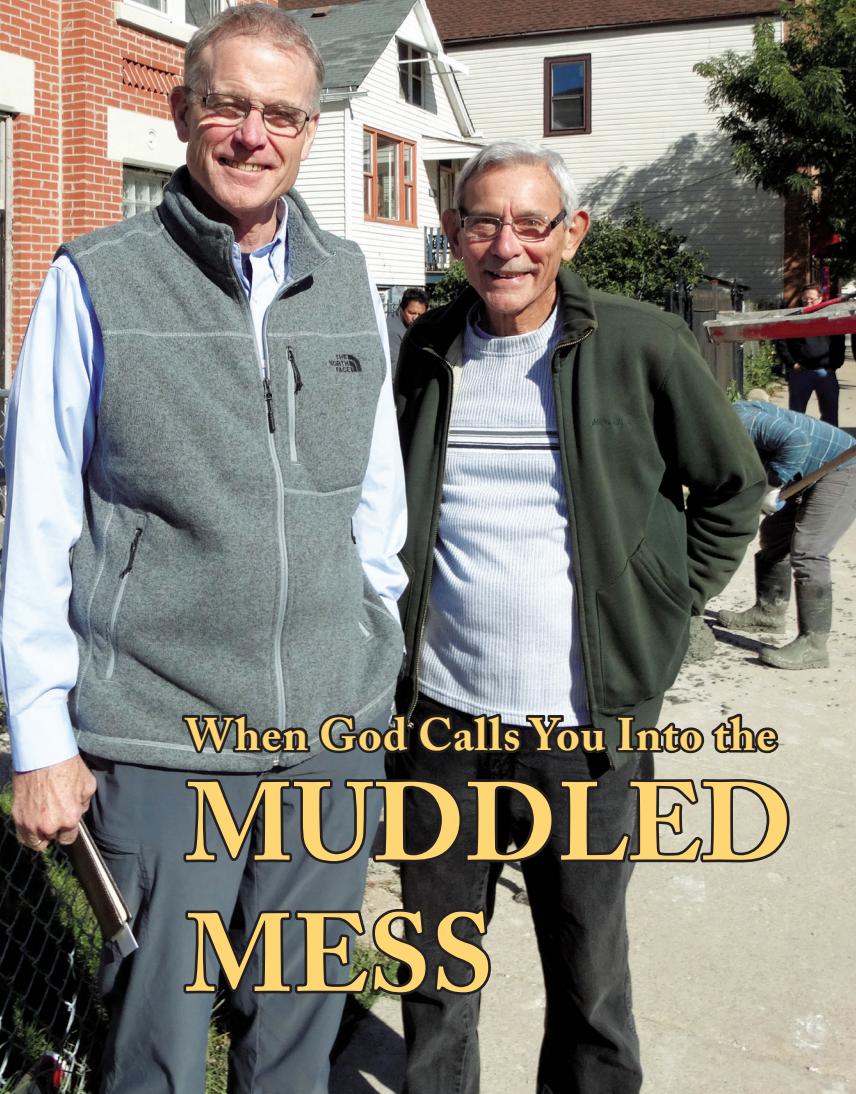


WINTER 2019

CPPS TODAY

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD



When God Calls You Into the
**MUDDLED
MESS**

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Tom Hemm and
Tom Welk.

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

WINTER 2019

C.P.P.S. Today is published by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, (Society of the Precious Blood), Cincinnati Province, 431 E. Second St., Dayton, OH 45402 937-228-9263 mission@cpps-preciousblood.org cpps-preciousblood.org On Facebook, Missionaries of the Precious Blood Cincinnati Province On Twitter, @cppscincinnati

Precious Blood spirituality led Fr. Dave Kelly, left, and Fr. Denny Kinderman into a neighborhood where God's healing touch is needed every day.



When God Calls You Into the MUDDLED MESS

The Back of the Yards neighborhood on the south side of the Chicago, where the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation (PBMR) is located, is not always an easy place to be. It's a neighborhood where people have been kicked around,

undermined by poverty and assaulted by violence. It's not featured on any postcards of the city, but for two Missionaries of the Precious Blood, it's home.

For Fr. Dave Kelly, C.PP.S., who directs the center, it's the perfect place to live out his

vocation as a Missionary of the Precious Blood. Following Jesus isn't necessarily about occupying a land of peace—it's about allowing Christ's peace and healing to flow through you to those who need it the most.

"Part of understanding Precious Blood spirituality is understanding that by entering into the muddled mess, the woundedness that is carried in others and in ourselves, the chaos of life, is an act of faith, not an act of desperation," he said. "We move in to help other people not with the idea that we have all the answers, but that God will work through us. We touch the woundedness that we see, recognizing that if we stay with it, if we do the work faithfully, healing will happen. We embrace the spirituality of the cross as a sign of hope, because it's only through suffering that we really are one with God."

Living Holy Saturday

That means something different to everyone who embraces the cross. It calls for unflinching courage when looking at the pain dished out to humans by humans, or sometimes by happenstance. It requires a Christian to be a healing presence in the midst of discord. It means opening one's arms to strangers, to those who

are lonely or fearful, hungry or cold, and welcoming them into Christ's compassionate care.

Fr. Kelly carries out that calling at the PBMR, which annually serves nearly 300 youth and 100 adults, all of whom come to the center for their own reasons, and all of whom are welcomed into a safe space, a place where they are valued as sons and daughters of God.

Often, they present themselves with problems that may seem unsolvable, wounds that will never heal. Fr. Kelly said it's crucial that he and other staff members at the PBMR are patient and counsel others to be patient, too. He calls it living in Holy Saturday.

"We know from our own experience of the Triduum and in our own lives that Holy Saturday is not a very comfortable place to be. People want to move on quickly to Easter. But staying there in Holy Saturday when you know that's part of our spirituality, not glossing over the pain and yet not giving up hope—when you understand that there is the resurrection and that is ultimately what will come of this—that gives purpose and meaning to where you are sitting," he said. "You have the conviction that you will become a new creation—versus the desperation of being in an ugly place with no hope."

Relentless Engagement

He talks about waiting, he talks about sitting—but at the PBMR's center, which is on the second floor of a former parochial school building, patience does not mean passivity. The 20 staff members and many volunteers who minister at the center move heaven and earth to help the youth and adults who walk through the doors. "You've got to be willing to be real, authentic and caring," he said. "You've got to love these kids and not give up on them."

Sr. Donna Liette, CPPS, one of two Precious Blood sisters also in ministry at the PBMR, says what's required is "relentless engagement." That means not only welcoming people to the center and accepting them for who they are, but also taking phone calls after hours, visiting them and their family members in jails and hospitals, helping them find their way through a world that often tries to exclude or entrap them.

The youth and adults who come to the center have often experienced trauma at home or in their neighborhood, Fr. Kelly said. "Because of the trauma in their lives, they don't trust, period. To win over their trust and to be able to engage them in a deeper way, they have to sense authenticity about us—

versus us just coming in with a program that we think will help. Authenticity is the biggest thing," he said.

That's something that people on the outside struggle to understand, he added. "People get the general gist of what we're doing here, but I don't know if they understand the impact of trauma on these kids: how hard it is, how exhausting it is. That these kids come here scarred and wounded, and live out of that woundedness. (When they act out), other organizations sometimes tell them, 'You've got to leave.' But we try not to. It's no different than a family: throwing your kid out is really not an option. You will leave no stone unturned for a son or daughter who is suffering. For us, it is not theoretical."

Safety Within Themselves

That absolute commitment, that authenticity, has led to hiring staff members who understand the struggles of the neighborhood because they've grown up there or in a similar place. Orlando Mayorga, 38, whom everybody calls Chilly, was incarcerated when he was 17. In prison he participated in the CAVE program (Community Anti-Violence Education) with his peers and credits it for helping him find his way to a new life.



"Many of our youth don't feel safe in their homes, they don't feel safe on the streets."

PBMR staff member Orlando Mayorga

Now a case manager at the PBMR, he facilitates CAVE circles every week for 16- to 24-year-olds. "It's the same model that we used in prison: nobody is the holder of all knowledge: we can all learn from each other," he said. "I facilitate the conversation, and we talk about what trauma is and how it impacts our decision-making. The most important thing is that we build relationships: we build up connections that may not have been there before. Even though some of these guys may have known each other forever, they may not ever have discussed their emotions before. So we have conversations centered around the emotions that we face on a day-to-day basis."

In their neighborhood, one

of those emotions is fear. "Many of our youth don't feel safe in their homes, they don't feel safe on the streets," he said. "So we talk about how we can find safety within ourselves. We talk about emotional safety, moral safety, physical safety. We also talk about loss. Many of us have lost our freedom, lost our childhood, lost family members or close friends to violence. When we talk about it, it allows us to learn from each other and move on to a healthy future."

"The Call of the Blood"

Fr. Denny Kinderman, C.P.P.S., was led to the Back of the Yards "to ministry to and with those who live on the margins of society. I believe God called me

there, and I willingly said ‘yes.’”

His first assignment as a priest was as associate pastor of St. Mark Church in an urban neighborhood in Cincinnati. That was in 1967.

“I soon fell in love with the ministry of parish life in an African-American neighborhood,” he said. “It was a time of racial tension and upheaval. This immersion into a ministry among African-Americans taught me meaningful lessons about the need for social reform and care for those caught in the web of poverty and prejudice.”

When the Missionaries opened the PBMR in 2002, he knew he wanted to be a part of it. “While I chose to be part of PBMR, it was born out of my life journey, which I had not chosen but grew into,” he said. “PBMR was born out of a call to be about something new as we were facing a decline in vocations and needing to say goodbye to some of our ministries.”

Ministry in a neighborhood where people face so many challenges every day fits into what Missionaries term “the call of the Blood,” a response to God’s urging that Christians to look around for those who need the healing power of the Precious Blood. The Missionaries, along with the Sisters of the Precious Blood and the Sister Adorers of

the Blood of Christ, thought this new ministry could bring new life and hope not only to the neighborhood, but to those who minister there.

That’s been true for him, Fr. Kinderman said. “I used to think, in my previous life, that I was busy as a pastor, but I’m far busier here. Even though I’m old enough to retire, I can’t imagine not being here constantly on call. I find it difficult to take any time off—you miss too much,” he said.

“I feel blessed to be able to continue to respond to the many needs faced daily (at the center). I know in my heart of hearts that God is the one arranging my life, and all I need to do is allow that. It ain’t always easy, but I continue to grow from my mistakes and will keep on ministering here as long as it pleases God to have me here.”

“I’ve Got Like 25 Sons”

It ain’t always easy—that’s something of an understatement. Yet the PBMR has experienced many successes. Young men who used to be fixtures at the center now come back with their wives and kids in tow and are making their way in the world as productive members of society. People who arrived at PBMR broken and suffering recover enough to join in its efforts, leading groups and showing



Marlon Gosa of the PBMR, with photos of young people who've lost their lives to violence.

up at fundraisers. The courts in Chicago have recognized PBMR's efforts and respect its methods. It has received funding, including a \$400,000 grant from the MacArthur Foundation (\$100,000 per year for four years).

But there is no way to say the work is ever finished, Fr. Kelly said. One goal is to get better at developing leaders among the young people who come to the center. "We want to help them become critical thinkers—we can do better with that," he said.

The center has established programs that encourage the youth to build on their talents, including the arts, through the gallery it rents across the street from the center, and skills such as carpentry, cooking and screen printing.

Other efforts also blossom, like the community garden

overseen by Sr. Carolyn Hoying, CPPS. It raised over 3,400 pounds of produce in 2018, much of it shared with the neighborhood. The Precious Blood Volunteer Program, administered by the Kansas City Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, is another boon, sending young people to the PBMR every year to lend a hand. There's a new staff member, Karlyn Boens, who works with young women, many of them single mothers. It's a new initiative at the center, which once worked exclusively with young men.

It's a place where love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor 13: 7). Marlon Gosa knows this; he's on the PBMR staff and serves as a mentor to young men ages 12–17. "I've got like 25 sons," he said.

"I try to instruct them and keep them on a positive note. I listen to them, and I understand where they're coming from because I grew up in this neighborhood. The issues they're dealing with, I've experienced all of that," Gosa said.

He takes them to football games, barbecues for them, shoots hoops with them, and takes them fishing. "We go everywhere," he said. "Mostly, I try to find something that they wouldn't experience normally. Once we went to the lyric opera. I went to sleep, but they liked it!"

Mainly, he said, he's trying to get them through a dangerous time, in a dangerous place. "I'm 38 now—and I realize that I wasted so much time in my life, doing things that didn't benefit me. I could have been a doctor or a lawyer! But I wasted all that time—I see no positive in it," he said.

"Most of the people I grew up with, they've been to prison. And I've been to so many funerals. I ask the kids, how many of us know somebody who has graduated from college? Maybe one or two hands go up. I ask, 'How many know somebody who's been in prison?'



The Precious Blood values and stances that have been taken at the center can help wounded people, and they can work anywhere.

All of them. When you go out to surrounding communities, that's not the way it is. That's what drives me to get to them all—which I can't. But if we can get them through their adolescence, maybe they'll be fine. If I can save one, two or three, maybe each of them will save one, two or three. That's the goal."

It Can Work Anywhere

That's the goal for Marlon and perhaps for everyone at the PBMR. And it can be a goal for everybody. The Precious Blood values and stances that have

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said. He invited Fr. Welk to St. Charles because of their shared commitment to the ministry, and because he wants to explore how the community at St. Charles can accompany members who are in their final days and how he might better enable that ministry.

The journey can be just as difficult for priests as it is for anyone else, Fr. Welk noted: "We're still human. We're not spared anything that belongs to humanity," including a fear of death.

But for priests and for all of us, accepting that our life will end with a walk toward a loving father will help us keep our

shoulders straight. It will help us consider that the angel of death is always among us.

"There's a natural tendency to have a sense of dread and fear about the unknown," Fr. Welk said. "It takes some courage to open those doors. And some people just don't want to, especially if they have no faith dimension. Human beings worry that life will end in nothingness. But we know that God has an immense love for us. We hear over and over in the Scriptures that God is love. And love drives out all fear."



The Muddled Mess

(Continued from page nine)

been taken at the center can help wounded people, and they can work anywhere. In fact, the PBMR will put them into practice in the archdiocese of Chicago, where staff members have been asked to hold listening circles in parishes that are merging. They're also involved in a conversation in the archdiocese that may result in listening circles for the laity and clerics in the midst of the Church's clergy sexual abuse crisis.

The same approach of respecting others, of showing them that they are valued and cherished and that their opinion

counts, works for large groups and small, for strangers and for family, Fr. Kelly said.

"It's not just for when you're trying to heal the effects of violence or incarceration—it's wherever you want to build or repair relationships, whether that's in your parish or in your family," he said.

Leading people into a safe place and allowing them to speak without fear is a step toward healing, he said. It's a way to honor the journey that all of us make through Holy Saturday, toward Easter.

