

FALL 2021

# CPPS TODAY

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD



“YOUNG CHURCH,  
it's good to be with you”

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Wirtner, C.PP.S.**

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*C.PP.S. is an abbreviation of the Latin name of the Congregation, Congregatio Pretiosissimi Sanguinis, Congregation of the Most Precious Blood.*

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# Finding the Best Fit

In our Congregation, as in many, one of the responsibilities of the provincial director or superior is to help members find the ministry that is best suited to them. In a perfect world, this would be a perfect fit every time, but it does not always work that way.

There may also be a misconception that a priest or religious brother settles into one ministry site and happily serves the Lord there for decades. Some do. Others find themselves called to several different ministries over their lives as priests or religious brothers. Their interests and/or abilities evolve over the years, just as with people who work secular jobs.

We encourage that. The word “Missionary” in our title means that while our priests and brothers are very committed to the people they serve, they are not necessarily bound to one place. “Missionaries are not statues,” said our founder, St. Gaspar del Bufalo, whose solemnity we celebrate on October 21.

It is a priority for me to sit with members and talk with them about their ministry, their own hopes and dreams, and where they feel called. I hope to help them see where the Holy Spirit is sending them.

I think I can speak for all religious superiors when I say these conversations are easiest when a member is fired up about a particular ministry. I hope you will get the feeling from our cover story in this issue that Fr. Vince Wirtner, C.P.P.S., really loves youth ministry, and walking alongside the students at Melbourne (Fla.) Central Catholic High School, where he serves as chaplain. This is a job that takes a lot of energy, which Fr. Vince brings along with him to school. Likewise, I think you will easily detect the tone of enthusiasm that characteristically comes from Fr. Harry Brown, C.P.P.S., when he talks about Marriage Encounter. As you will also read in this issue, Fr. Harry has been ministering with Marriage Encounter for more than 50 years. If I was the kind of person who used exclamation points, I would have put one at the end of that sentence.

If you know a Missionary, then I hope you have experienced the joy and commitment that he brings to his ministry. Ask him about the blessings he receives from the life he has chosen—that God chose for him. Ask him how he came to be a priest or a brother. Usually, it is a good story, one with a happy ending.

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





# “YOUNG CHURCH, it's good to be with you”



Photo by Kelly Ensell

*Fr. Vince Wirtner walks with a student  
at Melbourne Central Catholic High School.*

Many young people are trying to figure out where they fit in the Church today. It's good for them to have a guide on that journey.

**“Y**oung Church, it’s good to be with you, praying.”

With those words, Fr.

Vince Wirtner, C.P.P.S., greets his people: the students of Melbourne Central Catholic High School in Melbourne, Fla., where he is now in his second year as chaplain.

He looks out into the school’s chapel and sees the students, some joining in the worship, some distracted, some withdrawn, some at ease, some ill at ease. All welcome, whether they know it or not.

“Many of them are trying to figure out where they fit” in the Church, Fr. Vince said. They’ve grown up, many of them, in their parents’ parishes but now may be exploring, questioning. “That’s where I come in. The free time that they have, maybe their lunch time, they come down to my office with things they want to talk to somebody about. ‘I’ve heard about this, can you talk to me about this?’ Often they are trying to figure out where they stand on moral issues,” he said. “I’m accessible. I’m there, I’m with them. That’s a gift I can bring to them.”

### **There Every Day**

His ministry at the school is made more meaningful because he is around every day. Students see him in their

everyday surroundings, on the school grounds but outside of its classrooms, walking on the covered sidewalks between its buildings, sitting in the courtyard just like they do.

For many, he’s a walking introduction to the Church and to the priesthood. “I’m sure there are some of our students who are unchurched, or whose families don’t go to church regularly,” he said. “I hope to give them a good model of church—that’s part of what I can bring too.”

In that, he hopes to pay it forward. Fr. Vince grew up in Fort Wayne and attended Bishop Luers High School, where Franciscans were in ministry.

“You think of a priest typically at a parish. For me growing up, I saw a difference between my parish priests and the Franciscan priests who were at my high school,” he said. “I only saw my parish priest on Sunday. But the friars at our school were with us every day. Looking back on my experience with the Franciscans, I would think, ‘That’s how I want to be!’ I hope the students can see that I love them in a healthy way, and I can give them a good experience of what Church is, that they feel included in our liturgy and prayer.”

### **“Their Vision is Wider”**

There are 1.2 billion Roman



*Fr. Vince prays with students on a mission trip.*

“I hope to give students a model of Church, of the priesthood, of ministry, that honors who they are as the young Church.”

Catholics worldwide, so it’s not always easy to convince each teen that he or she has a place in that big tent. They are not always sure they want to be there.

Young people have access to so much information and opinions about the Church, which often leads to more questions, Fr. Vince said. “They see the Church as good and bad because of what they see on social media,” he said. “They see bishops who are against the pope, bishops who love the pope. They may have a broader experience of all those

viewpoints than their parents or grandparents did, because it’s all out there for them to see. Their vision is wider. Especially with scandals involving the Church, it’s all thrown in their face.

“So it may be harder for them to decide, ‘What do I do with the Church, how do I bring it into my own spirituality?’ They’re not necessarily hearing about all the good things the Church does in the world. I don’t remember that in my own experience as a young person. The Church was just my church.”

To counter what they might see and hear on social media, Fr. Vince tries to provide a living example of being part of the Body of Christ. "I hope to give students a model of Church, of the priesthood, of ministry, that honors who they are as the young Church," he said.

### **Not an Easy Year**

So far this academic year, his work at the school has been more manageable than last year. Being part of a school staff that was also trying to deal with COVID-19 and all its mandates and restrictions was difficult, he said, and not easy on the students, either.

"It was such a traumatic year last year, such a demanding year both physically and emotionally," he said. It was hard to give up some of the ministries that did so much good for the school and the community it serves.

"All of our retreats were just gone," he said. "All of the projects that we do to serve the community outside of the doors of the school were just gone. The school traditionally takes a mission trip each year to the Dominican Republic—and that was taken out from underneath them."

Like most other educators, he said, "We had to ask, 'How do we survive without all of those

things that students look forward to?'"

And there were even more serious worries. "I was constantly thinking, especially before the vaccine came out, 'Am I exposing the students (to the virus)? Am I bringing something into the school?' It was a life-and-death rollercoaster. And a lot of other adults said they felt the same thing. It's a rollercoaster they never want to ride again."

### **Treating Teens with Respect**

There are 400 students at the high school. It is a culturally diverse student body, with some from other countries, including Vietnam, China and Spain. Not all are Catholic, but Fr. Vince feels he ministers to all of the students, and to each of the students. He is happy to offer the sacraments for the school, but he's also honored when individual students seek him out with questions, concerns and doubts.

"Anytime you are ministering to young people, it's about building relationships. We're showing them the love of Jesus Christ through the things that we do and the way that we teach," said Fr. Vince, who served as a high school youth minister before he entered religious formation to become a priest. Students come to him for spiritual direction. They ask him



to hear their confessions.

"It takes a special breed of young adults to approach a priest, to have the confidence and courage to look for answers from an adult who is not a family member. We try to create that atmosphere here that makes them comfortable in seeking us out," he said. "It's all about treating teenagers with respect and honoring them as a child of God, empowering them to be a part of liturgical ministry, helping out with the prayer that we do."

So when they come to him, he listens, he said. If at all possible, he drops everything to be present to them. "I think that's what Jesus would do. He would stop everything he was doing and say, 'You're the most important thing to me right now. I'm just going to talk with you,'" he said.

### Building Unity

Whatever he is investing in the students and the school, they are also giving back to him. Not a morning person, Fr. Vince was never fond of the 7:30 a.m. Mass time. But the school asked him to preside on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. He found a community there of regular Mass-goers, both students and adults.

Among them are members



*Fr. Vince with Fr. Ben Berinti, C.P.P.S. Both live at Immaculate Conception Church in Melbourne Beach, Fla., where Fr. Ben is the pastor and Fr. Vince helps out.*

of the baseball team. "We have a baseball coach who is a great guy. He said to his senior players, 'Going to Mass together is a good way to build unity,'" he said. "So at every single Mass for the last two years on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, the baseball team has been represented, from two players to the whole team. They're always there. So I ask them, 'Did Coach make you come?' And they say, 'Nope!' They get something out of being together, building relationships, praying together. They want that."

So many people young and old want that. God bless those who help them find it.





# Fr. Kevin Scalf in Ministry At Cincinnati High School

Fr. Kevin Scalf, C.P.P.S., began a new ministry assignment this fall as a chaplain and teacher at McNicholas High School in his hometown of Cincinnati.

Fr. Scalf formerly served as director of mission and ministry and humanities chairperson at Calumet College of St. Joseph in Hammond, Ind.

At McNicholas, Fr. Scalf said he is teaching “dual-credit theology” for select seniors who are eligible to register for two theology courses that will satisfy their senior theology requirement and offer them college credit. These credits can transfer to most colleges and universities throughout the U.S. The two courses are Old Testament and New Testament. I am teaching both.” Mount St. Joseph is the sponsoring university.



*Fr. Scalf presides at Mass in the chapel of McNicholas High School in Cincinnati.*

As chaplain, he is presiding at all school Masses and offering the sacrament of reconciliation. He will also lead retreats and faculty formation. He is assisting with institutional advancement, donor relations and other administrative responsibilities.

He's already enjoying his new assignment, he said: “This is holy fun. I'm where God wants me.”

The school, established in 1951 as the first co-ed Catholic high school in Cincinnati, was named after Archbishop John T. McNicholas, the fourth archbishop of Cincinnati. Its current enrollment is over 520 students, who come from over 30 zip codes.



# Please Join us in Prayer

Asking for your prayerful support of the following intentions

## For teachers, school chaplains, staff and volunteers.

*Creator God, you kindle a curiosity and energy inside our young people. Help all who minister to them channel their sense of exploration in ways that lead to positive growth and a mature faith. Help us all guide their gaze to you. Amen.*



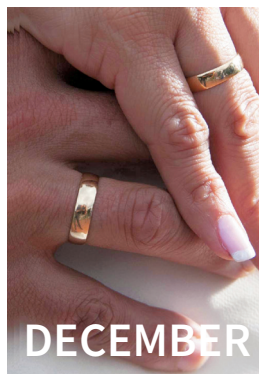
## In thanksgiving for all the gifts that God gives us.

*Lord, we take the time to look around and see all that you present to us. The gift of life, brought to us anew each day. The gift of challenges that stretch our minds and muscles when we rise up to meet them. The gift of family and friends who see in us a reflection of you. The gift of food for thought and food for our table. For this and so many other things, we thank you. Amen.*



## For all married couples and for all those preparing for marriage.

*Lord, please bless and strengthen the union of your people. Let their marriages be the keystone of family homes in our country and around the world. May spouses appreciate in each other those differences that strengthen the pair. May their lives together always be steeped in your love. Amen.*



# The Importance of Being Present

In the article about Fr. Vince Wirtner's ministry at Melbourne Central Catholic High School, we read about how his position allows him to be present and available to the students. He isn't hemmed in by other responsibilities that would also make demands on his time. He is able to focus entirely on the students who make up the flock that he tends. It is truly a blessing to the students that he is able to do that, and to Fr. Vince.

It is also a blessing to the Church and the task of promoting vocations. His presence in the midst of the students' daily lives helps them to know the Church and the priesthood in a far more personal way, a way that moves priests from the sanctuary to the sidewalk of their lives. I wish that more of our men had the freedom to be that present to the youth and young adult community.

Like Fr. Vince, I am lucky, because as vocations director my ministry allows me to be present to youth and young adults in a variety of ways. I have freedom in my schedule to be present on college campuses or to accept invitations to present or participate in some other way at youth events. The downside is that my presence is necessarily intermittent. I may visit a college campus or a parish youth group a couple of times a year. I'm free to be present to a wider variety of youth and young adults, while Fr. Vince is able to be a more consistent presence to the students he serves.

Unfortunately, with modern parish life being what it is, parish ministers are often unable to be as present as they'd like to be. Running from meeting to meeting and project to project, they have little time available to simply be present to their people.

As we rethink parish life in the 21st century, we need to find better ways to manage the temporal realities of the modern parish, so that our Missionaries in parish ministry are able to give the time they'd like to be present to their people, and especially the young.

This ministry of presence not only helps folks out in moments of crisis and questioning, but it also has the ability to stir up the possibility of a vocation in a young man who gets to know Father as more than "that guy up front on Sunday."



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



# Fr. Harry is a Super Booster of Marriages

*For more than 50 years, this energetic, 89-year-old priest has been recruiting couples to participate in Marriage Encounter weekends, because he totally, completely and wholeheartedly believes in what Marriage Encounter can do. Plus, that's just how he does things.*

When he invites married couples to participate in a Marriage Encounter weekend, Fr. Harry Brown, C.P.P.S., knows that it's probably the guys who need an extra push. That might sound old-fashioned, but Fr. Harry is in fact not very apologetic about being old-fashioned. He believes, in general, that women are more willing to set aside a weekend to celebrate their marriage and work on improving it.

It's a belief that is based on his more than 50 years of experience with Marriage Encounter, a worldwide ministry



**Fr. Harry Brown with his special Marriage Encounter chausable.**

that encourages married couples to improve their communication skills and thereby enrich their marriage.

So when Fr. Harry preaches on a Sunday about Marriage Encounter, as he attempts to talk



couples into giving it a try, he invariably uses a term he thinks may be more relatable to husbands.

“Look at all those cars out there in the church parking lot,” he says. “How many of you have ever had them tuned up? Think of Marriage Encounter as a tune-up for your marriage!”

People can relate to that, he says. But he doesn’t stop there. How about your boat? Do you tune that up? How about your motorcycle? How about your lawnmower?

With a twinkle in his eye, he explains that he knows he is being repetitive. But you never know what’s going to grab someone out there in the pews, he says. And for Marriage Encounter, Fr. Harry doesn’t mind pulling out all the stops.

### **Pulling Out All the Stops**

In fact, Fr. Harry, now 89, has been that way about all of his ministries throughout his 62 years as a priest and a Missionary of the Precious Blood. He pulls out all the stops. When he writes, which he still does in longhand, the page is generously scattered with exclamation points, and key phrases that are underlined. This is true whether it is a homily, a letter to a colleague, or one of the C.P.P.S. Sunday Reflections, at which he still takes his turn. He

does a task with enthusiasm, with fire, or he does not do it at all.

Marriage Encounter is just one of his ministries. Fr. Harry is one of the priests on staff at the Missionaries’ Sorrowful Mother Shrine in Bellevue, Ohio. He presides at Masses there and hears confessions for pilgrims who come to the shrine, either on their own or as part of the busloads that come during the summer-and-fall pilgrim season.

He meets people where they are, and he meets them with genuine and purposeful ebullience. He knows he is an ambassador for the Church and for the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. He’s seldom seen without his bright-red windbreaker, a subtle or not-so-subtle promotion of the Congregation, and when he went to pick out a car, he told the Chevy dealer he wanted a bright red one.

When it is suggested that he could have been a successful secular salesman, he agrees: “Absolutely!”

### **Growing Up Personable**

Fr. Harry grew up, one of 12 siblings, on a farm outside of tiny Glynwood, Ohio. Being a part of that big pack of siblings made him “personable,” he said, not afraid to express his opinions to others and in turn to listen to

what they had to say, “and those are the traits I needed in my ministry.”

Ordained in 1959, he ministered in parishes for a few years before he was appointed to Brunnerdale, the Congregation’s high school seminary in Canton, Ohio. There he served as assistant *magister spiritus*, prefect of discipline, vice rector then, from 1972 to 1978, as its principal. Throughout that time, he was also the school’s Latin teacher.

It was there he experienced his first Marriage Encounter, under the tutelage of Fr. John Zvijak, C.P.P.S., and volunteer couples who were part of the Marriage Encounter team. He saw right away that it worked. “I saw couples fighting as they came up the steps, and they left arm-in-arm,” he said.

He was such a believer that he asked for permission to work fulltime with Marriage Encounter. Once he was appointed to that ministry, he was based in Tampa and took part in 193 weekend events.

With Marriage Encounter, Fr. Harry traveled to almost all of the states. He also preached what he called “Super Marriage Sundays,” when he recruited couples, often with the aforementioned tune-up analogy. Through his decades with Marriage Encounter, Fr. Harry recruited over 11,000

couples to sign up for a Marriage Encounter weekend, “a record number for any priest or couple doing the same. It’s the proof of a salesman,” he said.

He also became the director of family life ministry with the Diocese of St. Petersburg, Fla. “I had six satchels of talks I would give for different programs,” he said.

Fr. Harry returned to parish life in 1996, when he was named pastor of St. John the Baptist Church in Glandorf, Ohio. He moved to the shrine in 2009.

“I love mingling with the people here,” he said. With all of his ministerial experiences, he says that he is a “general practitioner” of the faith, of the priesthood.

But he is very specific when it comes to the message that he wants to deliver, whether it is a homily, a recruiting talk for Marriage Encounter, or any other message: “The key to preaching is to connect the people with the Word of God through a high-powered talk.” That means an energetic delivery with exclamation points, lots of them.

“And always try to connect the Gospel message with the lives of the people. I have learned to make it personal, make it relatable.” And in that way, this mechanic of God, this super salesman, offers everyone a tune-up.



# A Sense of Gratitude to St. Joseph

*Pope Francis has proclaimed this the Year of St. Joseph. We asked our Missionaries who are named Joseph to reflect on their name and their connection to the saint. Fr. Joseph Deardorff, C.PP.S., a native of Dayton, is now in ministry in Bogotá, Colombia.*

*By Fr. Joseph Deardorff, C.PP.S.*

The picture of St. Joseph that hung above my bed when I was a child has always been a vivid part of my memory of growing up. In grade school, at the parish church, there was a large statue of him off to the side. I would go to talk to him and on many occasions asked for his help.

Inspired by St. Joseph, I thought that one day I could become a carpenter. It was one of my interests while growing up. At 14, I entered the Missionaries' Brunnerdale High School Seminary as a brother candidate. During my time there, I always admired the work of



**Fr. Joseph Deardorff in Colombia.**

Brother Oliver Weaver, C.PP.S., a carpenter by trade and one who was always willing to serve the Community and be a source of its hospitality.

I discovered eventually that I was not endowed with the skills to be a carpenter. In my last year of studies, the Lord made it clear to me that I was to pursue the priesthood and to prepare myself to be part of our foreign missions in Latin America.

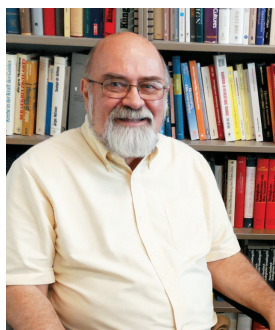
I then attended Saint Joseph's College in Rensselaer, Ind. Those were years of personal transformation and were very challenging to me. It was there that I began to define myself and discover my creativity. I always felt that St. Joseph was present to me and was a guide in those moments when I was confused or making poor decisions. It was as if he would bring me back to the  
(Continued on page 16)

**The Year of  
St. Joseph**

**\$5 MILLION GRANT:** Right on the heels of a celebration of its 70th anniversary, on September 14, Calumet College of St. Joseph received notice from the Department of Education that CCSJ will receive a \$5 million grant for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education for Hispanic-serving institutions. This grant is the largest single gift/grant in the college's history.

The college will receive \$1 million per year over five years in support of expenditures to strengthen STEM education, enrollment and retention strategies, and academic and technology support for its students.

The college was founded in 1951 by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Missionaries in ministry there are Brothers Ben Basile and Jim Ballmann, and Fr. Tim McFarland.



**Fr. Robert Schreiter**

**IN MEMORIAM:** Fr. Robert J. Schreiter, C.P.P.S., 73, died on June 1, 2021, at his home in Chicago. He had been in failing health.

He was born on December 14, 1947, in Nebraska City, Neb., to Robert F. and Mildred (Kreifels) Schreiter. He entered the Congregation in 1961 at Brunnerdale, the Missionaries' former high school seminary outside of Canton, Ohio, and was ordained on June 21, 1975 at St. Mary Church in Nebraska City.

Fr. Schreiter, a world-renowned author and theologian who spoke four languages, earned degrees in philosophy and psychology from Saint Joseph's College in Rensselaer, Ind., and his doctoral degree in theology from the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands. There he studied under the renowned theologian Edward Schillebeeckx, OP.

He put his many talents to work for the Church and the Congregation immediately after his ordination when he became a faculty member at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago. He remained on the faculty (serving as academic dean from 1977–86) until May 2021, when he retired and was named professor emeritus.

Aside from classroom teaching, at which his many students will affirm that he excelled, he managed to find many other ways to share the Good News with the whole world. An author and editor of



many books, articles and academic papers; a preacher and presenter, he traveled around the world to speak—and more importantly to listen to—people who had lived through such traumas as civil war and natural disasters. To all, he imparted the message that healing and reconciliation could be found in the Precious Blood of Jesus. Bishops invited him to speak at trouble spots around the globe to be a messenger of peace for the people of God.

Fr. Schreiter was also active in the leadership of the Congregation, serving on its senate, as its vice provincial director, and on the general council of the worldwide Congregation. He also served as formation director, guiding candidates toward ordination as a priest or profession as a religious brother.

He explained his personal mission and ministry in this way: “Peacebuilding is arduous and often frustrating work, since there are many setbacks and disappointments. What has come about in recent years is a growing awareness of how important the role of faith is in this work. . . The work is exhilarating, because one feels that such things help make a difference in the world. . . But as we learn in our faith, it is not my work, but God’s. A ministry of reconciliation flows directly from our Precious Blood spirituality. And I have been happy to be part of this.”

A Mass of Christian Burial was held on June 10, 2021, at St. Charles Center, Carthage, Ohio. Burial followed in the Community cemetery.

Memorial donations may be made to the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, Cincinnati Province ([cpps-preciousblood.org](http://cpps-preciousblood.org)).



## St. Joseph

*(Continued from page 14)*

path that was chosen for me, as a father would do for his son.

I was ordained a priest in June 1982. I celebrated my first Mass at St. Joseph Church in Dayton, where Missionaries are still in ministry. I chose St. Joseph Church because I could identify with him and I had developed a sense of gratitude for the role he plays in my life.

In this year dedicated to St. Joseph, I took time out to develop a novena in his honor. In preparation for his feast day in March, the people of the parish where I now serve, Our Lady of the Alps in Bogotá, Colombia, came together for nine days to reflect on the life and virtues of St. Joseph. Each Wednesday, we celebrate a votive Mass in his honor and afterwards, we continue our reflections and our prayers for his intercession.



# The Value of a Bucket

We were returning from a summer trip to Washington, D.C., a delayed Christmas gift from our oldest son, when we ran over an unavoidable and thankfully empty five-gallon bucket in the middle of I-68 in West Virginia.

The bucket got good and stuck under our vehicle, and we had to pull off the side of the road. Our son managed to dislodge it but it had already dislodged something under the vehicle. The vehicle made a squealing, grinding noise when we tried to continue.

The irony of this was that earlier in the summer, my son was teasing me about my extensive, treasured five-gallon bucket collection. I was furious with our boys every time I found a bucket peppered with holes from a BB gun, a senseless murder in my mind. An overreaction to our son. Especially when he learned as a grown up that those buckets cost \$3 at Lowes. "The way you acted, I thought they cost \$25 each," he said.

When not being shot, those buckets are sturdy, as we can attest.

The tow-truck driver, when he reached the scene, was cordial. We all piled into the extended cab. His is an interesting job, he told us. He meets all kinds of people. He reached into the side pocket of the cooler next to him and pulled out a neck gaiter marked with the seal of the vice president of the United States. He'd once picked up a secret service agent, stranded in his family car by the side of the road. The agent had left him with a little gift.

I immediately wished that I led a more exciting life, so I had something good to tell the tow-truck driver. I could have told him the exciting story about the time we hit a five-gallon bucket on the way home from Washington, but I was still waiting to see how that one would turn out.

I was thinking of my dull life story as the miles rolled past on the way to the garage in Berkeley Springs, W.Va. Do we write our own story, powered by our own free will, or does God pen our story and we make little edits here and there, planting flowers and trees along the path that God has set for us? Theologians argue about this sort of thing.

In the end, I was grateful that our son who hit the unavoidable bucket did not swerve into another lane, that we'd been to our nation's capital and seen the sights, which not everybody gets to do, that we'd raised this son who is so funny and a good driver and can dislodge buckets. It's good enough for me, for now.



**At Our House**  
by Jean Giesige



# You Belong

*Calumet College of St. Joseph*

founded & sponsored by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood



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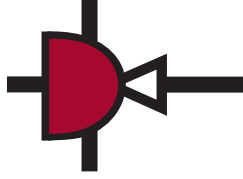
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