors and associates for the way they live out Precious Blood spirituality in a parish setting.

We set a high standard for our Church: one, holy, catholic and apostolic. We don’t always live it perfectly. But we hope to live it faithfully, with all eyes on Jesus.



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





ONE CHURCH



Above, Mass at Sangre de Cristo in La Labor, Guatemala; below, Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Montezuma, Ohio.

Separated by thousands of miles and differences in language and culture, parishioners in the U.S. and in Guatemala find ways to support each other in faith.

Everybody does something to help out at the mission breakfasts at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Montezuma, Ohio. There's a core group of volunteers who get together on Saturday mornings before the four-per-year breakfasts to prep the food. They cut up fresh fruit and mix the to-die-for cheesy potato concoction.

Others in the parish bake coffeecakes, muffins and rolls at home then drop them off at the parish. The kids in religious education classes, under the leadership of volunteer Paul Dwenger, set up the tables and chairs in the church's spacious basement after classes on Wednesday night, getting ready for the Sunday morning breakfast.

And everybody else shows up after Mass to eat.

The mission breakfasts, fundraisers for the parish's long-term commitment to its brothers and sisters in Christ here in the U.S. and in Guatemala, have been going on for 27 years. "It's a good feeling that we get, that we're helping other people," said Janet Niekamp, who was cheerfully slicing strawberries early on a Saturday morning in the church basement's kitchen. Janet and her husband, Ron, have been volunteering with the mission commission at Our Lady of Guadalupe since the beginning.

Almost everyone who cooks for a large crowd worries at some point about running out of food. But not the crew at Our Lady of Guadalupe. They don't sell tickets, don't require reservations—they don't even charge, asking only for donations. People from far and wide are invited through notices in church bulletins, public service announcements and word of mouth. The volunteers never know how many people will show up, but somehow, there's always enough good food to go around.

"It's like the loaves and fishes, we always have enough," said Pat Dwenger, who with her husband, Paul, is one of the



Janet Niekamp and Pat Dwenger prepare for the mission breakfast.

original volunteers. The menu includes ham and sausage from a hog donated by a parishioner; scrambled eggs; sausage gravy and biscuits; the aforementioned cheesy potatoes; mixed fruit; and baked goods.

On Sunday morning, savory smells filled the church basement. Between 225 and 325 people come to each breakfast, dropping donations into a wooden replica of a wishing well. (The well has special significance; more on that later.) Volunteers, including youth from the parish, served a hot breakfast to all. Old folks, little ones and everybody in between took a plate as it was offered and found a place to sit, either with family, neighbors or people they do not know.

“People come to the breakfast after they’ve been to Mass, but we have just as many visitors as we have parishioners,” Janet said.

While the breakfast is meant as a fundraiser for mission projects, it is also a mission unto itself, the organizers said. Donations are a suggestion only. “We’ve had people come in with five or six kids, and they’ve told us they don’t have much,” Pat said. “We tell them not to worry about it because we’re here for them, too. We feed them a good meal.”

Nearly three decades ago, the parish took on a specific

mission commitment. Under the leadership of then-pastor Fr. Carl Wise, C.P.P.S., Our Lady of Guadalupe pledged to help fund a well for the village of La Labor, Guatemala. Our Lady of Guadalupe is less than a mile from Grand Lake St. Marys, which at one time was the largest manmade reservoir in the world. Many of the parishioners are farm families, supplemented in the summer by people visiting the lake. The people there know the worth of water.

“Fr. Wise started it all,” Paul said. “We went with him to Guatemala when the well in La Labor was dedicated.” People from Our Lady of Guadalupe were inspired by what they saw in La Labor. Even after the well was dug, they wanted to continue to support their brothers and sisters in Guatemala. They pledged to be a twinning parish, and they have been connected ever since.

After the well, they moved on to repairing roofs and other projects at churches and schools. Their donations have also funded many scholarships for the young people of La Labor. But the well started it all. That’s why, to this day, donations are placed into a wishing well—the people in La Labor wished that they had a well, and the people in Montezuma, Ohio, helped make their wishes come true.



Food for all at the mission breakfast at Our Lady of Guadalupe, left. Below, donations go in the wishing well.



A Real Difference

In La Labor, Guatemala, the well still operates, supplying water to a village that has grown much larger in the last 30 years. The parish of Sangre de Cristo is at the heart of town; also part of the parish are 14 chapels in smaller, rural communities surrounding La Labor. In all, the parish serves 40,000 people who live in the mountains northeast of Guatemala City.

It was Fr. Bill Beuth, C.P.P.S., who suggested the well project to his fellow Missionary of the Precious Blood, Fr. Wise of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The parish's next pastor, Fr. Jim Dugal, C.P.P.S., also had a heart for mission work and helped instill it in the parish in a lasting way.

A reliable water source was one of the top things the people wanted when Fr. Bill first arrived in La Labor in 1992. Other priorities were improvements to the rural chapels and room for catechical programs. The people also wanted clinics to meet their basic healthcare needs, and a soccer field where their children could play.

"We knew where to start,"

Fr. Bill said. He helped organize special projects that were financed by twinning parishes in the U.S. The result has made a real difference in the people's lives, on both ends. People in Guatemala have been able to begin or complete projects with the support of their brothers and sisters in the U.S. People in the U.S. have been reminded that they're part of a Church that knows no boundaries.

"I have enjoyed a long, fulfilling priestly ministry in our C.P.P.S. parish in La Labor. A phrase from the Puebla Document by the Latin American bishops in 1979 set me on course: 'Always have a preferential option for the poor.' That's why parishes in the U.S. were encouraged to 'twin' with our faith communities in Guatemala," Fr. Bill said. "Important projects were approved and are still going strong. I can't tell you how very grateful and appreciative everyone is—and so am I."

Father to 40,000

Fr. Bill, who is now 87, was once pastor of Sangre de Cristo and is now is a senior associate pastor. He travels to chapels in the surrounding villages with the help of Jose Luis Jolón, who drives for him and helps him up and down steep steps. Fr. Bill is part of the pastoral team at La

Labor, which includes his fellow Missionaries of the Precious Blood, Fr. Noe Lemus and Fr. Jaime Miranda. Fr. Noe was born across the street from the present parish offices in La Labor. "He is a great Missionary," Fr. Bill said.

They are assisting the new pastor of Sangre de Cristo, Fr. Abel Cruz, 58, who is also a son of the parish. He received his first communion at Sangre de Cristo when he was nine years old, and was confirmed the next year. After he finished elementary school at age 12, he went to work on the family farm. And there he stayed until he was 21 years old, when he met Fr. Paul Aumen, C.P.P.S.

Fr. Aumen founded the Missionaries' mission in Guatemala in the 1980s. Tall but slight, he had a fiery faith and believed that he was where the Lord wanted him to be—even when his fellow Missionaries back in the U.S. questioned the viability of the mission. Fr. Aumen gave everything he had to establishing the mission; he was a heroic figure to many, including a young Abel Cruz.

When Abel was working on the farm, Fr. Aumen invited him to visit the seminary he had established. There, Abel felt the call to become a Missionary, like Fr. Aumen. "I saw Fr. Paul, and I wanted to be like him. To me, he was an amazing man who had an



Fr. Paul Aumen, who founded the C.P.P.S. mission in Guatemala, always encouraged Fr. Abel Cruz (left) in his vocation. “He always supported me, even when I was having difficulties,” Fr. Abel said.

amazing view of life. And he saw something in me,” Fr. Abel said.

Abel entered the seminary in 1982; in addition to his studies, they put him to work as a gardener. “After all, I had experience,” he said.

The coursework was difficult for him. He had to work hard to catch up. Some of the other seminarians rejected him; they saw him as a country mouse. But Fr. Paul continually encouraged him. “He always supported me, even when I was having difficulties,” Abel said.

He continued to work hard; his classmates called him *padrecito*, “little father.” He was ordained in 1997 and has been

serving the people of God ever since. As pastor, he is the spiritual father of 40,000 people.

“I have seen all the different communities of our parish, and I’ve seen the different needs,” he said. As pastor, he’ll have to guide them, inspire them and lead them.

He recognizes that the support of people in the twinning parishes in the U.S. has greatly helped the people of La Labor accomplish a lot, and he hopes those relationships will continue. He will happily welcome those who want to be part of the life of Sangre de Cristo parish and its chapels, through their prayers, visits and financial support.

A Blessing for Both

Being a part of a twinning relationship adds something to parish life. “Our world has become very small,” said Our Lady of Guadalupe volunteer Cindy Rammel, who feels the connection with the people of Guatemala.

“Twinning is a blessing for both the people Guatemala and the people of Guadalupe,” said Fr. Ken Schnipke, C.P.P.S., pastor of the Celina Cluster including Our Lady of Guadalupe parish. “It’s a not only a sharing of financial resources, but also a sharing of culture, faith, friendship and life itself. It is enriching for all.”

On the Sunday of the mission breakfast at Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Gospel was about being the salt of the earth and the light of the world. In his homily, Fr. Schnipke preached about the long reach of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which had helped people whom many there would never meet. “We’re a community of faith, and we look out for each other, and also for those in a country far



Volunteers at Our Lady of Guadalupe, above; and at the Holy Family Chapel of Sangre de Cristo Parish, below (whose twinning parish is Immaculate Conception, Celina, Ohio).

away,” he said.

“There’s no thought of giving just from our surplus, but really sharing deeply with others. We are called to care for those in need. And through that, we can help bring healing, including to ourselves. There’s a sense of hope, the warmth that we feel inside when we’re helping

others—that can help us to heal.

“There’s a lot of darkness in our world today: the darkness of injustice, the darkness of harsh and hardened hearts. How does one bring light to such a world? The Gospel answer is strikingly clear: light comes from being the presence of Christ each day. We cast out the darkness when we are instruments of peace rather than hatred, when we are agents of hope rather than despair, when we are people of warmth,

kindness and love.

“Never underestimate the power of the goodness we can do for others. People are drawn to the light. People are desperately searching for the light because that is the way out of the darkness. What may be a small, everyday act of kindness to us may be the one thing that lifts another from their darkness and points them toward God.”



Thanks to parishes in the U.S. that support our Missionaries in Latin America!

Ascension Church, Kettering Ohio
Celina, Ohio, Cluster
Church of St. Gaspar, Rome City, Ind.
Coldwater, Ohio, Cluster
Fort Recovery, Ohio, Cluster
Holy Trinity Church, Trinity, Ind.
Our Lady of Hope Church, Attica, Ohio
St. Gaspar del Bufalo Church, Bellevue, Ohio
St. Henry, Ohio, Cluster
St. James Church, Liberty, Mo.
St. John the Baptist Church, Glandorf, Ohio
Sts. Peter and Paul, Ottawa, Ohio
Also: Calumet College of St. Joseph, Whiting, Ind.

For more information on how to “twin” with a parish in Latin America, contact Mark Giesige, director of mission advancement, 937-228-9263, mgiesige@cpps-preciousblood.org.

New C.P.P.S. Province Formed in Latin America

Five units of the C.P.P.S., including four that were formerly part of the Cincinnati Province, became a new Latin American Province in the worldwide Congregation at the end of January.

“There are boundaries that define our countries but there are no boundaries between us,” Fr. Maximo Mesia, C.P.P.S., told the members of the new province. Fr. Mesia was elected as the new province’s first provincial director.

“We are all part of St. Gaspar’s dream and are to continue it,” he said after a celebration Mass. “As a new province, we are no longer five units but are now united: we are one in the Blood of Christ.”

A province is the largest unit in the worldwide Congregation. Smaller units are known as vicariates and missions. Included in the new province are four units that were formerly part of the Cincinnati Province: the Chilean Vicariate, the Peruvian Mission, the Central American Mission (Guatemala) and the Colombian Mission *ad experimentum*. The former Brazilian Vicariate is also



Fr. Emanuele Lupi, right, moderator general, installs Fr. Maximo Mesia of Peru as the provincial director of the Latin American Province.

part of the new province.

The Cincinnati Province has pledged to continue to support the Latin American Province, including fundraising efforts. It will maintain a close relationship with the new province, said Fr. Jeff Kirch, C.P.P.S., provincial director of the Cincinnati Province.

“Over the past 70 years the American Province, Cincinnati Province, Vicariate of Chile, Peruvian Mission, Central American Mission, and Colombian Mission *ad experimentum* have journeyed together as we have sought to respond to the needs of the Church in Latin America. That

commitment will not change. As brothers, we will continue to work to ensure that the dream of St. Gaspar continues into the future,” Fr. Kirch said in a message to the new province.

“The entire Cincinnati Province is holding you in prayer. We have been richly blessed by our relationship with each of you and we pray that our relationship will be strengthened as you take this new step in the life of the Congregation.”

The Mass, held at San Francisco de Borja Parish in Lima, Peru, was a happy and bracing occasion for the 42 members of the new province. The members, their seminarians, lay associates and friends filled the church, which was built by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

In his homily, Fr. Emanuele Lupi, C.P.P.S., moderator general, spoke of the four-year journey that led up to the celebration. “Being from different cultures, we discovered that we live in different contexts and have a diverse cultural heritage, yet we saw the need to see how it is possible for a man so old to be born again,” a reference to the words of Nicodemus relayed in the Gospel of John (Jn 3: 1–8).

“The Brazilian Vicariate just celebrated its 90th anniversary; the Chilean

Vicariate has a history of 73 years; the Peruvian Mission has given service to this beloved land for 58 years; the Central American Mission has existed now for 45 years; and the Colombian Mission, the youngest of all, with its 15 years of service. As a whole, they now are discussing how to be reborn, how to harmonize the gifts that the Lord had given to each of its members.

“Tonight, you are witnessing the goal that we have achieved, a new Latin American Province. Although we know that on the one hand, this represents a goal, but in fact, it is the beginning of a new journey forward, of a story that will continue, rooted in the past but at the same time looking forward to something new.”



Installed as councilors for the Latin American Province were Frs. Omar Cerda, Luis Briones, Dionicio Alberca, Arcelino Batista, Rony Diaz and Joseph Deardorff.

Keep Moving Forward

I love the image of the wishing well at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Montezuma, Ohio (*see page six*). It's so beautifully connected to the beginning of their nearly 30-year relationship with the people of Sangre de Cristo parish in Guatemala. That relationship has grown over the years. Vocations ministry can sometimes feel like throwing coins in a wishing well, or to use the more biblical image, casting lots. We encourage, invite and pray for vocations, always hoping that someone will respond. We never know what will work, or who will respond.

In a lot of ways it is like Lent. We set out on a journey of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We are sometimes more "successful" at keeping our promises, and other times we find ourselves two bites into a burger when we remember it is Friday. Sometimes it feels like we are on the mountaintop with Jesus, and other times it feels like we are wandering in the desert. When we slip, we keep going. We recommit ourselves to our plans, and we keep on going, trusting that God will keep drawing us forward.

In vocations ministry, I cannot assume that every person who reaches out to me will eventually be incorporated as a Missionary of the Precious Blood. I can't even assume that they will remain in relationship with us beyond that first interaction. And that's okay, because ultimately it is God's plan. We have to keep praying and inviting. We have to keep sharing the story and serving the Gospel. We have to keep moving forward, trusting that it is God's plan and he will see it through.

When I stand at the Missionaries' information table at an event, I have no idea who will see me, who will hear me, or which heart will be touched, and yet I keep at it. That could be true of you, too, wherever you find yourself. We can only move forward. We work to share the Good News of Jesus with our young people, reminding them of just how much he loves

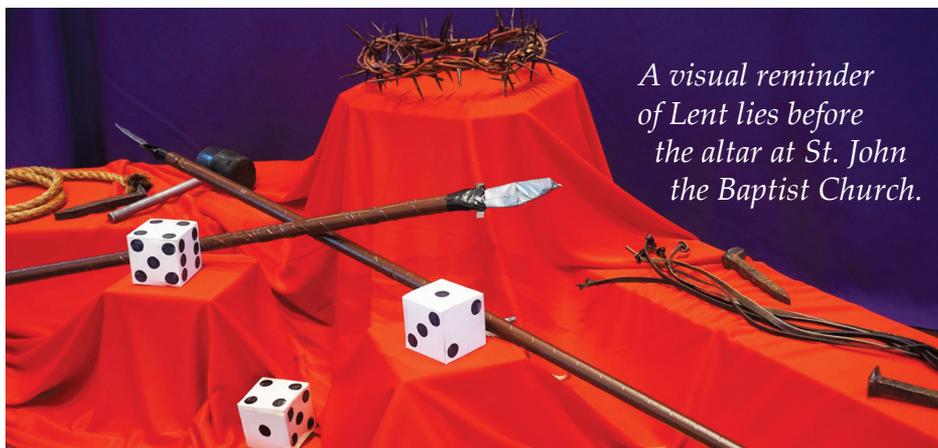
them, and that he has a plan for them. We invite, and we pray, and we trust in God's plan. We keep at it, encouraging each other along the way and steering clear of discouragement. It is God's plan, and God will see it through.



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



May 1, 2020, is Religious Brothers Day. We thank C.P.P.S. brothers for their faithful lives of service!



A visual reminder of Lent lies before the altar at St. John the Baptist Church.

Lent, Holy Week Lived Out in a Parish

Church Marks a Sacred Time

In front of the altar at St. John the Baptist Church in Glandorf, Ohio, is a display of objects that have a special significance at this time of the year. A spear, a sponge, a crown of thorns, a trio of oversized dice that the parish had specially made for this purpose—visuals to go along with the stories that all will hear once again.

The visuals help keep Lent in front of everyone's eyes and in their hearts—at least that's the hope of the pastor, Fr. Tony Fortman, C.P.P.S.

"Lent is a sacred time; we spend more time in prayer, and we accompany each other in parish life," he said. "We're on this journey together, like the Israelites. We are the body of Christ."

For the pastor and the parish staff, Lent and Holy Week can also be a busy time, with a lot of extra activities. That's certainly true at St. John the Baptist, where the calendar included prayer, worship, study and service opportunities for all ages from Ash Wednesday on.

"Lent can take you by surprise—it takes me halfway through to really start getting into the penitential, sacrificial mode," Fr. Tony said. "There's always a lot of preparation, along with worrying that everything is ready for the season. Plus, I like to eat, so Lent is hard for me" with its days of fasting.

The fact that it's hard, even for the pastor, should encourage people to take it seriously. Fr. Tony said Lent is a good time for

introspection—“It’s important to go to your inner room and pray,” he said—and for reconciliation. He hears a lot of confessions during Lent from people who are sincerely trying to make straight the way of the Lord. Their efforts to improve their lives and to face their inner demons is inspiring to him, he said.

“I’ve seen people sincerely want to change—in the confessional, they are sincere with me,” he said. “And I’ve seen incremental improvements in them, over time. They are happier, their depression is lifting. They’re getting along with life, living a healthier life, in better relationships with their families.”

That happens only when people can be honest about their own flaws and failings, he said. “Lent is a time for us to be honest with ourselves. We’re all sick with sin. We’re not all okay. We do need Jesus and his healing presence, his mercy. We need the healing that comes from his Precious Blood,” he said.

Fr. Tony likens sin to an invader, some kind of creepy-crawly creature that circles around a person’s head and neck. “There’s an impulse to grab that sinfulness, throw it on the ground and try to kill it,” he said. “Especially during Lent, I hope that we all are able to really see our weaknesses and understand

our sin. My hope is that we take the time to identify our sin, to understand where sin enters into our lives. Because otherwise, it will just come crawling back. It creeps right up and whispers into our ears. Lent is a time when we can identify where we’re going wrong and say, ‘I’m a sinner, I’m not perfect, I’ve got issues I need to deal with. God wants me to keep traveling toward the light, toward him.’”

The pastor does the same self-examination with the same goal: to travel toward the light, toward God. For Fr. Tony, that means being careful not to get caught in the trap of the busy-ness of parish life, to overschedule and under-pray. It’s easy for pastors, as it is for the rest of us, not to take care of themselves and then their mental, spiritual and physical health suffers, he said.

“When I choose not to enter into communion with God, I also choose not to look at myself and my failings. With that, reconciliation never happens,” he said. “It’s the same old scenery; nothing ever changes. But if we can be honest with ourselves, we can see that we all have things to work on. We don’t give up.”

This time of the year, when we contemplate Jesus’ sacrifice and death on the cross, is a good fit for the Precious Blood spirituality to which he has



Fr. Tony Fortman
with Br. Jerry Schwie-
terman, both in
ministry at St. John
the Baptist Church.

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- Fr. Tony
Fortman

dedicated his life as a Missionary of the Precious Blood. As the people are looking at the Lenten objects in the sanctuary, from his vantage point as presider he sees a different view.

“I see it when I’m at the altar—in our church, I look over to my right and I see a statue of the crucified Christ. He’s human-sized, and it’s very real to me. During the Eucharistic prayer, I’m talking with God, and it all becomes more intimate to me, the suffering,” he said. “I also

have a lot of sympathy for the Blessed Virgin Mother, as we pray the sorrowful mysteries all through Lent. This man, Jesus, had a mother, and she watched everything that happened to him.”

And he sees the people of God, the Church, praying along through the Mass, moving together into the light of Christ. “I’m blessed to be part of it,” he said. “I’m blessed to be with them on the journey.”



The Third Favorite Pair of Boots

I wore my third-favorite boots to Mass on the evening of Ash Wednesday. It had snowed that day and I would be walking home in the dark, so I needed to wear boots that meant business, not fashion boots. These are the boots that I throw in the car when driving long distances in the winter, thinking that I might have to walk through the wilderness to save my life. Or to the nearest Denny's. You ever know.

But they are not good for walking. I remembered that as I clumped into church. They are warm but heavy. They don't bend in the middle, or anywhere. A gang could grab me while I was wearing these boots and throw me into the lake and I would never be seen again; never mind the cement.

In Ohio, you need a lot of different boots to get from November to April. You need rain boots, hiking boots, snow boots for light snowfall and snow boots for drifts over eight inches. You never get rid of any of your boots, unless they spring a leak. But those heavy boots in church on Ash Wednesday: I wished I had chosen something different.

I'm miserable enough during Lent. Since I was a kid, I never liked it. It always seemed like a dreary time, slow-moving in its thoughts and actions. It seems to me it does not suit the soul of a child, and because I suffered through it so often as a child, I feel childishy recalcitrant when I still have to go through it as an adult. Life can be glum enough already without all those sad songs and sorrowful meditations.

But one day when I was wearing the heavy boots on a walk, I thought about how good it was going to feel to kick them off. To leave them behind and be free. It struck me then that perhaps I had been looking at Lent all wrong. I had been looking at Lent as if it were the boots, when maybe Lent was the act taking off the boots, jumping barefooted into a new spirit of grace that God holds open for us. Maybe Lent is abandoning the things that weigh me down and keep me from getting to my destination, which is the full embrace of God.

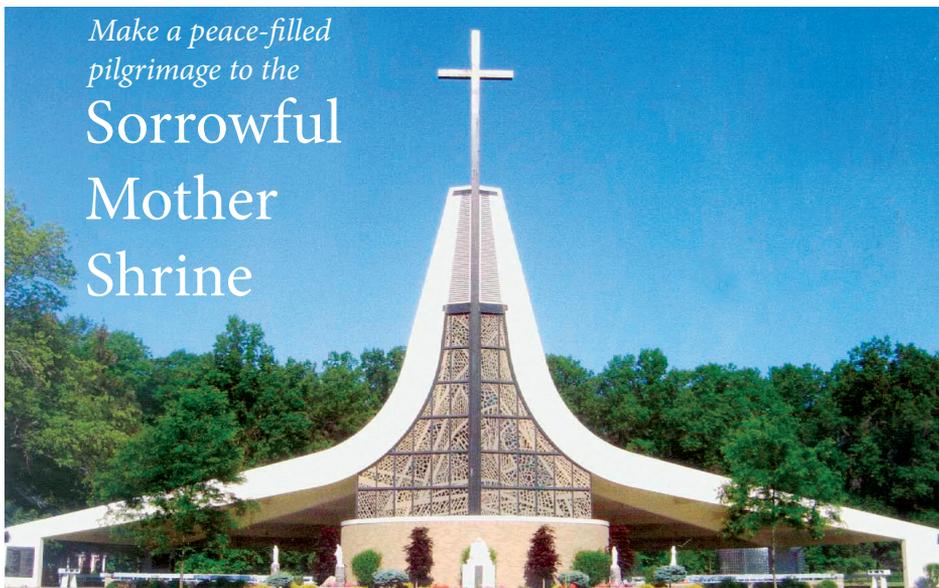
If I could see what was ill-fitting and poorly chosen, if I could discern what did not suit me to be wearing as a daughter of God, and put that aside, would that be the real spiritual exercise of Lent? Did I have to hang onto everything? Could I kick some things to the side and leap up, metaphorically at least? I'm not a dancer or an athlete. I can't get very far off the ground in real life, but sometimes in prayer, in the silence of being in God's presence, I can fly.

At Our House
by Jean Giesige



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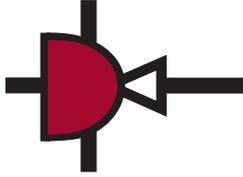
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