

FALL 2023

CPPS TODAY

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD



GROWING HOPE

In this issue of **C.P.P.S. TODAY**



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On the cover: Back row, L-R, C.P.P.S. Frs. Denny Kinderman and David Kelly with PBMR staffer Holly O'Hara and Precious Blood Volunteers Clare Brown and Anna Nowalk. Front row, L-R, C.P.P.S. Srs. Donna Liette, Carolyn Hoying and Pauline Siesegh.

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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God is Everywhere

“God is everywhere” is one of the first lessons taught to children, and it is one of the hardest to grasp.

Again and again, we are reminded that we find God in the largest, most awe-inspiring moments of life, and in the most minute miracle that blooms in the center of a flower, where only a honeybee can see it up close.

In this issue of *C.P.P.S. Today*, we explore the infinite possibilities of prayer and God’s grace. We hope that people see God’s endless creativity when they visit the urban farm that thrives at our Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation (PBMR) in Chicago. The neighborhood that PBMR serves on the south side of the city is plagued with violence and abandonment, according to PBMR’s director, Fr. David Kelly, C.P.P.S. But the fruits and vegetables that grow in PBMR’s urban farm show that life can take hold anywhere. It is a living, growing example of God’s healing power.

Also in this issue, we offer a view of contemplative prayer. Inspired by Trappist monk Thomas Merton, who spent his religious life in the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky, Fr. Garry Richmeier, C.P.P.S., encourages others to spend time alone with God in contemplation.

Contemplative prayer is a spiritual practice that takes practice—it is best to set aside time every day to talk with God, both to speak and to listen, says Fr. Garry. It requires trust and an attitude of quietude.

There are many ways to pray. We encounter God through the sacraments, through the Eucharist and through spiritual reading and reflection. We can lose ourselves in the liturgy, absorbing a personal message in the Word of God, receiving the Eucharist and carrying it out into the world. We can find great power in prayers written by saints through the millennia, in spiritual practices that our ancestors in faith passed down to us.

And we can find God in a quiet room, in a park or in a garden. God comes to us through any window that we open. Or we can bar the windows and lock the doors, and God still finds a way in. On a bright morning or a dark night, God is there. Through song and word and silence, God sends messages. On a path that we know well, or through the wilderness where we feel lost, God walks with us, guards and saves us. Seeking God in many ways brings new life to our soul, helps us stretch and grow. To take a metaphor from the garden, we sprout both branches and roots.

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





GROWING HOPE

PBMR staff members, volunteers gather in its urban farm.

The urban farm at the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation in Chicago introduces visitors to the vibe of the place, which is an open-door policy that allows lots of room to grow.

When it comes to vegetables, corn is the great equalizer, and, on this continent, maybe it always has been.

"Everybody likes it, but it is hard to grow," said Sr. Carolyn Hoying, C.P.P.S., with a sigh.

Sr. Carolyn spends much of each growing season in the community garden of the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation (PBMR), where she works hard for every success and takes each failure personally.

The corn, for instance.

"This summer, before it was really half grown, a big wind bomb blew through Chicago," Sr. Carolyn said. She lay in bed that night and listened to the howling wind. "I prayed, 'Oh please, God, save the garden.'"

Half the corn, always the tallest kid in Sr. Carolyn's botanical classroom, was blown over that night. But half remained. Focusing on that half, Sr. Carolyn found the strength to go on.



She and a crew of dedicated

volunteers work hard in the PBMR garden, in a neighborhood on the city's south side. We should call it by its proper name: it is an urban farm. It is a lively place during the growing months, and into the fall, as folks harvest the last of the produce and then tend to the raised beds, clean and oil the tools, store seeds and equipment for the coming spring.

In November, spring seems like it is a long time away, but in a farmer's mind it's always right around the corner.

"We start our first seeds in February, to give them a head start," Sr. Carolyn said. She starts the seeds in flats in an upstairs girls' bathroom in the former high school where PBMR has its center, on the corner of 51st and Elizabeth Streets.

PBMR was founded 21 years ago to raise a crop of hope in the neighborhood, to give youth a safe place to gather, to mourn alongside families who lost a loved one to violence, to be good neighbors.

There was no PBMR garden in the early years, but in 2012 the idea was planted and immediately grew, that a community

garden would do a lot of good.

"That's the year I came here," said Sr. Carolyn, a former elementary school teacher who was raised on a farm near Egypt, Ohio. "I came in November 2012, and people were talking about a garden. I asked, 'Who is doing the garden?'"

She realized it would probably be her. When it was time to plant, she said, "I got a couple of kids from upstairs," the center's second-story gathering spaces, "and I said, 'Come help me.'"



The PBMR's urban farm is aboveground, in rows of raised beds built by youth and adults at the center. The foundational layer of the garden is a broken-down asphalt parking lot. No one who looked at it would have thought it was a natural place to plant a garden. But at PBMR they know hope can grow with a little encouragement.

"Out of that hard surface, all this life bursts forth," said Fr. David Kelly, C.P.P.S.,

PBMR's executive director. "In our own lives, in the lives of the families in this neighborhood, despite the harshness of the environment, we celebrate all kinds of wonderful and life-giving moments."

It started with 12 beds and now has more than 70. Those

first beds were raised, but not raised enough, Sr. Carolyn said. "It was like trying to get blood out of a turnip," she said. Live and learn; beds built in successive years were higher, holding more soil.

There's so much to learn on a farm. The relationship between the soil, rain, sun and seeds. How living things sprout then blossom then produce—plant life proceeds in a certain order. How to keep a healthy balance. The PBMR's urban farm is organic, so bad bugs are an everyday reality. This is frustrating but not unlike life, where there are always threats to young growing things.

A marauding horde of Swede midges, an invasive insect that feeds on crops like broccoli and cabbage, came through this summer and wreaked havoc. Sr. Carolyn sorrowfully tells the story of cleaning out the affected beds.



So many other things survived and thrived, a powerful sign of hope and God's grace. This year, the urban farm produced nearly 6,000 pounds of food that it shared in meals at the center, with neighbors, and with food pantries nearby.

It's a prayerful place, even when no prayers are spoken



Sr. Carolyn Hoying checks a rain gauge from a raised bed.

“Lots of tour groups come through the garden, and we tell them, ‘Whatever you want from the garden, you can take.’”

out loud. It is such a clear partnership between God and the children of God. It is a miracle that a fat tomato can come from a tiny seed, but the work it requires is no miracle. Humans have to pitch in to get the results they want, following God’s laws of nature.



People are drawn to the garden. One of them is master gardener Mary Harkenrider, who has volunteered at PBMR

for years. With Sr. Carolyn, she plans what they hope the urban farm will produce. Then they work to achieve it.

There are others from the neighborhood who stop in to help, and people from parishes far away who come to spend the afternoon. Friendship is just another thing that grows.

The urban farm is usually the first thing people notice when they come to PBMR’s center, said Fr. Kelly. “It makes a good first impression of who we are and what we stand for,” he said. “When you walk into



In front of the wire arch built by Scouts are Precious Blood Volunteer Anna Nowalk, Sr. Carolyn, PBMR office manager Diana Rubio and Sr. Pauline Siesegh, C.P.P.S.

that space, there is so much life and growth in a community that is plagued by disinvestment, the result of which is violence and abandonment, empty lots and empty buildings. But the urban farm is a different space, life-giving to this community and beyond."

Those who know how to tend to plants dive right in. Those who don't, Sr. Carolyn is happy to teach. "Lots of tour groups come through the garden, and we tell them, 'Whatever you want from the garden, you can take.' If they've never seen how a carrot grows, sometimes people will pull one up in amazement: a striking orange

spear beneath frothy fronds of green on the surface.

"It's educational, because every year we plant something new," Sr. Carolyn said.

Sometimes they plant things that people might not recognize or immediately like. Asparagus was a hard sell at first, "but then people found out they really like it, so we planted one bed then another."

This year Scouts came to PBMR to build a wire arch, which supported a crop of heavy butternut squash. The arch, covered with blossoming squash, was so pretty, "we could have taken wedding pictures out here," Sr. Carolyn said.



Knowledge of plants and how they grow is not innate. Young people who grew up without a garden have to be introduced to it. Sr. Carolyn is happy to do that. “Since I was able to walk, I was in a garden. I’ve been pulling up weeds forever, so I just know what is a weed. The kids might not know what’s a weed, so you have to show them.”

PBMR’s garden has become a neighborhood in itself, with a chicken coop nearby, and beehives. In the summer, it’s buzzing with life. All creatures—except maybe the Swede midges—peacefully coexist.

PBMR’s urban farm helps feed the neighborhood. That which is eaten was transformed into human energy, one hopes

energy for doing good, for reaching out to help others. Even just to grow or survive another day is no small thing. Human beings have to eat, and to be able to feed them is a blessing.

Every living thing has to eat. It is Fr. Kelly’s daily responsibility to feed the PBMR chickens and collect the eggs. “We have a farm now. My grandparents had a farm, and they had animals. So I thought we should have chickens here,” Fr. Kelly said. “I said it one too many times, and a parish on the south side of Chicago built the coop and run,” and the PBMR gained a flock. Another flock.

“The whole life-and-death cycle can be found there. It’s a reality on the farm,” Fr. Kelly said. “Even in the winter when it’s pretty desolate out there, there are still signs of life.”



A sign honoring PBMR’s growing accomplishments is planted in one of the raised beds.

Thanksgiving Saves Us

For many of us, gratitude is a feeling or expression that results from something fortunate happening to us. But as author Stephen West notes, “One secret to developing a heart of gratitude is that we don’t wait for something to be happy about. Rather, we stretch ourselves and claim the blessings of God’s presence in every situation, no matter how lonely we may feel.”

The early pilgrims didn’t wait to give thanks until all their trials were over. They gave thanks for the possibility of what could be. Thanksgiving requires trust in God. How can we give thanks if we do not believe that whatever comes our way, God will be with us? When we worry, we deplete our sense of gratitude.

As Trappist Monk Thomas Merton reminds us, “To be grateful is to recognize the love of God in everything He has given us—and He has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of His love, every moment of existence is a grace, for it brings with it immense grace from Him. Gratitude therefore takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise of the goodness of God.”

Discerning one’s life vocation involves an awareness of God’s abiding presence. God who has created us in love calls us by name to follow him. God is leading each of us along the path of life and when we stop to see just how many ways he has blessed us, we desire to know and follow him more and more. St. Paul reminds us that “we are not lacking in any spiritual gift as we await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1: 7).

In the dialogue of the Mass before the Eucharistic prayer we always say, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God . . . for it is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation always and everywhere to give you thanks.” The Mass we celebrate is a school of thanksgiving where we learn to give thanks to God as the path to salvation. We are saved through thanksgiving.

Jesus always thanked his Father in prayer. His prayers were always marked by gratitude. The Mass is our way of entering into the thanksgiving prayer of Jesus to the Father. No matter what we have experienced this year or the hardships we’re still going through, God continues to come into our world to nourish us, to accompany us, to strengthen us, to heal us and to help us. For this we simply say, “Thanks be to God.”

**Call and Answer
by Fr. Angelo
Anthony, C.P.P.S.**





“It’s Not Beyond Our Reach”

Contemplative prayer is an enriching spiritual practice that requires an open heart and the simple desire to listen to God speak.

Contemplative prayer requires very little; it requires everything. It can be done at any time and place; it is perhaps more effective if done at a regular time, in a familiar place.

It is a very simple way to go about a conversation with God; it can lead us into a complexity of communion that we never experienced before.

Contemplative prayer is within reach of every believer, said Fr. Garry Richmeier,

C.P.P.S., who this fall led a discussion series at the Precious Blood Renewal Center in Liberty, Mo., on Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk who became world famous for his commitment to being alone with God.

“For me, contemplative prayer is the idea that you don’t have to go too far to hear what God has to say—it’s already within you,” Fr. Garry said. “Contemplative prayer is awareness, it’s going into

your own experiences, your own thoughts and insights, and making that an exploration of seeking God. You don't have to go outside yourself. It's all right there."

It is a great gift from God that lies within us, placed there with great care, a treasure waiting to be discovered. It's as if the transmitter that connects us to our Creator, which we may have thought was broken, just needed to be plugged in.

"It's not beyond our reach," said Fr. Garry. "Sometimes our Catholic tradition has said we need to look outside to hear what God has to say, whether that is through Scripture, in Church teachings, through spiritual direction. To Merton, all of that was good and proper—but he also advocated for the practice of going inside oneself, searching and listening and seeing what God has to say to us."

A World-Renowned Hermit

Thomas Merton was a convert to Catholicism. Born in France in 1915, his parents brought him to the United States when he was an infant, during World War I. While honing his craft as a writer in graduate school at Columbia University, Merton felt drawn to the Church and was trans-

fixed by his first Mass when he was 23. In 1941, after a period of discernment to religious life, he was accepted as a postulant at the Abbey of Gethsemani, where he would live and write for the rest of his life. He was ordained in 1949.

The Abbey of Gethsemani is a wildly rural monastery outside of Bardstown, Ky. After 16 years as a Trappist monk in the abbey, Merton requested permission from his abbot to become a hermit.

Throughout his years at Gethsemani, his voluminous spiritual writing, precise yet elegant, gained a devoted following, which carried a complexity of its own: he was so popular as he wrote about his solitary life as a monk that it almost overwhelmed the abbey with visitors and new postulants. Merton's 1948 autobiography, "The Seven Storey Mountain," which tells the story of his own discovery of the profound faith that God placed inside him, was a surprise best seller that has been continuously in print ever since.

It's More About the Journey

Most of us are not going to live in a remote cabin in the Kentucky woods, daily rinsing our coffee pot in a bucket of rainwater as Merton did. But



Fr. Garry Richmeier, C.P.P.S.

“The listening, the being aware, the discernment. It requires a lot of trust that if we begin the journey with the right attitude and motivation, if we come at it from the right place, we will end up where God wants us to be.”

we can achieve our own true level of contemplation, if we give it a good effort, said Fr. Garry.

And we have to practice.

“It’s more about the journey than the destination,” he said. “The listening, the being aware, the discernment. It requires a lot of trust that if we begin the journey with the right attitude and motivation, if we come at it from the right place, we will end up where God wants us to be. It’s not in our control. That’s not the

point of contemplative prayer. In our culture, we always want to be in control—that’s why it’s sometimes hard to trust the journey. The destination is not always clear to us, we just have to trust God.”

In Fr. Garry’s own spiritual practice, that takes the form of meditation, “being quiet, listening, and hearing what God has to say.” It’s helpful to set aside some time every day for contemplation. You might be amazed at the gifts

you receive, he added.

“Contemplation is the practice of listening. We get good at whatever we practice. If we set some time aside to practice this skill (listening), you can then employ it in any situation, in your workplace, with your kids. It spills over into your daily life, and you are able to hold onto the notion that God is speaking in the present moment, whether you’re doing dishes or spending time with your family or whatever you are doing. You get good at asking, ‘What is God saying in this moment?’”

Tapping into the Wisdom

It certainly has helped him in his professional life. Fr. Garry is a counselor, in which the art of listening is essential.

“I offer compassionate listening,” he said. “I’m here to serve the people in that way. People are desperate for it. I don’t have any special gifts, but people have told me that there’s something about talking with me that is calming. It has an effect and people pick up on it. I can’t explain it. But my experience tells me that it is true.”

So what begins by looking inward, by searching for God deep inside us, can flow out into a world that needs to hear God’s voice and message of peace.

“One of the core things for me about contemplative prayer is that when we go inward, we see what we were created to be. We were created in the image and likeness of God. If we can get through the outer stuff, all the layers of personality, we find out who we really are.

“Meditation and contemplation can help do that. Contemplation assumes that each person has a part of the wisdom, and that God’s voice is speaking through each person. Each person can tap into that. It’s not the only type of prayer, but it’s important. Be quiet, listen, and see what happens.”



FOLLOW THE STAR

December 16–17

at St. Charles Center,
Carthagen, Ohio

An annual Advent
event to help you
prepare for Christmas.

All are welcome. Visit
cpps-preciousblood.org
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SUNDAYS AT ST. CHARLES: The Missionaries of the Precious Blood welcome everyone to *Sundays at St. Charles*, a series of faith-formation presentations offered twice a month at their mission house, St. Charles Center, 2860 US 127, Celina, Ohio.

Visiting Missionaries preside at the 9 a.m. Mass and then give a brief presentation after Mass in St. Charles' Gaspar Room. Coffee and light refreshments are served.

Visiting Missionaries in the coming weeks are: Fr. David Kelly, C.P.P.S., November 12 (with an art show at St. Charles of works by youth and adults from the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation on November 4–12); Fr. Ron Will, C.P.P.S., on November 26; Fr. Denny Kinderman, C.P.P.S., on December 3; and Fr. James Smith, C.P.P.S., on December 17. Visiting preachers in 2024 will be announced soon.



**Fr. Angelo Anthony, C.P.P.S.,
presides in St. Charles' chapel.**



CANDIDATES IN VIETNAM:

Four candidates in the Missionaries' Vietnam mission were temporarily incorporated on August 14 in Saigon. Three are preparing for the priesthood; one as a religious brother.

Please join us in praying for Andrew Khuong Nguyen, Andrew Blir Ha, Peter Dien Nguyen and Vincente Tinh Cao.

IN MEMORIAM: Fr. James McCabe, C.P.P.S., 91, died on August 27, 2023 in the infirmary of St. Charles Center, Carthage, Ohio.

Fr. McCabe was born in Newcastle, Neb., on December 6, 1931, to Lawrence and Helen (Lewis) McCabe. The family moved to Detroit in 1941, and he considered Detroit his second hometown.

He entered the Congregation in 1945 at Brunnerdale, its former high school seminary near Canton, Ohio, and was ordained on June 1, 1958.

In his years as a priest, Fr. McCabe was involved in parish ministry, college administration and leadership of the Congregation.

Fr. McCabe served briefly in parishes after his ordination, then became an instructor and librarian at St. Charles Seminary from 1961–65. He also served as archivist for the Congregation. In 1965, he became the librarian of Saint Joseph's College in Rensselaer, Ind.

He was instrumental in the growth of another college sponsored by the Missionaries, Calumet College of St. Joseph in Hammond, Ind., where he served first as executive vice president then president from 1975–80.

Fr. McCabe served as pastor of St. Mary of the Woods Church in McQuady, Ky., and Immaculate Conception Church in Hawesville, Ky.

In 1987, Fr. McCabe was named pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Celina, Ohio, where he served until 1992, when he was appointed provincial secretary for the Cincinnati Province. In the 1990s, Fr. McCabe helped found the Amici, a group of former members and students of the C.P.P.S.

In 1997, Fr. McCabe accepted an assignment to the Sorrowful Mother Shrine in Bellevue, Ohio. He was named director of the shrine in 2000, where he served until his retirement in 2001. He moved to St. Charles Center in 2002.

Fr. McCabe had a genial manner and in parish life, generally led by consensus. He was a good listener and effective preacher, often including his own foibles that drew smiles from listeners. Yet he had a powerful intellect and organizational skills. His nickname in the Congregation, given to him while still at Brunnerdale, was Dux, Latin for "leader."

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at St. Charles Center on August 31. Fr. Jeffrey Kirch, C.P.P.S., provincial director, presided. Burial followed in the Community cemetery.

For a full obituary, visit cpps-preciousblood.org.



**Fr. James
McCabe**

IN MEMORIAM: Fr. Leon Flaherty, C.PP.S., 88, died on September 29, 2023, in the infirmary of St. Charles Center, Carthagen, Ohio.

He was born on July 10, 1935, in Superior, Wisc., to Michael and Emily (Jaques) Flaherty. He entered the Congregation in 1949 at Brunnerdale, the Congregation's former high school seminary.

Fr. Flaherty was ordained on June 10, 1961, at St. Charles.

After his ordination, Fr. Flaherty served as an instructor at Brunnerdale. In 1970, he was named director of vocations and later became director of formation. He was also the chaplain for firefighters in Jackson Township of Stark County, Ohio.

In 1978, Fr. Flaherty was named to the retreat team at the retreat center in Maria Stein, Ohio, where he also participated in Marriage Encounter weekends and offered spiritual direction.

In 1982, he was elected vice provincial director of the Cincinnati Province. He served on the general curia of the worldwide congregation from 1983–89, living in Rome during that time.

Fr. Flaherty then continued his retreat and renewal ministry in Columbus, Ohio, in 1989. In 2000, he returned to parish ministry in the Diocese of Superior. He ministered at St. Anthony Parish in Superior and Queen of the Universe Parish in Woodruff, Wisc.

Fr. Flaherty served as the associate pastor of the Cathedral of Christ the King in Superior from 2002–09. He was also active in the Twin Ports Ministry to Seafarers, an interdenominational service to the sailors working on the Great Lakes freighters. He ministered from 2009–12 at St. John the Baptist Church in Whiting, Ind.

Fr. Flaherty returned to Superior in 2012 in his retirement, and ministered at the cathedral once again. He was honored with the *Lumen Christi* Award for his outstanding priestly service.

In 2022, Fr. Flaherty moved to St. Charles.

Fr. Flaherty had a pastoral approach to people, reaching out with all his being in his many ministries. With a Missionary spirit, he went where he was called and he truly loved his Community, but part of his heart was always along the shores of Lake Superior.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on October 3 at St. Charles, with Fr. Andrew O'Reilly, C.PP.S., presiding. Burial followed in the Community cemetery.

For a full obituary, visit cpps-preciousblood.org.



**Fr. Leon
Flaherty**

The Emergency \$20

Our human grandparent memory system is inherently unfair. I met only one of my four grandparents, my maternal grandmother, the other three having died before I was born. I still look to the grandmother I knew as my spirit guide, but what if my paternal grandmother is the one I take after?

The soul lives on, and we joyfully hope that all four grandparents are equally alive in God's glory, all four presumably on call to help out in an emergency. The same with our parents and parents-in-law, all of them gone from this life. Yet I cry out to some and not others when our family on Earth needs a special ambassador.

I was very demanding of my mother and mother-in-law when my daughter was carrying her first child, hectoring them to watch over her and tug on God's sleeve asking him to keep everybody safe. One does not often think of the dangers of childbearing until one's own daughter is in the labor room. (Or birthing suite, as they now call it, as if it is a luxury hotel. It is not.)

All that behind us, with a beautiful baby girl in the cradle, or actually never in the cradle because she prefers being held. I was called on to help the new little family as a combination housekeeper, butler and nanny. "Mary Poppins," I called myself, but mainly I made trips to Walmart for more wipes.

Once, my daughter asked me to stop at her local pharmacy to pick up some supplies on my way to their house. I was halfway through the nine-mile drive when I realized I left my purse behind.

I remembered the \$20 tucked in my camera bag, which I always have with me when going to see the baby in case my daughter and son-in-law are suddenly be in the mood for a family portrait (so far, no).

It was a gift from my father, passed along to me by my mother. She pulled me aside one day a year or two after he died and said he had always kept a stash of cash in the house, and she wanted me to have \$20 of it. You have to know our family to realize how great of a gift this is; we never give away more than \$20 at a time.

The \$20 bill in my camera bag was not that bill. From the first, I knew the real gift was having emergency money, not the actual bill. The \$20 was representative of my father, and especially on that day, when he could buy a little something for a great-granddaughter he would never see. Or maybe he can see her, and take delight in her as we do, and feel a part, still, of the great sweep of life that God began and continues through the generations.

At Our House
by Jean Giesige



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