

WINTER 2022

# CPPS TODAY

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

## A Farmer In Winter

*Fr. Mark Hoying,  
C.P.P.S., encourages  
us to find solace  
in silence.*

# In this issue of *C.PP.S. Today*



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Hoying, 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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# Sharing Our Greatest Gift

I always feel a twinge of sympathy for the servant in Jesus' Parable of the Talents (Matt 25: 15-30) who, when entrusted with money by the master, went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried it. I am suspicious of risky investments and can appreciate someone who wants to hold on to what is given to him.

In our line of work, as Missionaries who preach a message of God's redeeming love through the Precious Blood of Jesus, we cannot just hold on to the treasure we have been given. We have to pass it along. Indeed, all Christians are called to evangelize, to let our faith show in our lives and in our actions, and in that way draw others closer to Jesus.

As a Congregation devoted to the Precious Blood of Jesus, we have been given a great gift—a precious gift. It is what we call our charism, what makes us unique among the many religious congregations that live out their own particular call. Our founder, St. Gaspar del Bufalo, believed that he could save people through the Precious Blood of Jesus, that by pointing people's gaze toward the crucifix, he could help them see their own worth as beloved sons and daughters of God.

This is our heritage and our mission. It is a treasure that we are bound to share with others. It is not enough for us to gaze on it, contemplate it, and receive it ourselves. We have to look for ways to pass it along.

Our Missionaries find many ways to do that. Fr. Mark Hoying, C.P.P.S., a pastor in Putnam County, Ohio, counsels people to take time to reconnect with God through nature, in all seasons. Fr. Mark, featured in our cover story of this issue, makes a mini-retreat every time he walks in the woods. He comes back out recharged for his life of service to his parishioners.

Our Congregation, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ and the Sisters of the Precious Blood are collaborating in a larger effort to put our message into the world. We are partners in a new Precious Blood Spirituality Institute, which we hope will find many ways to bring Precious Blood spirituality to new generations of believers. Learn more about the institute on page 11.

We are all entrusted with a mission and a message from God that we can share with others. Each of us finds a unique way to do that through our words and actions. How are we passing along the message of God's redeeming love in our own time and place?



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



A photograph of a man with white hair, smiling, sitting on a rusted metal structure in a wooded area. He is wearing a dark jacket and light-colored pants. Behind him is a large, rusted metal tank. The ground is covered in dry leaves, and the background shows bare trees.

# A Farmer In Winter

*Fr. Mark Hoying,  
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# IN THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE,

winter has set in once again. It's January, a time of short days and long nights. After the bright lights and choral music of Christmas, the winter can seem bleak indeed—gray and lifeless.

But there is life—in nature, everywhere—life, and God, remain. All the signs are there. We just have to look for them.

For Fr. Mark Hoying, C.P.P.S., the busy pastor of St. Michael Parish in Kalida, Ohio, and St. John the Baptist Parish in nearby Continental, looking for signs of life and God's enduring love often means heading to the wilderness, literally and figuratively.

Fr. Mark slips out to the woods a few miles from the Kalida village limits, as often as his schedule permits. There, he reconnects with nature in all seasons—and suggests it as a good way to clear the mind and heart, making room for the God who is always present to come forward into our hearts.

Fr. Mark is still a farmer at heart, still someone who loves more than anything else to watch things grow: livestock, trees, gardens, people. He grew up on a farm in Carthagena, Ohio, the 15th of 17 children, and something of the farm took root in him and remains in him. He is a priest who is also a farmer,

a farmer who is also a priest.

As such, he has had to make his peace with the winter, a time of waiting and wondering when spring will come. In times of uncertainty, societal change and the clashing cymbals of a loveless, heedless world—Fr. Mark goes to the woods to make sense of it all.

## **"You Have to be Quiet"**

"When I'm out in the woods, I start looking for both life and death," he said. "The longer you're out there, the more you become attentive to life, the small signs of life even in the dead of winter.

"When I walk through the woods, sometimes it takes a couple of times around the path to see life, present in different ways. You have to be quiet enough before you're aware of the first birds. But they're there: the little birds of life. Sometimes there's been a hawk or an owl that's been through, that scares



**“WE LIVE IN A WORLD**  
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with God.”

them so much they're afraid to come out. Once that hawk flies off, the fear is gone, and they start chirping.”

As a pastor, Fr. Mark is often ministering to people who are scared: by an illness, by a loss, by economic hardship; a hawk has flown by, casting a dark shadow onto their lives. He sits with them until they can quiet themselves, see that God is still present. Until they can chirp a little.

“I don't want to minister from a place of fear, and I

don't want people to have to live in a place of fear,” he said. “Sometimes I encourage people to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. Even when times are uncertain, when they feel there is something threatening their peace, there are things that are always true.”

Chief among those things that are true: “God loves us. God is with us. That's where I always start. The things that trouble us are sometimes passing. But God is never a passing thing.”



## **"It Takes Time to Build"**

It's an outlook that requires patience, the long view. Fr. Mark compares it to the steps he has to take when he sets out into the woods for a long time, for more than just a daily walk.

When he plans to spend an afternoon in the woods, "I always make a fire," he said. "A fire takes work—it doesn't just start itself. You collect the little things, the sticks and leaves. You build them up. You plan on sitting there for a while—you know it will take time. You have to nurture the fire, appreciate the fire.

"And on a cold day, even with the fire, you don't warm up right away. You have to sit there and let the warmth from the fire get beyond the outer clothing that you wear, all the way to the inside of you. And it takes time."

All of that—the sticks, the building of the fire, the first flames and finally the sustaining heat—is a metaphor. Fr. Mark sees it as a way to pray.

"We live in a world that wants immediate results. Everything has to happen quickly. But it takes time to build that relationship with God, to speak to God and to listen for God's voice in response. From a spiritual point of view, if you only want God on the fringes of your life, you'll never get warm."

A fire can cleanse as well as

warm, he continued. As in the woods, he seeks for the dead wood to burn. "Some parts of our lives should be burnt up. They're only taking up space that could be used for better things," he said. "It's a balance, because we want to keep the things that are of value. But we are also meant to keep growing, keep seeking. It's part of our journey and struggle, finding out what's alive and not alive within us."

## **Hard to Move On**

His time in the woods helps him with his parish ministry, some of which comes easily to him, some of which is harder. He has a heart for the sick and the homebound, and he makes a point to visit them as often as he can. With two parishes under his care, there are many demands on his time—he calls out to his cell phone, "Hush!" as it continually buzzes during a conversation in his office.

Because he is a good conversationalist, people may be surprised to learn that he finds it a struggle to preach. He calls himself an introvert but he knows that homilies are part of his job, so he works hard on them.

On Gaudete Sunday in Advent, for instance, he preached to the people that their "church face" should not be somber, but it should be joyful. "Funny things



“In a world  
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happen in church, it’s okay to laugh in church!” he told the congregation.

It’s also going to be hard to say goodbye to St. Michael and St. John the Baptist, where he loves the people and knows them so well.

“This is my last year here. It’s always hard for me to move on,” he said. “As a Missionary, you go from place to place. I remember my first assignment, in Orlando, and when I left, I drove all the way from Orlando back to Carthage, not having any idea when I’d get back there.

“I had to trust that I was an instrument, but that God was still there. Like Paul saying to the people, ‘I might not see you again, but I know you’re in good

hands with the Lord.’

“So in my own life, there are plenty of times when I have to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. It may sound glib, but it’s not.”

It’s something that he will carry with him into the woods, something that he can examine by the light of the fire.

“In a world where we count on having all the answers, we have to realize that there are some things we don’t know,” Fr. Mark said. “I can find out as many things as humanly possible, but a lot of things we can’t know. I can be ignorant, I can be human, and be okay with that. Our thoughts aren’t always God’s thoughts, and I’m okay with that.”





# Brother Nick Renner

## Honored as No-Till Educator

Brother Nick Renner, C.P.P.S., was named the no-till educator of the year for 2021 by the Ohio No-Till Council at its annual conference on December 8 in Plain City, Ohio.

Brother Nick, who manages the Community's farmland around St. Charles Center in Carthage, Ohio, works with the farmers who rent the Missionaries' land, requiring them to employ no-till methods of farming, including planting cover crops to save and nurture the topsoil.

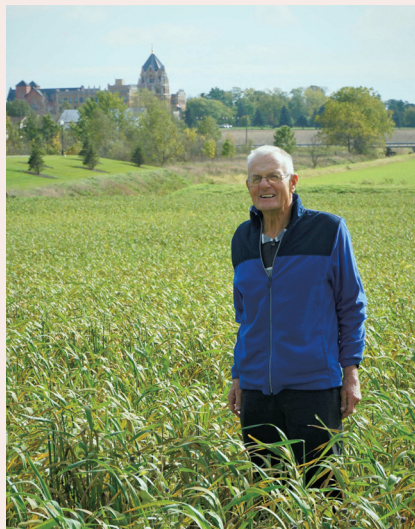
"Brother Nick Renner has been in an unusual position to educate farmers. In his role as the manager of the farmland owned by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, he has selected and worked with the tenant farmers to keep improving their no-till farming practices, including the use of cover crops," said Randall Reeder, executive director of the Ohio No-Till Council. "As a result, crop yields are excellent, there is minimal soil erosion and runoff into nearby streams, and the soil is healthier than when he started."

Brother Nick has also served as a speaker at various Ohio No-Till events and conferences, Reeder added.

Also receiving an award at the conference was Jeff Duling, son of C.P.P.S. Companions Bob and Cathy Duling of Ottawa, Ohio. Duling was honored as the state's outstanding no-till farmer of the year.

Brother Nick was one of the first in the area to adopt the no-till method of farming, which attempts to plant and harvest crops with as little disruption as possible to the topsoil. In this way, the structures and life forms present in healthy soil are not destroyed by the plowing and cultivating that are a part of traditional farming methods.

*(Continued on page 16)*



*Brother Nick Renner with a cover crop that protects the Community's farmland near St. Charles Center.*

# Please Join Us in Prayer

Asking for your prayerful support of the following intentions

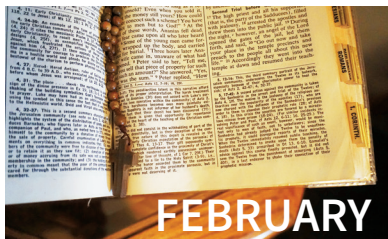
## For pastors and parish staff.

*Lord, please walk with our pastors, parish staff members and volunteers who are serving your people in times of unprecedented challenges. Keep them strong in faith, healthy in body and bright in spirit, as they guide and support your people in their lives of faith. Amen.*



## For those who spread the message of God's redeeming love.

*Lord, make us all evangelizers of your Word. Especially bless the teachers and preachers among us—give them an eloquence worthy to carry the message of your divine, reconciling love. Place your Word in our hearts, help us make room for it in our busy days. Give us the wisdom to hear you with clarity. Amen.*



## For all who work with the land as they approach another growing season.

*Creator God, keep in your care all those who plant in the springtime and harvest in the fall. Walk with them as they tend to your good Earth and help things grow to feed your world. Bless them with sun and rain, with insight and patience, and keep them safe. Amen.*





# It's Still So Important to Pray!

I recently heard a young parent express the opinion that with little ones in the house, “the days go by slowly but the weeks and months and years go so fast!”

I’m not sure scientifically how that can be true, but I feel the same way about vocation ministry! There are annual events on my calendar that I can’t believe are coming up again—it feels like I was just there.

Looking back at the articles I have written about this vitally important ministry, I found the very first column that I ever wrote for C.P.P.S. Today in the 2016 summer issue. As fate (or the Holy Spirit) would have it, that issue also included a story about St. Michael Church in Kalida, Ohio, including its pastor, Fr. Mark Hoying, C.P.P.S., who is featured in the cover of this issue.

My message has not changed much over the years. In that first column, I wrote:

*Praying for vocations is an incredibly important part of vocations promotion. We all need to pray for vocations. And if you have children at home, please be sure to pray for vocations with them. A gentleman I met recently told me that he and his wife teach their children to end their nightly prayers with the following: “Jesus, I love you with all my heart. Help me to learn my vocation.” What an awesome way to plant the seed of vocation in a child’s mind. Parents, while you’re at it, you could be really bold and pray that God might call one of your children to the priesthood or religious life.*

*As important as praying for vocations is, the work doesn’t stop there. We also need to invite and encourage young people to remain open to the idea of a priestly or religious vocation. . . .*

*We also need to encourage them to consider this as an option for their own life. Plant the idea in the mind of a young child by simply asking “Have you ever thought about becoming a priest?” . . . Tell high schoolers or young adults specifically why you think they’d make a good priest or religious: “Your faith inspires me. Have you ever considered religious life?”*

*Raising up vocations is hard but rewarding work, and, like the old saying goes, many hands make light work.*

While I hope I have changed and grown in the years since, I stand by that first message. I ask you to continue to pray for vocations, pray with your children about vocations, and encourage vocations in your own family.



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



# New Institute Will Spread Precious Blood Message

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood in the United States are partnering with the Adorers of the Blood of Christ and the Sisters of the Precious Blood in Dayton, Ohio, to create the Precious Blood Spirituality Institute (PBSI).

The PBSI will promote Precious Blood spirituality to the world, coordinating retreats and workshops, and offering volunteer opportunities where the spirituality is lived out.

“The institute will help us bring our spirituality to the world, at a time when the world sorely needs it,” said Fr. Jeffrey Kirch, C.P.P.S., provincial director of the Cincinnati Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

The PBSI will also offer resources, teaching and guidance to the members and lay associates



“Somehow, we have to put this message out. Our spirituality is really needed in the world today.”

— Fr. David Kelly, C.P.P.S.

of its partner congregations, helping them strengthen their own sense of Precious Blood spirituality and how it influences and informs their missions and ministry sites. The PBSI will work with each collaborating congregation to ask how the PBSI can best serve it.



## **Partnering with CTU**

The PBSI will also partner with Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago to offer courses and support academic research and writing about Precious Blood spirituality. This partnership will be called The Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S., Institute for Precious Blood Spirituality at Catholic Theological Union (in brief, the Schreiter Institute).

The work of the PBSI will be guided by a board, the members of which will be appointed by the sponsoring congregations. Two directors—one for the PBSI, the other to further the PBSI's work at CTU—are being sought to carry out the mission of the Institute. Fr. Bill Nordenbrock, C.P.P.S., has been appointed interim director of the PBSI to begin the work of the institute.

The Missionaries, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, and the Sisters of the Precious Blood of Dayton have committed to support the PBSI financially, while the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O'Fallon, Mo., are collaborating in the project.

## **A Dual Approach**

The dual approach of academic research and teaching along with outreach such as workshops, retreats and lived experiences in Precious Blood spirituality is an important and

innovative component.

A working group of members from each of the congregations has been helping the project take shape, envisioning ways that it can carry the Precious Blood message to the world.

Examples of Precious Blood spirituality lived out might be workshops and training led by the PBSI; circle training; and immersion experiences at the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation in Chicago, or at the border, for example.

The PBSI could also seek out partners who would offer volunteer ministerial placements. These opportunities would be offered to members and lay associates of the congregations, as well as to those who have no prior knowledge of the Precious Blood family or its spirituality.

## **Sharing Our Spirituality**

While the partnership with CTU will allow the PBSI to introduce Precious Blood spirituality to a wide-ranging group of students and scholars, it may also undertake programs and partnerships at other institutions and ministry sites, such as the ASC's Newman University in Wichita or the Missionaries' Precious Blood Renewal Center in Liberty, Mo.

It is a way for the congregations to ensure that the treasure

of their Precious Blood charism will continue into the future, carried by a new generation.

“Somehow, we have to put this message out. Our spirituality is really needed in the world today,” said Fr. David Kelly, C.PP.S., a member of the working group that helped make the congregations’ vision of the Institute come alive. “How do we promote our Precious Blood spirituality in and among our own membership, among the Missionaries, the Adorers, the Precious Blood sisters—and also in the world in which we live and serve?”

### **“The Best of Who We Are”**

Precious Blood spirituality is lived out in many ways. For some, it is discovered through the Eucharist. Others see it in social justice issues. Other hallmarks are hospitality and a willingness to accompany God’s suffering people, as Jesus did. Some use it as a way to bring God’s reconciling love to the world.

For Sr. Maria Hughes, ASC, the PBSI will show the many facets of Precious Blood spirituality to people eager to explore it. “It’s my hope that this board and the executive director will use this great opportunity to work with all of our congregations and pull out the best of who we are and who we can be,” to share that with the

world, said Sr. Maria, who is part of the working group.

The Precious Blood Sisters of Dayton, Ohio, have placed a priority on spreading their spirituality beyond their own membership, said Sr. Donna Liette, CPPS, who served on the working group. “The important part in the first years of the institute will be hearing from many voices: what is Precious Blood spirituality to you, and how can the institute bring this to the world?” she said. “Our founder, Mother Brunner, so hoped that her good work would continue long after she was gone. We hope the institute will ensure that.”

### **The Schreiter Institute**

The PBSI at CTU (The Schreiter Institute) is also seen as a way to continue the work and ministry of the late Fr. Robert Schreiter, C.PP.S., who spent his life as a priest at CTU and helped to articulate Precious Blood spirituality to generations of ministers of the Church. He also traveled around the world to help people suffering from civil and personal trauma see that they could find healing through the Blood of Christ.

Fr. Schreiter, who died in June 2021, was equally deft at both components: academic research, writing and teaching, and living out what he learned



**Fr. Robert Schreiter**

The institute will ensure that Fr. Schreiter's "groundbreaking work, and that of his brothers and sisters, will endure into perpetuity."

— Sr. Barbara Reid, OP

and taught.

It is hoped that the PBSI will have the same impact, but in its own way.

"We looked at how we could ensure that the work of Fr. Schreiter was not lost or ended," Fr. Kelly said. "We felt it would be good to have an academic component, breaking open the spirituality from study, which then could lead to living it out in real time and real places. That's what Fr. Schreiter did. He took the theology and made it accessible to us—and we all benefited from that. He helped us really see the spirituality of the Precious Blood as something we lived out in our daily work."

CTU is looking forward to the collaboration, said Sr. Barbara Reid, OP, CTU president. "CTU is thrilled to partner with the Precious Blood communities to establish a new institute at CTU that promotes their charism of reconciliation and

peacebuilding," Sr. Barbara said. "Named for our beloved colleague Fr. Robert Schreiter, C.PP.S., of blessed memory, this institute will ensure that his groundbreaking work, and that of his brothers and sisters, will endure into perpetuity and imbue our students, and all who attend the PBSI programs, with his legacy of mission and ministry, most especially needed in the world today."

"One of the hopes of the PBSI is that we can expand the sharing of our spirituality beyond our congregations," said Fr. Nordenbrock. "This will help us with evangelization. How do we go outside of ourselves in sharing this message? That's our hope: sharing our spirituality beyond the current boundaries that we have. In this way, we hope to be good stewards of the spirituality that the Church has given to us."







**Happy Anniversary, PBMR:** This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation (PBMR) in the Back of the Yards neighborhood on Chicago's south side.

The PBMR was originally the dream of four Missionaries of the Precious Blood, Fr. David Kelly, Fr. Denny Kinderman, Fr. Joe Nassal and Fr. Bill Nordenbrock. Over the years, it has also been supported by the Sisters of the Precious Blood of Dayton, Ohio—CPPS Srs. Donna Liette and Caroline Hoying minister there—and the Adorers of the Blood of Christ.

Its mission is spelled out in two sentences on its website, [pbmr.org](http://pbmr.org): “Rooted in the spirituality of the Precious Blood, we restore human dignity through hospitality, hope and healing. We work as agents of reconciliation to build relationships among youth and families impacted by violence and/or conflict; create safe spaces where people can experience radical hospitality, hope and healing; (and) promote a restorative justice approach to conflict and build a sense of community.”



**Fr. David Kelly with PBMR staff member Joseph Mapp.**

That mission has remained consistent for 20 years, though the methods of bringing it to life have grown and expanded. Many people who doubted if the PMR could make a difference are now true believers. The PBMR's staff has grown from those first four to 32 people plus volunteers, many from the neighborhood it serves.

Fr. Kelly also works with a 12-member board that meets quarterly and helps determine the course of the ministry.

The PBMR works to convince each individual that he or she is a child of God, worthy of love and respect.

“In a lot of ways, what we are today is not that far off from what we envisioned 20 years ago,” Fr. Kelly said. “Our services to families are growing. We’re trying to look at things holistically, and we’re moving more into the direction of serving the family as a unit. Can we solidify and strengthen the family? Families could be the building blocks for a healthy community.”



# Brother Nick Renner

*(Continued from page eight)*

“We thought years ago that you couldn’t grow a crop unless you moldboard-plowed it,” said Brother Nick, who grew up on a farm outside of Delphos, Ohio. With no-till methods, Brother Nick said he hopes to work with nature, encouraging healthy life forms like microbes and earthworms that are in the soil.

Brother Nick, who served 10 years on the board of the Mercer County Soil and Water Conservation District, still remembers his own no-till revelation, when he was still farming the Community land at St. Charles, then with Brother Don Fisher, C.P.P.S.



**Brother Nick, right, with Brother Don Fisher on St. Charles farmland.**

It was a slow-building vision that came to him in the middle of the night. He was preparing for a trip to Rome with Fr. Ken Pleiman, C.P.P.S. It was the mid 1970s, in April, and Brother Nick had to plow the field directly to the west of St. Charles Center before he could leave for Rome. He had a small window of good weather to get it done before his trip.

So he plowed all night. Up and down the rows he drove, up and down. “When it’s daytime, you can watch the traffic, the cars and trucks going by on the highway,” he said. “At night, it’s just you.”

He had a lot of time to think and pray, as the furrows of top soil rose up behind the plow. “They were turning to clay,” he said. Gradually it occurred to him that maybe there was a better way to farm, a way that would result in better soil and healthier crops.

And by dawn, he was thinking about no-till farming and has not stopped thinking about it since.



# The Master Plan

Last November, aside the long country lane that leads back to our cabin in the woods, one narrow stand of corn remained after the rest of the harvest was in. If we were going to see deer on our daily walk to the mailbox, it was likely to be there. I don't know if the deer were literally living in the corn, and I apologize to all farmers in advance for saying this, but I didn't blame the deer. If I could live in a Kroger, I would.

Then one day, the corn was gone. The deer had to lament this, but I don't know if they could have anticipated it.

Speaking for myself and perhaps for most humans, I am not good at heeding warnings. I have seen enough of life to know that it can change in a heartbeat. I have seen people struggle with these changes, and I have seen people accept them with good grace and move on with enduring strength. I want to be able to see what's coming, but probably I am going to be surprised.

In our family, we are planning two weddings in 2022. We celebrated a wedding in 2021. It is a time of love and joy and exponential growth, like champagne flowing out of a bottle. I want to live in 2021–22 forever. I am like a doe in a cornfield right now.

Do you think that I fear the clatter of the combine coming my way? In a far-off, abstract way, yes. I want everyone I know to stay safe and happy forever. My loving husband has often said he's up for the Second Coming because then we could all go together, holding hands.

Whatever is in the future for us will likely include love and joy, heartache and pain, suffering and loss, fascination and challenge, shock and contentment, and above all, awe. This rainbow of flavors God promises to us, in the contract of life that we signed perhaps before we were even born.

There was a reading from Baruch on the second Sunday of Advent that struck me to the point that I scabbled in my purse for a pen and an old envelope to write it down: "For God has commanded that every lofty mountain be made low, and that the age-old depths and gorges be filled to level ground, that Israel may advance secure in the glory of God" (Bar 5: 7).

I heard this at roughly the same time that last bit of corn was harvested, and it struck me that we have no more idea of God's master plan for us than the deer had about their future in the corn. However, therein lies a promise, that we may advance secure in the glory of God. May our eyes see that glory.



**At Our House  
by Jean Giesige**





*Join in the Missionaries' mission through the*



# *Missionary Hearts*

MISSION AND MINISTRY SOCIETY

*The Society provides support to the Missionaries through various annual giving levels. Annual gifts are used to educate and train new priests and brothers; support our retired members; and support C.P.P.S. missions and ministries. Society members enjoy two events each year at St. Charles Center.*

*Visit [cpps-preciousblood.org](http://cpps-preciousblood.org) to learn more.*

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from  
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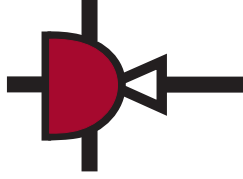
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