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ORDINARY PEOPLE DOING EXTRAORDINARY THINGS

Local Precious Blood sister writes book about spirituality

The study is meant to lead to prayer.

Pope Pius XII issued a papal encyclical during WWII regarding the church as the mystical body of Christ. In that he stated, “For in the Holy Eucharist the faithful are nourished and strengthened at the same banquet and by a divine, ineffable bond are united with each other, and with the Divine Head of the whole [church] Body.”

For the Sisters of the Precious Blood in Dayton, this partaking of the Eucharist is of the utmost importance. “Precious Blood” stands both for Jesus shedding his blood on the cross and the symbols of precious blood that are offered daily in the Eucharist. One of those sisters, Sister Joyce Ann Zimmerman has recently completed a book, “Red+Gold: A Spirituality of the Sisters of the Precious Blood for Everyone” (published by Maria Stein Shrine of the Holy Relics, \$10).

“The book was directed to the laypeople we touch, so if they want to know more about what feeds and drives us, here is something they can use for prayer and meditation,” said Sister Zimmerman, director of the Institute for Liturgical Ministry. “The book is meant to lead to prayer and reflection.”

Sister Zimmerman, who lives in Trotwood, describes her book as a comprehensive study of the unique expression of spirituality that has driven the Sisters of the Precious Blood for almost 200 years. The publication is divided into five sections, each with four two-page meditations. Each meditation ends with three statements that enable readers to reflect on how the meditation can be implemented in their own lives.

The idea of a book was sparked when Sister Zimmerman and Don Rosenbeck, administrator at Maria Stein Shrine of the Holy Relics, discussed new merchandise in the Maria Stein Shrine Pilgrim gift shop. Sister Zimmerman suggested a book on spirituality to help pilgrims to the shrine gain a deeper understanding of why the shrine is part of the congregation’s legacy and ministry.

“It’s not primarily directed to the sisters but to those with whom

we’ve worked and taught, worshipped with, and been in contact with over the years,” said Sister Zimmerman. “It’s to inform those people who have fallen in love with our spirituality.”

She reiterated that the most important idea she wanted to impart to her readers was the two-pronged approach to the sisters’ spirituality. Some of the areas discussed in the book are spirituality, adoration, suffering, salvation, life, glory, sacrifice, self-offering, generosity and justice.

“As Sisters of the Precious Blood we certainly reflect on, and are motivated by, Jesus shedding his blood on the cross,” she said. “But our (congregation’s) mother, Maria Anna Brunner, had a great devotion to the blessed sacrament, so Eucharist adoration from the very beginning has been our primary gift.”

Mother Brunner founded the Sisters of the Precious Blood in 1834, and, according to the website, she adored the symbolism and partaking of the Eucharist. Sister Zimmerman loves to write about it, having written about 30 books and 300 articles. She started her publishing adventure 40 years ago with a text on catechetical aid in the early 1970s.

“I just started the 16th volume of Living Liturgy, along with another sister and a priest. I do a lot of national conference work and I teach,” said Sister Zimmerman, an adjunct professor at Athenaeum of Ohio in Cincinnati. “I have started to let go of some major projects because I am busy writing.”

She not only writes, but does design and layout work, as well. She was the designer for “Red+Gold.” The congregation’s rich tradition of Eucharistic adoration, which was the center of Mother Brunner’s prayer life, shapes her written commentary.

“The book is like a self-guided retreat into our spirituality,” she said. “I’m inviting people to take what I’m saying that strikes them and struggle with it to make it their own.”