

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

UNITED STATES PROVINCE
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August 2, 2022

Dear Friends,

Each year we honor our jubilarians, C.P.P.S. priests and brothers who have reached a milestone of 25, 40, 50, 60 or more years of service to God's people.

As I read the accounts of the lives of these Missionaries, I am amazed by not just the longevity but the variety of their ministries. Nearly all have served in parishes in some capacity. Others have been hospital chaplains, taught at Catholic institutions or were otherwise involved in education ministry. Some are musical, others authors. Many are preachers and lead retreats. Many help form new candidates to be priests or brothers, or walk with discerners who are thinking about the religious life.

Most undertake more than one ministry at once.

"Missionaries are not statues," said our founder, St. Gaspar del Bufalo. He meant for his Missionaries to be on the move, seeking out new yet always faithful ways to serve. Most would tell you it is spiritually enriching to try something new.

This summer, two of our younger members and one who is in initial formation are stepping away from their familiar classroom settings to spend time in parishes in new locales. They are using their summer break to learn more about themselves as ministers.

One is Fr. James Smith, C.P.P.S., who is celebrating his fifth ordination anniversary this year. Fr. James is enrolled as a fulltime doctoral student at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley, Calif. During his summer break, he is helping out at parishes in Dayton where our Missionaries are in ministry. It has been two years since Fr. James was in parish ministry in St. Henry, Ohio (and two years since he has experienced Ohio humidity).



Fr. James Smith presides at Mass at St. Joseph Church in downtown Dayton.

It might surprise you to learn that priests sometimes get nervous when they are presiding. "I tend to learn by doing, so the first baptism, or the first Mass, at a parish where I'm not familiar with how things are done, I'm scared witless," he said. "The first time presiding in a new place takes about as much energy as three Masses in one."

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Fr. James said that parish ministry will help him with his ongoing academic work at GTU. "Doing a doctorate in theology to hopefully teach in university—spending summers ministering in parishes is part of my life," he said. "It grounds my work to not just be inside the ivory towers of academia. It ensures that I have one foot planted where people are in daily life, and one foot in research and academics trying to make sense out of that."

Finding a new community at St. Mary of the Visitation Church in Ottumwa, Iowa, is Newton Lih. Newton finished his academic year at DePaul University while living in our house of formation in Chicago. This summer he is living with and learning from Fr. Jim Betzen, C.P.P.S., the pastor.

Newton, a California native who became a Catholic when he was a young adult, said he enjoys being part of parish life, and he is looking for ways to lend a hand at St. Mary. And the people are reaching out to him—parishioners already have invited him to the Iowa State Fair.

Any connection that he can make, he is all in. "We're all looking for that experience of being loved in our Church. This is one of the quintessential questions of what is happening in our Church today: do you feel loved by the experience? That's where I want to spend my energy: to be more loving to the people I meet."

Greg Evers, C.P.P.S., completed his seminary coursework earlier this year and will be ordained a deacon in August. He is spending part of his summer at St. Augustine Church in Cleveland with Fr. Bill O'Donnell, C.P.P.S., the pastor. Assisting at the parish will help Greg prepare for fulltime ministry.

How will these experiences form these young men? That's the work of the Holy Spirit, who is sure to help them use what they learn in the years ahead. That is true of all of us: God puts us in places where we can learn and grow.

We are growing into our identity as the United States Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, formed in June out of the former Cincinnati and Kansas City Provinces. We are committed to staying faithful to the mission of our Congregation, to bring the reconciling power of the Precious Blood to those who need it the most. Will you help support our Congregation with your prayers and your financial gift?

A vital part of our operating expenses is for formation, shaping young men for a life of service, building a community of priests and brothers who devote their lives to serving the people of God. As we focus on our community life, with the goal of making it spiritually enriching for all of our priests, brothers and candidates, will you help the Missionaries, now in their third century of service? Our Congregation draws strength from the people who join in our mission, from people like you.

Please pray that Fr. James, Newton and Greg have healthy, happy summers in which they grow in wisdom. May these experiences give them an even broader understanding of the boundless nature of God's love, demonstrated in the goodness of God's people, wherever they encounter them.

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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