

SPRING 2021

# C P P S T O D A Y

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD



Far  
and  
Away



*Missionaries say ministry in another country  
can be mind-stretching and life-altering.*

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*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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# The Missionary Life

During my time in theology school I took a class on ecclesiology, which simply means the study of the Church. The course covers various aspects of the Church throughout history. One time, when we were discussing the work of the Church, such as preaching, caring for the poor, worshipping and teaching, my professor said something that has stuck with me through the years. He said that the Church does not have a mission. The Church IS mission. By its very nature, the Church is missionary.

If we take that statement seriously, it will have a profound effect on our lives as Christians. Everything we do as a Church should be directed to spreading the good news of the Gospel. This evangelization is not an option. It is essential to who we are as Church.

In this issue we have several great examples of how various people have lived out this missionary dynamic of the Church. Fr. Donald Thieman, C.P.P.S., and Fr. Pat Patterson, C.P.P.S., are examples of what you probably think of when you hear the word missionary: missionaries leave their homeland and travel to another country to preach the Gospel. Missionary work like this takes courage, commitment and faith. And as you see in their stories, it is a transformative experience.

The transformation that comes along with a missionary experience helps us see beyond our often small world. Our candidate for priesthood, Greg Evers, spent a few months in Guatemala earlier in his formation, and while it was a short experience, it opened up pathways of being a missionary in Chicago.

We are called to be missionary in a variety of ways. There are many different models of missionaries throughout our history, from great preachers like St. Francis Xavier and our founder, St. Gaspar del Bufalo, to St. Therese of Liseux, who as a cloistered Carmelite nun is the patron saint of missionaries.

St. Joseph in his fostering of Jesus provides us with another model of a missionary. Joseph, whom our Church honors in this Year of St. Joseph, provided Jesus with a foundation of love and faith that impelled Jesus to preach the Gospel message. We're celebrating this special year along with the rest of the Church, as you'll also see in this issue.

As members of the Body of Christ, each of us is called to be missionary. How we live out that call will vary, but we must respond to that call in faith. St. Gaspar, pray for us!



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







*Fr. Don Thieman and the camper that was his headquarters when he went out to parish mission in rural Chile, left; Fr. Pat Patterson on horseback in Chile, below.*

# Far and Away



*“Missionaries are not statues,” said Saint Gaspar del Bufalo, our founder. He meant for his Missionaries to be on the move. For those who say yes to ministry in another country, the experience can be mind-stretching and life-altering, giving them a new and broader perspective that stays with them forever.*

Fr. Don Thieman, C.P.P.S., spent 53 years as a missionary in Chile. He was 31 years old in 1958, newly ordained, and an assistant pastor of St. Augustine Church in Minster, Ohio, when he got the invitation from his provincial director to be sent to Santiago. When he landed there, he knew not one word of Spanish, a limitation that worried him because he had never been what you would call an ace student of Latin in the seminary.

How long did it take him, once he settled in, to learn the language? "It's still taking," he said. Fifty-three years and it never did feel natural.

When you are a tourist, you grasp a word or two of a new language on a street sign or a restaurant menu, and you begin to feel like a citizen of the world. When you commit to living among people of a different culture, walking with them in joy and in sorrow, seeing to their needs—then you need to be able to communicate in complete sentences.

Fr. Thieman and his fellow Missionary, Fr. Milton Ballor, C.P.P.S., went to the Missionaries' mission in Chile together. They were sent to the Missionaries' mission house in Santiago where they were tutored in the language, rather intermittently.

"They hired a teacher to teach us Spanish, but he came

for only about an hour, and not every day. It was somewhat haphazard," said Fr. Thieman. "I remember being in the house and studying vocabulary. Then I would go out to the playground of the parish school and try out some of my new words on the kids. They couldn't understand me and I couldn't understand them. It was complete frustration. There I was, in my thirties, and I couldn't even speak as well as a child."

To be frustrated yet to stick with it; to be homesick yet to remain far away from home; to be mystified by the music and perhaps put off by the food yet to sing and to eat. "It wasn't just the language, it was everything," said Fr. Thieman. "In later years, the Congregation got better at teaching priests and brothers Spanish before sending them to Latin America. And the training was more inclusive—they also learned about the country's history and culture. We had to learn all that on the fly, without any formal training. I don't know if it would have made any difference."

What made a difference was the people, he said. Their generosity and hospitality, their patience with him while he was learning. He went to Chile to minister to them, but they in turn ministered to him, making him feel welcome and his

ministry necessary.

“When you’re with the people but not OF the people, it’s always a struggle toward understanding,” he said. “But they were so receptive, and so very kind.”

### Have Tent, Will Travel

From the beginning, St. Gaspar del Bufalo, founder of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, wanted his Missionaries to go out into the world to proclaim the merits of the Precious Blood of Jesus. He also wanted them to live together in mission houses where they share their faith and draw strength from each other.

That happened in Chile, where the Missionaries supported each other, Fr. Thieman said. In those years when they were first trying to fit in to a new culture, he worked with Fr. Ballor, whom he said was outgoing while he was more reserved. They made a good team and they learned together.

At the end of their first year in Chile, they were sent to southern Chile, 800 miles from the capital. Fr. Thieman went to Purranque, Fr. Ballor to nearby Rio Negro. While each had parish responsibilities, they went together on missions out to the countryside. Fr. Thieman acquired a used camper that

**“When you’re with the people but not OF the people, it’s always a struggle toward understanding. But they were so receptive, and so very kind.”**

*—Fr. Donald Thieman*



became a headquarters for them on these trips.

“We would ask some farmer if we could use his land, and we’d set up a tent. We had a generator so that we could have lights in the tent, and play some music. It was like the circus came to town,” he said. “While we were there, we would prepare kids to make their first communion, prepare couples to be married, and baptize the babies. We’d stay in an area for three or four days, living among them and worshiping with them.”

Among themselves and with the people to whom they



ministered, the Missionaries had to find a new community. Their own families were far away, and it was hard to reach them. Letters took about a month to travel from Chile to the United States. Fr. Thieman could place phone calls home, he said, but it was difficult. "You'd call and an operator would say, 'All the lines are busy—we'll call you when we can get through.' And that callback might come at 3 in the morning." Imagine the blessed relief when, in his later years in Chile, Skype came into being.

### **Shared Ministry a Joy**

When Fr. Pat Patterson, C.P.P.S., volunteered to minister in Chile in 1968, he also found the help of his fellow Missionaries invaluable. Fr. Patterson, an Indiana native, was sent to Rio Negro, the same rural parish in southern Chile where Fr. Ballor had once ministered.

He was the only Missionary in Rio Negro at the time, but Fr. Leo Herber, C.P.P.S., was the pastor in nearby Purranque. "He became a mentor to me, taking me with him out to the campo chapels (in the countryside), helping me set up catechetical programs and just being a friend—having me over for supper or

coming over to Rio Negro at meal time."

In 1971, Fr. Larry Eiting, C.P.P.S., arrived in Chile and was assigned to Rio Negro. "We were good friends going back to our seminary days. Being fellow Missionaries and close friends made our shared ministry a joy. And I think the parishioners could feel that," he said.

Fr. Patterson was in Chile for 27 years. Along with the joy and fulfillment of ministry, they were also times of fear and worry, "difficult times, under the dictatorship of August Pinochet," he said.

Priests as well as lay people lived under the government's curfew, he said. "I had been out on a sick call and was caught coming back to the parish after curfew. Three young men carrying machine guns pulled me over and put me up against a



**Fr. Patterson meets with Pope John Paul II in Rome in 1979.**

wall," he said. "When they saw that I was a priest they weren't sure what to do with me. After an hour or so a jeep pulled up and a sergeant, who recognized me, got out, pulled me aside and told me how to get home by a 'safe street.' I was scared and glad to get back home. All of us have stories to tell of those 17 years of the dictatorship."

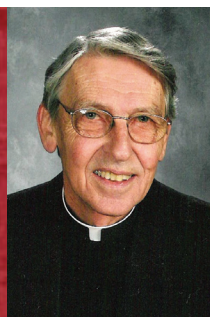
### A Rich Cultural Stew

What he experienced in those years helped him later, when he was back in the United States and in ministry at St. James the Less Parish in Columbus, an urban parish in a neighborhood with a growing Latino community.

"I went to the pastor, Fr. Rick Nieberding, C.P.P.S., and said, 'They have a spiritual hunger, we have the space, and I have the ability. Can we offer a Sunday Mass in Spanish?' Just like that, he said, 'Go for it.'"

They placed fliers about the Spanish Mass throughout the neighborhood. At the first Mass, 75 people came to worship. Within a few years, over 800 people were coming to two Masses in Spanish.

"We had people from Chile, Argentina, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, El Salvador, Guatemala, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Mexico," he said. "That was a very rich cultural stew."



"Our  
nation's  
motto is  
*E Pluribus Unum.*

Where does this im-  
pulse come from?  
My answer: God."

— Fr. Pat Patterson

Fr. Patterson made it his mission to make all people feel welcome. "But my efforts went beyond creating unity amongst the Latinos," he said. "I knew I had to integrate the English and Latino members of the parish. One way was the use of language. We offered classes in English to adult Latinos and for a while classes in Spanish to adult English-speaking members. We had already started teaching Spanish to the seventh and eighth grade students in our school. I believe that language is somewhat like a sacrament: words make manifest culture, traditions, beliefs, values and more. Words express an individual as well as unite one with others."



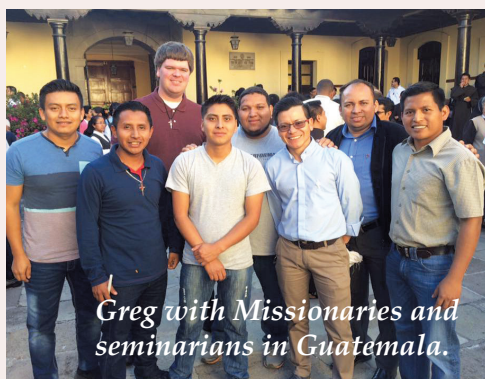
Still today, he said, “I reflect on this effort or drive to bring unity within diversity. Even our nation’s motto is *E Pluribus Unum*. Where does this impulse come from? My answer: God. God seems to delight in diversity —just look at God’s creation—the mighty splendor of it all. But above all look at God

himself. God is diverse—three distinct persons. Yet God is one. I believe that in contemplating the trinity, we can learn how to live in a unity that is enriched by diversity. Our effort to bring about unity is part of our initial inheritance as we were brought into being in the image of God.”



## Changed in Profound Ways

Fr. Thieman is the oldest member of our Congregation. Our candidate Greg Evers, who is studying for the priesthood, is the youngest. Greg chose to spend time with our Missionaries in Guatemala during his special formation for the priesthood. Like Fr. Thieman so many years before, he felt lost without a common language.



“It was really difficult for me to communicate with the other guys,” Greg said. “Physically, I was not by myself. They didn’t leave me alone. But I couldn’t talk about what was on my mind, or understand what they were saying. I remember the night at supper when I caught my first sentence: I almost broke down and cried.”

Now studying theology in Chicago, Greg volunteers at a food pantry on the south side of the city. “It’s good to be with those who are in need, to be with them as they are going through their struggles,” he said.

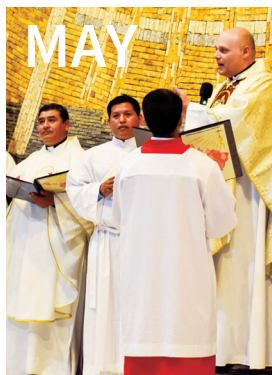
“My time in Guatemala changed me in profound ways,” said Greg, who spent three and a half months there. “My experiences, the people I met, and the stories they told me are a part of me now, and it helps shape my encounters with people in my ministry.”

# Please Join Us in Prayer

Asking for your prayerful support of these monthly intentions

**St. James the Less Church in Columbus,** where Missionaries remain in ministry (see page seven). C.PP.S. Frs. Antonio Baus, Andrew O'Reilly and Brother Tom Bohman serve there.

*Lord, please protect, collect and inspire the people of St. James the Less Parish, as together they form a faith family to help build your kingdom.*



**The Missionaries of the Precious Blood of the Latin American Province,** serving in Chile, Peru, Brazil, Guatemala and Colombia.

*Lord, we ask that you guide this newest province of our Congregation to continue to do the work that you assigned to us through our founder, St. Gaspar. Glory to the Blood of Jesus, now and forever.*

**Asking for the intercession of St. Joseph to strengthen our faith.**

*Lord, gift us with same the wisdom, courage and steadfast faith that you gave to St. Joseph. Like him, may we take care of those whom you have entrusted to us. May we be the firm foundation upon which a family is built. Help us turn all hearts to you.*



# It's Almost Like a New Adventure

I preside at Eucharist once a week for the Precious Blood Sisters of Dayton, so when the residents of Salem Heights got vaccinated, I got vaccinated with them. I am blessed to have already had both doses with no significant side effects. That's right, I am one step closer to the light at the end of the tunnel, and am beginning to take some baby steps out of my year-long bubble.

I have been able to start thinking about how I might return to vocations ministry the way it was before the pandemic, and that means in-person events. I have already visited two of our parishes for high school vocations panels. These were still "hybrid events." Panelists sat six feet apart, students were spread out around the whole Church, and some even watched online. But it was so nice to be able to interact with people without a screen and camera between us.



**Fr. Steve with priests and sisters at a vocations event at St. Michael, Kalida, Ohio.**

I have a couple of other in-school visits already planned. I am also beginning to plan college and parish visits, and I have my fingers crossed about the possibility of attending The FEST, a faith-based event for young people and families, in Cleveland in August. I can't wait until I'm able to travel to Liberty, Mo., again to make visits and attend events in the Kansas City Province.

In some ways I feel the excitement that comes with setting out on a new adventure in ministry. I've been in this ministry for several years now, but I am looking forward to the year ahead as a true time of rebuilding, and am beginning to look for new events where I can promote vocations to our Community.

There is excitement in the air as, little by little, things open up. Like crocuses popping up through the damp earth, my fellow vocations directors and I are looking forward to all that the year has in store for us. Who will we meet? Where will we go? It's still to be determined; but there's a future in store and that's very exciting.



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



# The Year of St. Joseph

*Pope Francis has proclaimed this the Year of St. Joseph. We're asking our Missionaries who are named Joseph to reflect on their name, its connection to the saint, and what it means to them.*

*Brother Joe Fisher, C.P.P.S., provincial treasurer, in ministry at the provincial office in Dayton and in the Old North Dayton neighborhood where he lives. He feels a clear and constant connection to St. Joseph, whom he calls his "buddy."*

**How/why did your parents choose the name Joseph for you? Were you at least in part named for St. Joseph?**

My dad was a hard-working farmer who spent a lot of time in the shadows of the dairy barn or out in the field. He was a quiet fellow. About the only time we saw Dad was when he came into the house for meals or to rest.

Of my four younger siblings and me, I probably got to spend the most time working with Dad. Dad did not say a whole lot, but when he did you had better listen. He had a dry and witty humor. He was a deeply religious man.

Now why do I mention all of this? Well, the question was



*Br. Joe Fisher and his dad, Ralph.*

asked how and or why did your parents choose the name Joseph for me. My suspicion is that my name came from my mother. Her youngest brother died shortly after childbirth and Grandma named him Joseph.

My mom, being the oldest of her siblings, had the privilege of naming one of her children after her deceased little brother. Good thing she did not wait, since all of my siblings are girls. Of course I guess there could have always been a Josephine . . . but that just doesn't have that ring, though, like Joseph.



Now the next question is whether my given name has a connection with St. Joseph. I suspect so. We had a few St. Joseph statues and pictures of St. Joseph in the house.

The one that really grabbed your attention was the large statue of St. Joseph the carpenter holding a square in one hand and a plane in the other. This statue stood in the indoor chalet-style shrine that hung in the front room with all of our rosaries dangling from the bottom. You just could not miss that statue when you walked into the front room; and yes, of course, it hung right above the television.

**Do you consider St. Joseph a personal patron saint? Can you describe the connection that you feel with St. Joseph?**

Growing up, I cannot say that I had that close of a connection with St. Joseph. And you can rightfully say, "shame on you." But over the years, I have become closer to him. In fact, I now call him my "buddy."

My home parish in Wapakoneta, Ohio, is St. Joseph. So you might say I grew up under the watchful eye of St. Joseph.

Then, after high school seminary, I attended Saint Joseph's College and earned a degree in accounting. The

Hebrew name Joseph means "may Jehovah add, give or increase." See a connection?

And now here I am working at the provincial office, which is right next to St. Joseph Church in downtown Dayton. So St. Joseph continues to keep an eye on me.

Quite a few years ago, I read a book entitled, *Joseph, the Man Who Raised Jesus*, by Fr. Gary Caster. The book devotes chapters to many of St. Joseph's virtues as listed in the Litany of Saint Joseph. I came to a deeper appreciation for St. Joseph from that book. Fr. Caster reverses the expression, "Like father, like son," to develop a picture and understanding of the man we know so little about.

## Pope Francis' Prayer to St. Joseph

*Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,  
Spouse of the Blessed  
Virgin Mary.  
To you God entrusted  
his only Son;  
in you Mary placed her trust;  
with you Christ became man.  
Blessed Joseph, to us too,  
show yourself a father  
and guide us in the path of life.  
Obtain for us grace,  
mercy and courage,  
and defend us from every evil.  
Amen.*

# Loss of Little Brothers Shaped Him

St. Joseph's story, what we know of it, is defined by babies. There's the startling pregnancy of his betrothed, Mary, that he had to reconcile in his own heart, with the help of an angel. Then there was the miraculous birth of the Christ-child, of which he had to engineer all the earthly details of food, lodging and security for his new little family. Then the flight into Egypt to protect the baby from a blood-thirsty king.

In a way, Fr. Joe Bathke's early story is also defined by babies. Fr. Joe, a member of the Kansas City Province, was born to a family in a small Wisconsin town. He was the oldest of eight siblings.

"Because I spent so much time on my grandparents' farm I learned very early about life, how it came about and how it was nurtured," Fr. Joe said. "From the day I was born, March 5, 1950, until my sister, Cathy was born on January 25, 1960 my mom had seven more babies."

Those times when a baby was

on the way were always times of great anticipation for Fr. Joe, who always wanted a little brother. But they also became times of trial due to a condition related to Rh factor (a sometimes lethal conflict between the blood of the mother and the child she is carrying).

"Today, the condition is treated by a shot given to the mother that actually reverses the Rh factor to its original condition in the mother. However, in the 1950s, this treatment was unavailable," Fr. Joe said. "I and my sisters Pat, Mary and Cathy were lucky and were born without difficulty. My sister Sara spent an extended time in the hospital as an infant and my sister Joan, because of complications at birth, deals with permanent deafness.

"My two brothers died shortly after birth. Even to this day, this is my greatest heartbreak. I had had four sisters already and when I learned my mom was expecting, I was sure it was going to be boy, my long-expected brother. . .

"When the big day came at last and mom went to the hospital



**Fr. Joe Bathke**

**The Year of  
St. Joseph**

I was ready. When dad came home from the hospital he did not have to say a word. I, we, all knew what had happened. Our brother had died shortly after birth.” This sad story was repeated once again.

“The loss of those little brothers was a really sad time for me and for the whole family,” Fr. Joe said. “One of them (the fifth sibling) was named David. My mother couldn’t bring herself to name the second brother.”

To grow up having known such heartbreaking losses, to have seen some of his baby sisters struggle for life, to see his parents mourn their lost sons yet still say yes to new life—it had to be part of what shaped him as the open-hearted, intuitive Missionary he is today.

Fr. Joe, who was ordained in 1978, is now the pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Warrensburg, Mo. He has also ministered as a hospital chaplain and as director of initial formation for the Missionaries. He happily carries the name Joseph, “a good, solid name,” he said.

Fr. Joe has come to a deeper

understanding of St. Joseph as he has gotten older, he said. “One thing that has always struck me about Joseph is that he must have been empathetic. I think he truly loved Mary. He was not just being kind or charitable. He was being loving. He must have been deeply dedicated to her—he goes running around the countryside avoiding Herod. That’s a choice too, you know?”

**St. Joseph was able to “hold in his heart things that were difficult without allowing them to destroy him or the people he loved.”**

St. Joseph was able to “hold in his heart things that were difficult without allowing them to destroy him or the people he loved,” Fr. Joe added. That requires wisdom and patience.

“In our world today, we find it hard to have a conversation with people, to just listen to what they have to say, without trying to bury them with our own opinions,” he said. “Joseph, is a good example for how we can navigate the challenges of the world today.”



**Calumet College of  
St. Joseph sets a goal of  
5,000 service hours in  
the Year of St. Joseph  
(see page 16 for details).**



**Message of Gratitude:** Ed Nieberding, the brother of the late Fr. Rick Nieberding, C.PP.S., shared the following story about the reach of the Missionaries' global ministry:

Several years ago, I took a trip with my brother, Fr. Rick Nieberding, C.PP.S., to Richmond, Va., for a family event. We flew on Saturday, attended the gathering, and had a Sunday afternoon flight home.

We wanted to do some sightseeing in downtown Richmond prior to our return, and looked around for a church for Sunday Mass. We decided to go the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.

The cathedral is the seat of the Richmond Diocese and a large, beautiful church. That Sunday, a young priest with a heavy eastern European accent presided at Mass.

As he began his homily, he said that once a year, his small parish was invited to Richmond to speak at all the Masses. He added with a laugh that he would continue speaking until he had received a commitment of \$500 from those attending.

He continued to talk about his small parish and the financial difficulties it faced. Rick poked me in the ribs and said, "Let us help him get over the top, we have a plane to catch."

The young priest thanked everyone for their help. He then said, "The greatest thanks I can give, and no one is here to receive it, is to the members of the Precious Blood Society. Their work for so many years kept our parish and its members alive and growing. So to them, thank you so very much."

What a surprise he got when Rick approached him after Mass to accept his thanks on behalf of the Society. What a small but wonderful world.



**Ed Nieberding, right, with his brother, Fr. Rick.**

**Book Explores St. Gaspar's Methods:** The ministry of preaching missions was central to our founder, St. Gaspar del Bufalo, and his earliest companions. A new C.PP.S. resource book explores the methods that St. Gaspar used when he came to town to reinvigorate the



faith of the people of God.

*An Acceptable Time: The Method of Popular Missions According to Saint Gaspar del Bufalo*, is the first English translation of a book by Fr. Beniamino Conti, C.P.P.S. Translated by Fr. Jerome Stack, C.P.P.S., the book also contains Gaspar's own *Method of the Missions*, as well as guidelines for the associations aimed at continuing the work of the mission, an important part of the ministry of the mission houses.

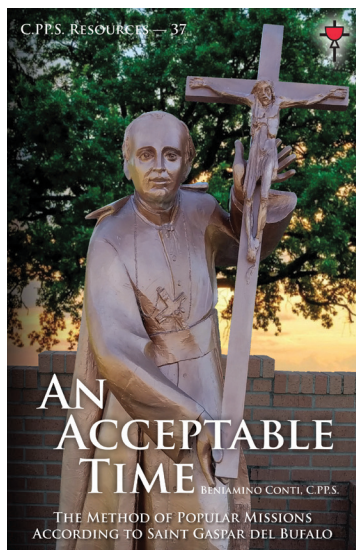
St. Gaspar called his parish mission "a holy machine that runs like a clock." He was not exaggerating. Gaspar outlined the preparations for the mission, how the Missionaries were to travel, and the various duties of the Missionaries and the lay people during the mission, which generally lasted two weeks. The schedule is amazingly detailed, although always subject to modification given local circumstances.

What shines through all of Gaspar's writing on the topic of the mission is his zeal to bring people to a deep consciousness of God's mercy and thus have a change of heart, a repentance that would lead to a new direction in life. Gaspar's profound awareness of the spirituality of the Precious Blood motivated him to share the Lord's merciful love with all.

*An Acceptable Time* is available for \$15 plus shipping. For more information, contact [mission@cpps-preciousblood.org](mailto:mission@cpps-preciousblood.org).

**Celebrating St. Joseph at CCSJ:** Calumet College of St. Joseph, the only Catholic college in Northwest Indiana, is sponsored by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. At CCSJ, in Whiting, Ind., social justice and community service are inseparable.

Every year, CCSJ students, faculty and staff give their time and talent to many worthy causes throughout Northwest Indiana and beyond. In this Year of Saint Joseph, the college is renewing its commitment to the people and communities it serves by setting a goal of 5,000 hours of community service. It will also give out monthly *CCSJ Hearts and Hands* service awards to college groups and individuals who go above and beyond in serving others.



# A Sprinkling of God Dust

I was feeling lowdown and blue early one morning in February, one of those what-have-I-done-with-my-life kind of days. But it was also country trash day, so I needed to haul our weekly trash down our long, long lane to the side of the township road. I could drive it up there, but it seems like an insult to all creation to drive trash around, so I use the wheelbarrow and it is a good morning workout too.

And prayer time. I would use the walk as a time to commune with God, in whatever way God chose, up to and including not at all. I put the trash bags in the wheelbarrow and set off with the dog, who was not blue. We walked out into a snowy clear morning that God had painted with the most beautiful of all Midwestern sights: hoarfrost. Every tree, every weed and rock, twinkled with frozen stardust. It doesn't happen often and it doesn't last long, so you have to appreciate it, even when and maybe especially when you are blue and pushing a wheelbarrow full of household trash.

It does not take a lot of spiritual genius to leap to the thought, "Thank you, God," on such a morning. I had sent God a telegraph, "I am feeling blue," and God responded, "How about some bling."

The fact that it was not just for me makes it an even greater gift. There was hoarfrost all over our corner of the world that morning. Anyone who looked outside could have seen it. It brightened the commute of all the people driving up and down the I-75 corridor, as well as state highways and township roads.

Sometimes, when making requests of the divine, I wonder why a very busy God would take time for me, but it struck me on that trash day that God can take care of a lot of us, probably in fact all of us, at the same time. You don't run out to the store for a single can of peas, so maybe God in God's infinite strategic wisdom can work miracles that spread out like lightning, like a spider's web, like hoarfrost, across a landscape, blessing all that they touch in the way that they most need touched. Perhaps God is efficient with his to-do list, in the same way that we are when we plot a course from the hardware store to the library to the post office.

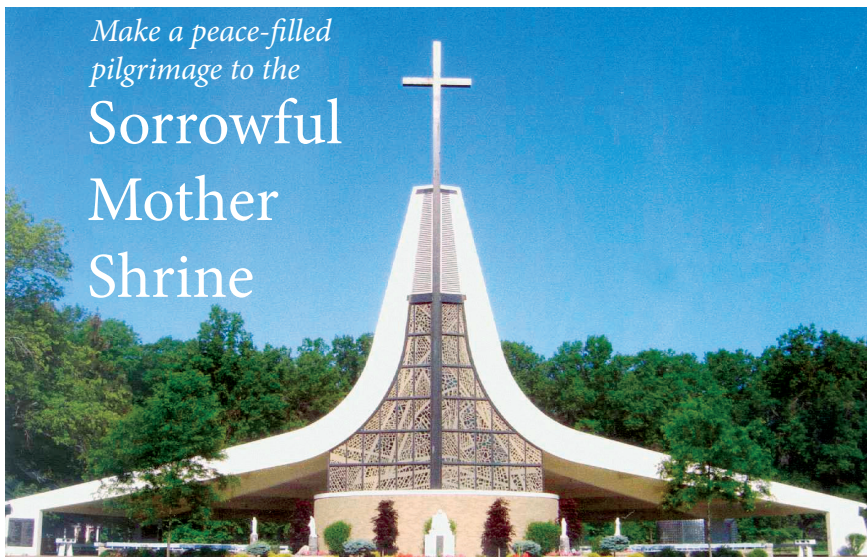
Who knows how God works? Who needs to know? Not me. But I like to think about it, teasing out the subtle hints and more direct directives that God sends from time to time, if not every day. And when you catch a glimpse of the fingers of God, trailing out across your part of the universe, a dusting of God-glitter in his wake, you just have to take notice.



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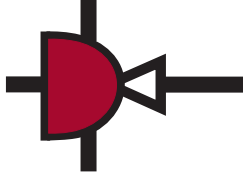
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