

SUMMER 2020

C P P S T O D A Y

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

QUO VADIS?

*Along with the rest of the Church and the world,
Missionaries must find the best way forward.*

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



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at Marian
University.

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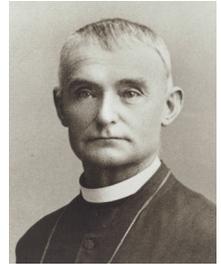
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**Fr. Andrew
Kunkler, C.P.P.S.**

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We Wait for Peace

There is an apocryphal Chinese saying that speaks to many of us today. “May you live in interesting times.” These are certainly interesting times. Everything seems to have turned topsy-turvy in our world and maybe even in your own individual lives. Our current times began with an ominous virus that we knew little about which has led to over 100,000 deaths in the United States alone. And then came the economic shut-down and stay-at-home orders. This led to staggering job losses and the shuttering of many businesses.

Yes, these are interesting times. This issue explores some of the ways our Missionaries have responded to the times, and to unsettled times like them in the past.

We still do not know what the fall will look like, and this level of uncertainty can be scary.

Just as some of us were starting to get a grip on the new normal of the pandemic, another wave of uncertainty crashed over us. A single, senseless, brutal act of police violence gave rise to protests across the country. Many of these protests have been peaceful. Some devolved into rioting, looting, and burning of buildings.

This social unrest added a whole new layer of uncertainty into many peoples’ lives. It seems as if everywhere we turn there is destruction: destruction of civil rights, destruction of lives, destruction of our neighborhoods and businesses. How do we describe what is happening in our world? Where is God?

For me, the words of the prophet Jeremiah have meaning. He writes, “Let my eyes stream with tears night and day, without rest, over the great destruction which overwhelms the virgin daughter of my people, over her incurable wound. If I walk out into the field, look! Those slain by the sword; if I enter the city, look! Victims of famine. Have you really cast Judah off? Is Zion loathsome to you? Why have you struck us a blow that cannot be healed? We wait for peace, to no avail; for a time of healing, but terror comes instead” (Jer 14: 17–19).

So often this is where we end up in the midst of terror, fear, and destruction. But just as in Jeremiah’s days, today we are called to go further. We are called to remember that despite the troubled world we live in, we are bound to God by a New Covenant, the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. No virus, violence, hatred or fear can break that Covenant. Just a few chapters later in Jeremiah, after all of the pain and destruction that the Israelites experienced, God says, “You shall be my people and I shall be your God.”

As people dedicated to the spirituality of the Precious Blood, when we encounter uncertainty, upheaval, and fearful times, we are called to remember the Covenant. We are called to remember those words from Jeremiah, “You shall be my people and I shall be your God.”

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



A photograph of a dense forest with tall, thin trees and a thick canopy of green leaves. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a bright, dappled light effect on the forest floor. The overall mood is serene and natural.

QUO VADIS?

*Whither goest thou? It's a question we've been asking
about ourselves, our Church and our world.
Ultimately, it's God who will provide the answer.*

Let's just say that 2020 hasn't been the best year ever for Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S.

Or has it?

A former moderator general of the C.P.P.S. who is now a chaplain at Marian University in Indianapolis, Fr. Barry underwent treatment for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma after a diagnosis late last year. He'd always been healthy, and once he arrived on Marian's campus in 2019, he'd started working out at the school's athletic center. A personal trainer had told him, "Get God and get a bod."

Now this. Cancer.

"When you first get the news and it's not good, it hits you," he said. "But I just put myself in God's hands. I never really felt anxious about what would happen or not happen. I went with the treatments and trusted the doctors. And I felt a tremendous wellspring of support from the students and staff at the university, from the Precious Blood Community, and students I had 40 years ago in Chile who sent messages or called me throughout the five months of chemotherapy. I learned that it was time to let myself receive the love and support of others, and that gave me a great calm."

Then in late winter 2020, the global pandemic came to campus and everywhere else in the world. That added an

extra layer of challenges for Fr. Barry to navigate. He draws his strength from community, from being among the people of God. Now all people were being asked to stay apart from each other. That was particularly true for people with compromised immune systems, such as those undergoing chemotherapy. For his own good, Fr. Barry had to stay strictly apart from the students and the campus ministry staff he had grown to love.

He was apart, but he was not alone. The campus ministry staff looked after him; Marian University's president, Daniel Elsener, delivered dinner. And around campus, there were suddenly new ways to connect.



Fr. Barry Fischer in the Marian University chapel.

“One thing that happened right away was that we all were working remotely, so campus ministry started an online morning prayer at 8:45 each day for staff and faculty. Sometimes as many as 30 people joined us. Someone read a quote from Scripture or something from a good book, and then we’d reflect on it. Afterward, we’d voice petitions. That went on right from the beginning,” he said.

“We’ve decided we’re going to continue that through the summer and into next year. It’s something new we’ve learned. We always ask ourselves, how can we reach out to a broader base of people on campus? There are a core of students who are very, very committed to their faith. The temptation is to just hang out with those people. But we always want to reach out to a broader base, and this might be a new way to do that.”

It wasn’t always easy. Chemo wiped him out for days. There were times when he just wanted to stay in bed. But he would get spiritually tapped on the shoulder by St. Gaspar del Bufalo, who founded the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1815.

“Gaspar always comes back to haunt me,” Fr. Barry said. “I can remember lying in bed thinking, is it (the ministry) worth it? Gaspar said, ‘It’s worth it,

even if for just one person. Jesus would have shed his Blood for just one person.’ And so I said, ‘Thanks, Gaspar. I guess that was the answer I was looking for.’”

A New Way of Ministry

Looking for answers, listening for the voice of God, learning something new, especially when it fits with your mission: those are good ways to heal and adapt, to survive and thrive in a new territory. Some of what the Missionaries and the larger Church had to learn to get through the opening months of the pandemic may be part of a new way of ministry that lingers long after the virus has run its course.

Fr. Tim Knepper, C.P.P.S., the parochial vicar at the Catholic Communities of Northwest Dayton, likes to astound and confound the people from the pulpit on Sundays. He often comes at old themes with a new twist, weaving family stories and hard-earned wisdom into his homilies.

But to preach, to be a parish priest without the people? That took some getting used to. “Livestreamed Masses are good, but without the people, it obviously just wasn’t the same,” he said. “Every Mass is valid. But when you don’t have the



“One of the things that’s often said about Precious Blood priests and brothers is that we’re down to earth. It’s one of our hallmarks. And I’ve really seen that over the two months of the lockdown.”

—Fr. Tim Knepper

family gathered, you’re missing something.”

He’s still preaching, but in new ways; in April, he began to post his thoughts on the Scripture readings on YouTube. He delivers his brief reflections from his office at St. Rita Parish in Dayton. He says he’ll continue those video chats even after the pandemic.

“People seem to have latched onto them,” he said. “It’s a good way to reach people who are not able to come to Mass. It’s a way to maintain their connection to the parish and a good way to

talk about the themes of Precious Blood spirituality, to get them out into the world. It’s something I want to keep doing.”

Bond of Charity

Those themes include redemption, forgiveness, God’s mercy and reconciliation through the Precious Blood of Jesus. They are all things that Fr. Tim has experienced in his own life, and in the life of his religious community, the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. In fact, he

said, the pandemic has brought his brothers in Community even closer together.

“One of the things I’ve really appreciated in recent months is the depth of sharing among the guys in our Community,” he said. “One of the things that’s often said about Precious Blood priests and brothers is that we’re down to earth. It’s one of our hallmarks. And I really saw that over the two months of the lockdown.”

Separated from the people they serve, the Missionaries have been talking to each other, helping each other get through the challenging times when their churches and schools were shut down, then reopened. There were many questions for all of them, and it helped to compare answers with other Missionaries, Fr. Tim said.

“The bond of charity that we have for each other has been expressed in many, many ways,” he said. “Sometimes it’s just checking in: ‘hey, how are you doing? Are things going okay for you?’ But there’s also been a real depth of sharing” that isn’t always possible in the normally busy life of a parish priest.

“One of the things I’ve learned during all this is the importance of listening. Not that I didn’t listen before, but there’s a new vulnerability for all of us. All of us have been affected,” he said. “This virus really makes us

realize how vulnerable we are. I’ve seen that with parishioners, with my fellow Missionaries, and with myself. It makes you realize how precious life is.”

A Job to Do

Ministry at hospitals also changed radically with the coronavirus at large. Fr. Jerry Steinbrunner, C.P.P.S., has been a chaplain with the Veterans Administration facilities in Cincinnati and Northern

Kentucky since 2010. Normally, he is at a VA skilled nursing facility one day a week, and at a VA hospital on the other days of the week, seeing patients who are being

prepared for surgery, in the emergency room or undergoing rehab. He also ministers to the medical staff at the facilities.

“The work is fulfilling and challenging,” he said. “Every day, you’re not sure what’s going to take place. It’s always interesting.”

COVID-19 has made everything more difficult at the facilities. “Everybody is very cautious. When I go into a patient’s room, I’m wearing a mask and maybe a gown and



**Fr. Jerry
Steinbrunner**

gloves too. Or sometimes we're calling patients on the phone rather than visiting people in their rooms. Or we stand in the doorway and talk to patients," he said. "I'm in the high-risk group (due to his age, 77), but we all have to be careful. You might not have any symptoms, but you might be the carrier."

Fr. Jerry realizes this will be his way of life for the foreseeable future. "I don't think this is going to pass quickly. But I wouldn't say I worry about it a lot," he said. "I'm not like the nurse who treats people with COVID-19 or tuberculosis, or the housekeepers who have to clean every room. I don't feel like I'm a hero—I have a job to do."

In-Between Mode

We all have a job to do. We all have a mission. It may seem a little murkier these days. For those working/ministering at schools, the fall remains a mystery, even though they're making plans on many levels. Fr. Barry Fischer, who received word in early June that he is now cancer-free, remains immunocompromised and must continue to stay away from the people he wants to serve.

"I am hoping my chemo is behind me. So I asked my oncologist how long it will take for my immune system to get

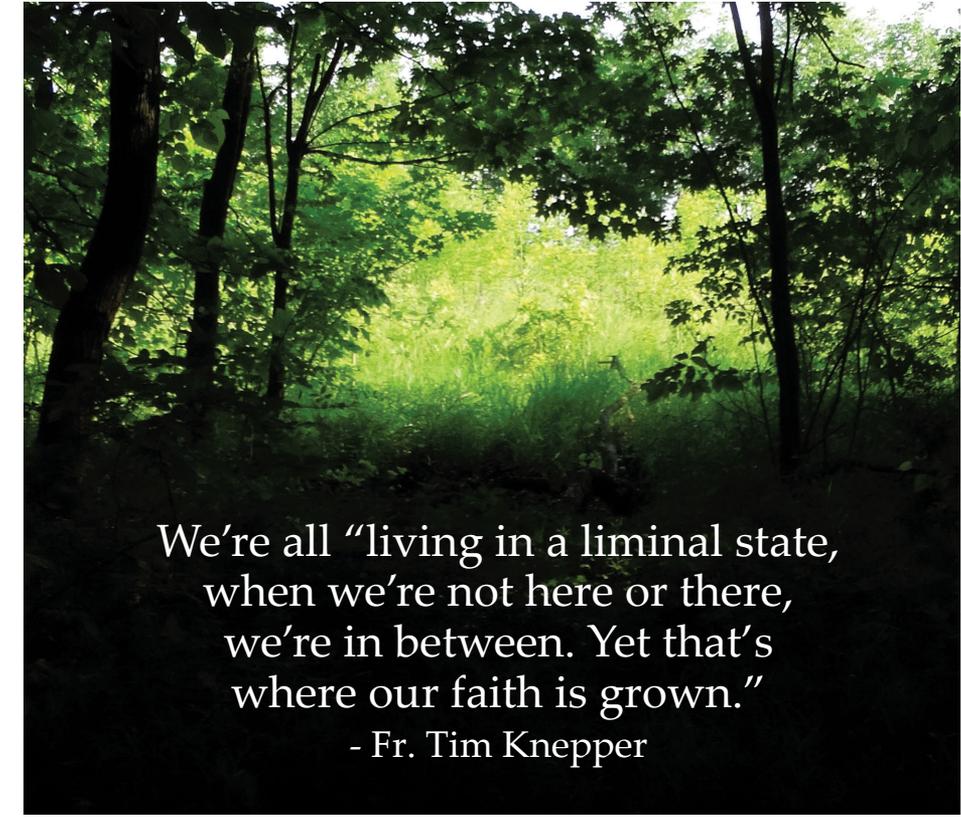
back up to par. He told me it would be another two or three months. I said, 'What? I have to be on lockdown all that time?' But he said, 'No, just be prudent, avoid crowds, wear your mask.' The campus ministry team does not want me to come back to work just yet, but I might sneak in once in a while."

"The hardest part of all this has been losing control. We're not in control of our destiny at this moment. We can't do all our fancy planning and expect those plans to be carried out."

— Fr. Barry Fischer

Throughout his illness, he's had to acknowledge and accept his own limitations. In the face of the pandemic, he said, so has everyone else.

"The hardest part of all this has been losing control. We're not in control of our destiny at this moment," Fr. Barry said. "We can't do all our fancy planning and expect those plans to be carried out. We might prepare



We're all "living in a liminal state,
when we're not here or there,
we're in between. Yet that's
where our faith is grown."

- Fr. Tim Knepper

for something now and in two months it will all be changed again. We just don't know what's going to happen. This situation is really calling us to let go and let God—even though that's easier said than done."

Fr. Tim Knepper agrees. Sometimes we're under the illusion that we have all the answers, but that's an illusion that was swept away by the pandemic. "The hardest thing is living in a liminal state, when we're not here or there, we're in between," he said. "Yet that's

where our faith is grown. That's where our relationship with God is deepened, and that's where real spirituality lives.

"In our American culture, it's difficult not having all the answers. We want security, we want the answers, we want to be at the finish line. We want that vaccine right now," he continued. "But we're in an in-between mode right now, and I know it's not easy. But most of the growth in our life happens in those in-between times."



Learning in the Midst of Crisis

When the stay-at-home order came out back in March, it meant a radical change in how I ministered. All manner of events got cancelled. I couldn't attend vocation fairs. I couldn't visit our parishes on the weekend. I had to shift our scheduled discernment retreat to an online session. I couldn't meet-up with a discerner for a meal or a cup of coffee. Lots of things had to change.

As vocations director, my ministry is about establishing and building relationships with men who are considering life as a Missionary of the Precious Blood. That was a lot harder to do when most of the tools I use were temporarily off limits. How does one do vocation ministry in the midst of a pandemic?

One of the most important things was to maintain my regular daily schedule. I got up at the same time and kept the same morning routine. It would be too easy to skip or shorten my prayer time if I didn't keep to the schedule that serves me well. Even though few others would be there, I went into the office every morning. This helped maintain a sense of normalcy in the midst of so much that wasn't normal.

Precious Blood spirituality is incarnational, so my preference is to do as much of this ministry as possible face-to-face. I'd rather sit across a table from you than stare at my computer screen and talk. But in-person meetings and airplane travel have not been possible these last few months. I've had to adapt.

Under normal circumstances I'd have never held a retreat via video conference. But a successful reflection session via Zoom with our discerners showed me that it is possible. And the ongoing virtual discernment group I help run offers a way for men from a variety of locations to discern in community.

I have been using video chat to meet regularly with our discerners. There is the occasional glitch, but by and large we have been able to keep the relationship moving forward despite the inability to be in the same place. Fortunately, that is changing. Just the other day I had lunch out with a discerner for the first time in months, and I look forward to more of the same in the future.

But getting back to normal won't mean abandoning everything that I'd done these last few months. Some of these special tools I had to use because of the stay-at-home order deserve a place in the everyday toolbox. They have been helpful in maintaining the relationships, and in creating new ways of connecting. Some of them will stick around long after a vaccine arrives.



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



Taking Courage In the Blood

In a Church that is over 2,000 years old, and a religious congregation that is over 200 years old, this isn't the first time that religious have had to confront a powerful contagion, and help the people of God through it.

St. Gaspar del Bufalo, who founded the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1815, threw himself into ministry during a terrible cholera epidemic that swept through Rome in 1837. It had started in the north, but crossed the Alps, moving south through Lombardy, Venice and part of Tuscany.

Pope Gregory XVI placed a sanitary cordon (what we might now call a travel ban) around the northern territories, forbidding any communication between Rome and the infected areas. As cholera continued its inexorable march south, the people of Rome were terrified. Confessionals were crowded. The pope ordered a



St. Gaspar del Bufalo, founder of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, died “a victim of charity” after ministering to those stricken with cholera.

penitential procession. Members of the nobility fled the city as the people panicked—but the priests, most notably the Jesuits, hit the streets, ministering from house to house.

Over 11,000 people in Rome died from that epidemic. One of the victims, it could be argued, was St. Gaspar del Bufalo. He did not die of cholera, but he ministered tirelessly during the epidemic even though he was in poor health at the time. He died on December 28, 1837. The physician who examined

him said Gaspar died a “victim of charity,” worn out by his ministry to others.

Charging Right In

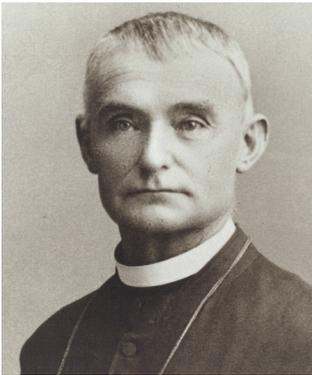
Br. Joe Mary Hrezo, C.PP.S., 70 years a religious brother, died on March 16, his 91st birthday. It was the day before all public Masses were suspended in Ohio, so Br. Joe Mary would have a private funeral. (Read more about his life and ministry on page 15.) A reserved, self-effacing man, he may have been fine with that. He’d worked for years in the infirmary at Saint Joseph’s College in Rensselaer, Ind. He knew about infectious disease.

He was fearless in the face of it, said his good friend Ed Habrowski, a former religious brother himself. Ed was a student

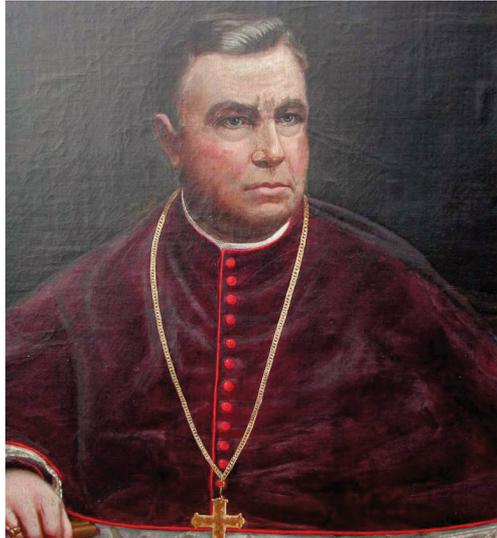
at SJC in the 1960s when Br. Joe Mary was working in the infirmary. “When we had cases of meningitis, the county health department would come out and put yellow or red tape, like the police tape you see today, around the entire building,” he said. “When we saw that, we knew there was somebody in the infirmary with meningitis. We stayed away from the building, but Br. Joe always charged right in. The students’ health was his number-one priority.”

Cholera’s Deadly Grip

Polio, which afflicted Br. Joe Mary as a child, meningitis and scarlet fever are all terrible diseases. Cholera, though, is both fearsome and swift; it causes severe dehydration and can kill



Fr. Andrew Kunkler, above, and Bishop Joseph Dwenger, the boy he saved.



people within hours. That makes the actions of Missionaries of the Precious Blood Frs. Maximilian Homburger and Andrew Kunkler during a cholera epidemic in Minster, Ohio, in 1849 all the more heroic.

Between July 5 and August 1 of that year, 175 people died of cholera in Minster, and another 31 succumbed in August. There were no funeral arrangements or services. Each body was wrapped in a plain shroud, placed in a simple box and taken to the cemetery by a surviving friend.

Frs. Homburger and Kunkler ministered to the sick and dying. (Both survived the epidemic; Kunkler went on to become provincial director of the American Province from 1860–74). On one of his trips to visit the sick, Fr. Kunkler encountered a dying woman, a widow, who entrusted the care of her son to the priest. That boy, Joseph Dwenger, was taken to a Community house and later joined the Congregation. Joseph Dwenger was ordained in 1859 and eventually became the bishop of Fort Wayne.

Influenza, a Dread Disease

Mostly tamed today, influenza was once a dread disease. The story is told of Fr. James McIntyre, C.P.P.S. (1890–1974), who served as a

chaplain in World War I.

According to one account, “Fr. McIntyre was a chaplain aboard a troopship that was part of a huge convoy bound for France during World War I, and he was a bantering, ribbing, laughing chaplain until his ship got pretty close to the middle of the ocean.

“Then the flu broke out on the ship, and thereafter he was a fighting, grim priest who labored like mad night and day to save the lives of the men. The story comes to light through a Pittsburgh newspaper man, Charles J. Doyle, who was on the ship.

“The epidemic raged for 10 days. The flu seized several hundred boys all at once. About 10 men died each night and before the ship reached France 67 had died.

“Fr. McIntyre pitched in immediately. He cleared the main dining room and salon and converted them into a hospital.

“The ship had a good-sized cargo of liquor, and Father McIntyre told the steward to bring out all the brandy and whiskey and milk. He ordered egg-nogs made and he and the men and women working under him passed them out to the gasping, choking doughboys. . . He would pass out egg-nogs and give medical attention and then, as dawn came, he would stand

beside corpses on the deck and pray as the bodies slipped into the water. . .

“No one knows how many lives he saved. He doubtless doesn’t know himself. He wore a mask over his face night and day, but the germ finally hit him — and it hit him hard.” Fr. McIntyre lost the use of his legs due to the virus, which also ruined his fine singing voice. Later in life, he ministered at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Cleveland.

These days, religious may understand more about infectious disease control and are not in a position where they have to rush into sick wards and “labor like mad night and day to save lives,” as Fr. McIntyre did. They’re walking a fine line, ministering to the people of God while at the same time paying attention to the signs of the times and trying to follow the recommendations of their bishops as closely as they can.

Together, we listen to and breathe in the words of the Prophet Isaiah: “God indeed is my salvation; I am confident and unafraid. For the LORD is my strength and my might, and he has been my salvation” (Is 12:2).

Thanks to C.PP.S. Frs. Jerry Stack and David Hoying, who contributed information to this account. Information on the Minster cholera epidemic comes from Msgr. Lawrence Mossier’s A Historical



Fr. James McIntyre, C.PP.S., an army chaplain in World War I.

Study of the Sanguinists and the Early Catholicity of Northwestern Ohio from 1844 to 1870. Msgr. Mossier was a priest of the Diocese of Toledo. The account of St. Gaspar and the cholera epidemic in Rome came from Merlini’s testimony during the process for Gaspar’s canonization, as well as the biography of Gaspar by Fr. Amilcare Rey, C.PP.S. Information on Fr. McIntyre was taken from material in the archives of the Cincinnati Province.





IN MEMORIAM: Br. Joseph Mary Hrezo, C.PP.S., died on his 91st birthday, March 16, 2020, in the infirmary at St. Charles Center, Carthagena, Ohio, where he made his home. He had been in failing health.

He was born on March 16, 1929, in Footedale, Pa., to Andrew and Julia (Scambora) Hrezo. He entered the Congregation in 1948 and was professed on July 1, 1950.

Br. Joseph Mary, who would have celebrated the 70th anniversary of his profession this year, held many positions of service to his religious community. He was an infirmary assistant at St. Charles Seminary in the 1950s, and was in ministry at Saint Joseph's College in Rensselaer, Ind., from 1958 to 1978. There, he was the equipment manager for the college's sports teams and later worked in its infirmary. He ministered at the Precious Blood Center in Liberty, Mo., from 1996 until his retirement to St. Charles in 2006.



**Brother
Joseph
Mary**

A gentle soul, Br. Joseph Mary was a loyal friend who never had an unkind word for anyone. He had a great love for Mary; his room at St. Charles Center was adorned with pictures, statues and icons of her.

He enjoyed his time at Saint Joseph's College, where he attended baseball, basketball and football games, and found the space to raise Irish setters and other bird dogs. Throughout his life, Br. Joseph Mary remained close to his family, serving as the family's spiritual guide. His gentle and attentive nature had a profound impact on the lives of his nieces and nephews. Br. Joseph Mary returned home to Pennsylvania from 1978–81 to take care of his mother, and there immersed himself in the life of his home parish, St. Procopius. Later, in ministry at the Precious Blood Center in Liberty, Mo., he made good friends among the religious brothers there. He enjoyed his life and ministered sincerely in service to others.

Due to health restrictions, a Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated privately on March 23 at St. Charles Center, with Fr. Jeffrey Kirch, C.PP.S., provincial director, presiding. Fr. Ken Schroeder, C.PP.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 MEMORIAM: Fr. James Miller, C.P.P.S., 94, died in his sleep on April 1, 2020, in the infirmary of St. Charles Center, Carthagena, Ohio, where he made his home.

He was born on October 7, 1925, in Gettysburg, Pa., to John and Carrie (Riley) Miller.

He entered the Congregation at Brunnerdale, the Missionaries' minor seminary near Canton, Ohio, in 1942, and was ordained on September 18, 1954.

After his ordination, he served at the following parishes: St. Ann, Toledo (1954); St. Clement, Toledo (1955); St. Mary, Clyde, Ohio (1956); St. Wendelin, Fostoria, Ohio (1956); Precious Blood, Dayton (1957); Holy Rosary, Dayton (1959); St. Mary, Dayton, (1961); Sacred Heart, Sedalia, Mo. (1961–1963); St. Adalbert, Cleveland (1963–1968); St. Brigid, Xenia, Ohio (1968); St. Augustine, Minster, Ohio (1971); St. Lawrence, Botkins, Ohio (1973); St. Romuald, Hardinsburg, Ky. (1979); St. Agnes, Uniontown, Ky. (1983); and St. Boniface, New Reigel, Ohio (1985).



Fr. Miller

From 1988–1989, Fr. Miller served at St. Ann Church in Warsaw, Mo. He was named pro-tem administrator for Mary Help of Christians in Fort Recovery, Ohio, in 1989, and later that year was named pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Ottawa, Ohio.

In 1996, Fr. Miller retired to St. Charles Center, where he spent much of his time and energy helping out at area parishes for many years.

Fr. Miller lived his life enthusiastically and his faith boldly. He gave of himself freely, driving his big red Ford van that he had emblazoned with “Missionaries of the Precious Blood.” Cheerful and friendly, he was firm in his faith; one never had to wonder where he stood.

Fr. Miller was an avid outdoorsman and sportsman and loved to cook and share game and fish with family, friends and parishioners.

Due to health restrictions, a Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated privately on April 6 at St. Charles Center, with Fr. Jeffrey Kirch, C.P.P.S., provincial director, presiding. Fr. James Seibert, 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.



The Flock Awaits

As I write this, I'm looking out my kitchen window to where the bird feeder should be. I've forgotten to put it out again.

I've been bringing it in at night because something voracious—I suspect a raccoon—has been tearing it open and gorging on birdseed once the sun goes down. So the birds must rely on me to remember our pact (I supply food and they supply points of interest in the landscape).

Birds look for consistency in these things. But we've all learned this year that consistency is optional. I've heard many people speak about how we're going to have to get used to a new normal; this is usually said in grave tones. Maybe if we flipped our vision, we could think about how fortunate we were to have lived with the old normal for so long. We rely on the reality that we know today, not always grasping that today's reality could change drastically tomorrow—until we learn that the hard way. One diagnosis, one traffic accident, one furlough, changes everything.

At our house, we've weathered 2020 so far but I can't say we've enjoyed it. Like the rest of the world, we await further instructions. What has been gratifying, though, is to see people rise to the challenge of finding the path forward. People of medicine were suddenly pulled out of their labs and clinics and put in front of the camera to answer our questions, all of which are various forms of, "How much longer?" Public health workers, who don't have the luxury of panic, have had to figure out new priorities and processes. And other leaders in our lives had to navigate waters that they, like us, had never seen before: school superintendents, mayors and even park rangers—when do you take the yellow police tape off of the swing set?

Among these I would count our pastors. They had to find a way, day after confounding day, to put the bird feeder out every morning. The flock was waiting on it.

Everything they had done before March 2020 was based on the supposition that they could gather with the people of God. While some of the life of the parish has resumed, it has not been completely restored, and they've had to find a new way of being the church that still feels like the Church, yet keeps the people safe.

I'm grateful for all the leaders who stepped forward quickly and made good decisions in the face of the pandemic. I'm grateful for those who were stumped at first but worked their way through the doubt and divisiveness to come up with a plan. I'm grateful for the plan. I'm grateful for the leaders. I'm grateful for today.



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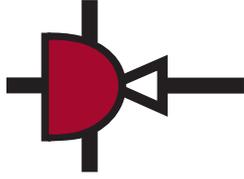
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