



MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

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Dear Friends

Have you ever stepped out of your comfort zone? Did it happen as a matter of personal choice, or were you pushed by circumstances into a new place or new state of being? Do you remember the feelings of being lost, having to find your way even though you may have been thrown off balance, and the exhilaration of proving to yourself that you could take on a new challenge and learn from it?

The *Dayton Daily News* recently carried the obituary of a man who, after his retirement, sold his home and moved to a sailboat off the coast of Washington State. I am not sure that is practical for most of us, but it can be intriguing to dream about such a radical change.

Many of our Missionaries have not only dreamed of radical change, but said yes to it. Starting in the 1940's, the Church called for religious communities in North America to send priests, religious brothers and sisters to Latin America. We responded, first to Chile then to Peru and Guatemala, and later in Colombia.

It was a leap of faith for our Missionaries. Fr. Donald Thieman, C.P.P.S., who is now 93, was a young assistant pastor at St. Augustine Church in Minster, Ohio, when he got a letter from his provincial director asking if he would go to Chile. Fr. Don had indicated, when he was first ordained, that he would consider such an assignment. But when put to the test, he had to think about it.

"I had my doubts. I was never fluent in Latin in the seminary, and I would have to learn a new language," he said. "I prayed about it. One day, the Gospel was Matthew 19: 29, 'And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life.' That sounded like a message to me."

Fr. Thieman went to Chile in 1958. It was difficult and frustrating at first, as he tried to learn a new language and culture. Gradually, the language opened up to him and he could understand the people, bit by bit—and grew to love them. He ministered in Chile for 53 years.



Fr. Don Thieman with the camper in which he traveled to rural villages in Southern Chile.

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Now retired and living back in the United States since 2012, he jokes that he is still working on his Spanish—it never did come naturally to him. But he gave himself to the life that the Lord was calling him to.

Fr. Thieman is the oldest member of our Congregation. Our candidate Greg Evers, who is studying for the priesthood, is the youngest. In between the time they make their first formal commitment to our Congregation and begin their advanced academic work, candidates enter a period that we call special formation. Greg chose to do part of his special formation among our Missionaries and their seminarians in Guatemala, where he found, like Fr. Thieman so many years before, that without knowledge of the language, you are lost.

"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."



Greg Evers with Missionaries and seminarians in Guatemala.

Greg chose to go to Guatemala. He chose to stretch his own personal boundaries. Now studying theology in Chicago, he 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.

There are a lot of ways we can stretch our boundaries. We are asking you if you would be willing to stretch yours all the way to the southern hemisphere. Would you be willing to help our Missionaries who minister in Latin America? The work there continues—God's work—God's mercy—never ends. Our Missionaries in Latin America continue to reach out to the poor, to those on the margin, and help them find the redemption offered to all through the Precious Blood of Jesus.

Fr. Thieman—and decades later, Greg Evers—responded to the call to go to Latin America and experience a new way of life, to experience the profound solitude of the foreigner, and to learn to see the world with new eyes. Can we too follow them in spirit? Please consider sharing your resources with people in need, who live far away but are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Will you help?

May God open our eyes and our hearts to see God's children around the world, our brothers and sisters, who laugh and cry, work and pray just like we do. May we see that our God is a God of limitless love, limitless potential, and limitless vision to look beyond the horizon into every human heart.

Sincerely in the Blood of Christ,

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

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Provincial Director

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