

The MESSENGER

MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY



TEACHING THE SACRAMENTS
Years in the Classroom. See page 14.

SUMMER 2025

The MESSENGER

MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY

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The MESSENGER

MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY

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Provincial Perspective

Dear Family,

Saint Catherine of Siena

Saint Catherine of Siena: Virgin and Doctor of the Church. At the age of 18, she entered the Third Order of Saint Dominic.



On fire with love of God and neighbor, she established peace between cities, fought for the rights of the Pope, and promoted the renewal of religious life.

Saint Catherine composed works of doctrine and inspiration. Born on March 25, 1347, as the 23rd child of Jacopo & Lapa Benincasa, she died at the tender age of 33 on April 29, 1380. Saint Catherine, pray for us!

Sincerely in the Holy Family, I am

Fr. Phil Sosa, M.S.F.

Very Reverend Philip Sosa, M.S.F.
Provincial Superior



Very Rev. Philip Sosa, M.S.F.

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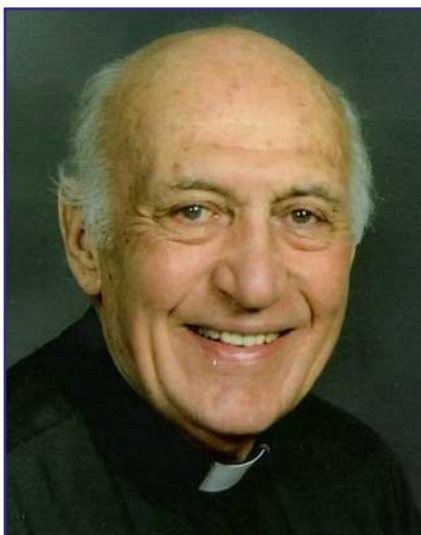
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RIP, FATHER LEO

The Opera Priest Reverend Leo Vitale Gariazzo, M.S.F. May 24, 1929 – December 2, 2024



Fr. Leo Gariazzo, M.S.F.

Fortified with the Sacraments of Holy Mother Church, Father Leo Vitale Gariazzo, age 95, of Brevard, North Carolina, entered eternal life on December 2, 2024. He was born on May 24, 1929, in Sandigliano, Italy, the son of Secondino Gariazzo and Maria Genova. He is survived by his niece Susan Toscani and his nephew Will Toscani (Sandy).

Father Leo had one sister, Doris. He grew up in the Bronx, New York, and graduated from Samuel

Gompers High School in 1948. He served in the Armed Forces and received an Honorable Discharge.

Before entering the seminary, he was very involved in music, voice, and opera. He performed at Carnegie Recital Hall in New York City to begin his musical career in opera, but the Lord had other plans. The Holy Spirit touched his heart, and he began to study for the priesthood instead. Even as a seminary student and priest, he never gave up his love for music and singing.

In 1957, Father Leo was accepted into Holy Family Seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri. He made his Novitiate year from August 15, 1958 – August 15, 1959. His Perpetual Profession of Vows took place August 15, 1962, and he attended Saint John Cantius Seminary for four years of theology. He was ordained to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ on April 3, 1965.

During his years of ministry, Father Leo shared the Good News of the Gospel in Texas, Missouri, New York, and New Jersey. For 20 of those years, he worked with

teenagers in two high schools as well as serving in various parishes.

Father Leo was assigned as Vocation Director at Holy Family Seminary from 1965 – 1968 in Saint Louis. He was also the seminary barber. The seminarians knew when their haircuts were complete because he would slap them on the side of the head and jokingly say, “Send in the next flunky!”


Because of his parents’ declining health, Father Leo asked for permission to take care of them. He was then assigned to the Shrine Church of Our Lady of Solace and Saint Francis Xavier Parish in Bronx, New York. He also served as Chaplain of Hudson Catholic High School in Jersey City, New Jersey.

He retired in June 2014 in residence with family members in Brevard, North Carolina, and assisted in ministry in the Diocese of Charlotte. As a retired priest, Father Leo was still able to help at neighboring Sacred Heart Catholic Church, and the parishioners cherish his liturgies and homilies.

His family and friends fondly remember his 90th birthday celebration when he got up and sang with his booming basso voice! Even to the end, Father Leo enjoyed talking about opera and music. The imprint Father Leo leaves upon the hearts of his loved ones remain eternally vivid, a testament to the depth of his spirit

and the richness of his legacy. May he rest in peace.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. Amen. May his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Contributions in memory of Father Leo should be mailed to the Missionaries of the Holy Family at 3014 Oregon Avenue, Saint Louis, MO 63118-1412. Gifts can also be received through our website at www.msf-america.org. 



Fr. Leo at age 29.





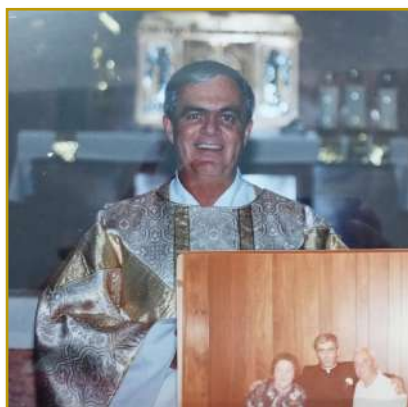
THANK YOU, FATHER DAVID

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.”

Matthew 6:19

A Blessed Retirement for Father David Tonary

by Celia Barragan



Father David with his mom and dad.

In February 2025, the following message was printed in the Sunday bulletin at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Seguin, Texas:

Please join us in celebrating the retirement of Father David Tonary, M.S.F. You are invited to a Mass of Thanksgiving in honor of our beloved pastor on Saturday, March 1, 2025. Mass will be celebrated at 12:00 p.m. here at Our Lady of Guadalupe. Reception will follow at the American Legion Post #245 at 618 West Kingsbury Street. Let's come together to celebrate and thank Father David for his years

of dedication, service, and love for our community.

The church community responded by the hundreds. On March 1, the church was filled with parishioners, Knights of Columbus, Guadalupanos, choirs, priests, and our celebrant and guest of honor, Father David Tonary. All were there to thank him for all his years of service to the people and to the Church.

Many of us recall having heard Father David remind us that when we are called to leave this world, we don't take anything with us. I remember him always saying, *“You've never seen a U-Haul behind the hearse in a funeral procession.”*

He reminded us of **Matthew 6:19-21**: *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where*

your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Father David's treasures are his parishioners and the Catholic Church. Mr. Guy Parasch interviewed Father David for an article in the Summer 2006 issue of *The Messenger*. Much from this article is taken from that interview. If you would like to read the entire interview, you can find it on the website of the Missionaries of the Holy Family at www.msf-america.org.

At the time of the interview, Father was approaching his 25th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood with a celebration on June 30, 2006. Father David was born on March 13, 1951, in New Waterford, Nova Scotia, Canada. He was ordained on June 21, 1981, at the age of 30.

Saint Joseph is his patron saint, the name he chose for his confirmation.

His hero is Mother Teresa, now Saint Teresa of Calcutta. In Father David's words, *“She did what she was called to do. She did it with joy. She was a lion and a lamb all in one. Her confidence came from believing in the Truth. She walked the walk and talked the talk.”*

Father's favorite hobby is reading. His advice to us is: *“Do the best you can for this day.”* He is one of six children in the Tonary Family. His father, also named David, was a coal miner, and his mother Sarah was a homemaker. They provided a wonderful, memorable family life, and both of Father David's parents are now deceased.

Father David had a twin sister, Heather, and he always made it a point to remind her that he was the older twin, a loving sibling rivalry. His first thoughts of becoming a priest went back to the time when he was between 12 – 14 years old. Although he took no action at that



Father David and brother priests.



Reception for Father David after Mass.

time to pursue the priesthood, the thought always stayed on his mind.

He taught elementary education for several years. One spring day after teaching, he was at home sitting at the kitchen table reading the newspaper. In the middle of a page was a small, one inch by one inch advertisement: "Want to be a Missionary?" This was the beginning of his journey into the Missionaries of the Holy Family.

Father commented, "As a teacher, I really enjoyed the role of helping people learn. I see being a priest as a broader role where I can reach more people and teach them about Christ."

In 1974, at the age of 23, he entered the Holy Family Seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri. Father David was ordained by Bishop William E. Power on June 21, 1981, at his home parish, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, with his parents present. His first assignment as an associate

pastor was with Father Herman Defler at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Seguin, where he gave his first Mass in Spanish not knowing how to speak the language! It is an experience he would never forget!

He was later transferred to Immaculate Heart of Mary in Harlingen, Texas, and then he served as rector at the Holy Family Seminary. Father also served as pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Corpus Christi, Texas, for over 10 years. Then he came back full circle as pastor at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Seguin until his retirement.

In his role as a priest, Father David aspired to be helpful in bringing people closer to Jesus Christ and to help people with a true vocation to religious life hear and follow the call.

Following are some of the questions asked by Mr. Guy Parasch in the Summer 2006 issue

of *The Messenger*, and the answers give great insight into knowing the heart of Father David.

Question: What have you enjoyed most about being a priest? *"Seeing the joy in others surface. Something as simple as a smile on the face of someone who is grieving at a funeral helps me see God at work."*

Question: What do you know now that you wish you knew when you were younger? *"That we are all trying to reach the same destination – union with God, but we are all on different parts of the road."*

Question: What is the key to being a successful priest? *"I think the first question should be – 'How do you measure success?' Success is often considered to be found in numbers. I think we need to leave the actual numbers or results up to God because our responsibility as priests is to be faith-filled and faithful. To be faith-filled, we need to be knowledgeable about our Faith. To be faithful, we need to act on what we know. With our cooperation in these two areas, God can work through us to get the numbers."* [You can feel Father's sense of humor in the next question!]

Question: What is one of your most memorable experiences as a priest? *"While hearing the confession of a little one, I gave a penance of praying three Hail*

Mary's. For a moment, it was quiet on the other side of the screen, and then I heard the sound of sobbing. I was confused. Did the child think three Hail Mary's was too harsh? Then came the words, 'I only know one Hail Mary!'"

On March 1, 2025, the parishioners of Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in Seguin celebrated Father David Tonary's 44th year of priesthood and his well-deserved retirement. The Knights of Columbus stood in honor as Father David and other priests walked up to the altar to celebrate Mass. We could feel the reverence, love, and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

At the end of Mass, Father David spoke. He told us how it filled his heart with joy to see so many people come to receive Holy Communion. This is what it is all about. To believe in Jesus Christ, to want to receive Him, and to then share Him with others.

A reception was held at the American Legion Hall Post #245 following Mass. Hundreds



Retirement Cake for Father David.



Father David and Jesus.

attended as they were entertained by a mariachi band. A meal of enchiladas, rice, beans, and tortillas was served. Father David made the rounds talking to all who came to extend their well wishes. He has been a good and faithful servant. Father David truly has his heart with the parishioners he has served. He loved, and his parishioners demonstrated how

much they loved him in return.

Thank you, Father David, for all the Masses, homilies, funerals, baptisms, weddings, and multiple blessings which you bestowed upon us. We are reminded that we don't take material things with us on our next journey because where our treasures are, there will our hearts also be found (Matthew 6:21). +jnj+

THANK YOU!

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Soliloquy at the Window (an epilogue) by Emil Poprawski

I continue to sit at my window, looking to the West,
Trying to live my life at its best.
Over time My Love began to slip away,
Some changes in her noted, each and every day,
Common things, ideas, and thoughts had waned,
And in her life, much confusion reigned.

Then My Love passed into eternal sleep,
So, now, for Her, I can only weep.
She left so quietly, quickly, and serenely,
All with no suffering, leaving life, freely.
No longer does she pass her love to me, through the setting sun,
I hope and pray it's not something in our lives that I had done.

She was more than a lover, or mother, or wife,
But a Witness to my entire life.
And always, to me it seems,
She was also the mirror of my dreams.
Now sunsets bring loneliness to the foreground,
But I know My dear Love is Heaven bound.



Cross-stitch of Saint Prisca by Emil Poprawski.



NO WAY IN HELL!

Welcome to Hell by J. P. Richardson

My grandmother said, “*Hell must be a very big place.*” Her saintly life led her to believe the Catholic Church’s doctrine that hell exists.

Yet many people deny that hell exists, or pretend that hell is not hellish, or make believe that only the wickedest people go to hell. Some people deny that Heaven exists, or pretend that everyone goes to Heaven, or make believe that Heaven is where everyone gets his or her own way, where each person’s own dreams come true. Why do people imagine things that are false, and deny things that are true?

Many modern people seem to think of the Second Vatican Council as The Vatican *Cancel* – as if the Vatican canceled ancient teachings and traditions of the Church.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* instructs us: “The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death, the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, ‘eternal fire.’ The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in Whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.” (Paragraph 1035)

Have you ever felt “madder than hell” at someone for “making your life hell?” Have you been “hellbent” on “giving ‘em hell” to get even? Many common sayings invoke hell. Ordinarily, we take them figuratively, not literally. The word connotes eternal trouble, endless loss, perpetual punishment, permanent pain, ceaseless sorrow, and suffering. It feels bold and daring to utter such a fearsome word even if we don’t mean what we say, strictly speaking, “*What the hell did you say?*”

Seeing is believing. Yet not seeing is not a good reason for not believing. Astronomers recently reported that they have discovered a massive gas cloud close to earth. The cloud is there right before our eyes, but it had never been detected until scientists figured out how to detect it. How many things exist that we don’t know exist because



The Last Judgment by Fra Angelico, 1431.



Dense gas cloud.

we can’t see them and can’t detect them? Only God knows.

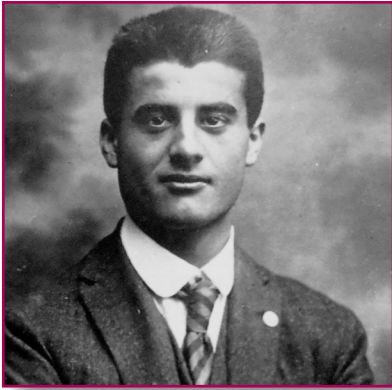
Some writers suggest that hell might be the place where a soul who refuses to say, “*I am sorry!*” to God and gets to practice forever the preferred vices and commit eternally the favorite sins of this life – the Seven Deadly Sins, for example: sloth, anger, gluttony, envy, pride, greed, and lust. Hell may be a place of our own making, but without a split second of satisfaction, only misery forever. “*It hurts like hell!*”

Monsignor Charles Pope, in his book, *The Hell There Is*, suggests that God may say to a defiant sinner: “You don’t want Me and My ways, so have your way without Me forever. I created you with free will. Do you choose hell or Heaven?” In hell, you will get your own way in the end, except there will be no end. Going to church calls Heaven to mind. We lift our hearts, minds, and souls to God. We ought to make it a habit to go to church, to learn God’s ways and to let go of our selfish ways, to cultivate a desire to go to Heaven, God’s Heaven, not our own.

The Cathedral of Saint Paul in Saint Paul, Minnesota, is the National Shrine of the Apostle Paul. The French architect, Emmanuel Masqueray, designed the cathedral so that, entering through any door, people are almost immediately under the great dome, which draws the eyes upward, as if toward Heaven.

Every Catholic church is a touch of Heaven, where God acts in the sacraments, where Jesus Christ is truly present in the Holy Eucharist. We retreat from the restless world of pursuing our own wills into a restful world of seeking God’s will – from a swirling, stormy ocean onto a tranquil island, a serene oasis, a pacific paradise, where God offers to us His sublime will and way, infinitely superior to our ways.

The Church teaches us that the Four Last Things of death, judgment, hell, and Heaven really exist and that, after our natural bodies die, our lives go on supernaturally in our immortal souls. Do people still go to judgment, then to hell or Heaven, or are we more enlightened by modern thinking than



Pier Giorgio Frassati, 1901-1925.

our forebears were in their dark ages of ignorance?

Maybe we think that the best they could do was to live by their comfortable superstitions, handed down from antiquity, only guessing about the unknown, whereas modern science lights the way for us. Are getting to Heaven and avoiding hell simply tall tales for old people and fables from yesteryear? Or are they as fresh as daisies that bloomed this morning?

Ever ancient, ever new. That is how Saint Augustine, a bishop who lived long ago, described the Catholic Church. The ancient Church still canonizes new saints, even young people after their brief, holy lives in this world. Giorgio Frassati and millennial Carlo Acutis are being canonized. Millennials Sister Clare Crockett, Helena Agnieszka Kniec, Matteo Farina, Akash Bashir, and Pierangelo Capuzzimati may be beatified. Look them up and then look up to them!

Do people still go to hell? Jesus seems

to warn us that more people wind up in hell than in Heaven:

"Enter through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few." (Matthew 7:13-14)

Jesus teaches about hell and Heaven more than we may realize. We may discover that hell is "not worth a damn," but Heaven is priceless, worth infinitely more than all the gold at the end of the rainbow. In the Gospel of Saint Mark 8:36, Jesus asks us, *"What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?"*

Are these admonitions from Our Lord "enough to scare the hell out of us?"

+jnj+



Sacred Heart of Jesus by Jose Maria Ibarra y Ponce, 1896



PRAYER CORNER

A Prayer for the Gift of Holy Purity by Elizabeth Cavallaro



Jacinta, Lucia, and Francisco (left to right).

Our Lady of Fatima, you taught the Fatima shepherd children that more souls go to Hell for sins of the flesh than for any other sin. Please intercede, then, in a powerful way for those engaging in sex outside of marriage and those using contraceptives. Ask your Divine Spouse, the Holy Spirit, to convict their hearts of these sins. Pray for great mercy for them and the grace of a good Confession. Pray that Almighty God will save them. Pray, too, for complete healing, new life in Christ for them, and the gift of holy purity. In Jesus Christ's Holy Name, we pray. Amen.





TEACHING THE SACRAMENTS

Years in the Classroom by Susan Wessel

"Good Morning!"

"Good Morning!"

"How are you?"

"How are you?"

"It's so good to see you!"

"It's so good to see you!"

This is how I have felt every Sunday morning for the many years I have been so very privileged to teach religion to young children from preschool to 2nd grade.

I wanted to be a teacher ever since I walked into first grade at Old St. Ferdinand's in Florissant, Missouri.

In those days the teachers were Sisters of Loretto at the Foot of the Cross. Sister Margaret Catherine was so wonderful, teaching us to read and write and the basics of Arithmetic. I knew in my heart I wanted to be like her and teach children.

Luckily my two sisters and I attended Catholic schools for twelve years. I went to Harris Teachers' College earning a lifetime teaching certificate for the State of Missouri.

While I became a first grade teacher in the St. Louis Public Schools I knew my goal was to teach religion.



Fr. Emmanuel with 2 of Susan's students.

During college I took a course sponsored by the Archdiocese of St. Louis for teaching religion. Afterwards, I signed up at Most Sacred Heart in Florissant to teach 2nd grade. I felt so happy I would be teaching the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist! Many prayers were said by me to St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, the missionary from France who founded Old St. Ferdinand's and to Sister Margaret

Catherine, my beloved teacher from first grade.

I have spent 49 years now, doing my favorite job in the world! I pray that the children I have taught are still receiving the Holy Sacraments and that maybe some of them are teaching the new little ones who step into the classrooms, eager to hear about our Holy Catholic Faith.

+jmq+



Susan's granddaughter, Caroline.



Susan (directly in front of Fr. Kusack, S.J.) as the flower girl on Mother's Day at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in 1953.

Susan's sister, Patricia (third girl from the right, second row).



Father Angelot, M.S.F. with some of his best friends.



A QUARTER-CENTURY OF SERVICE

Celebrating Father Francois! by the Holy Family Parish Community



Vesting before Mass.

On Tuesday, April 8, 2025, the parishioners of Holy Family Church in New Braunfels, Texas, joined Father Francois, a missionary priest of the Missionaries of the Holy Family from Madagascar, in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Prayers were offered in thanksgiving for his ordination and to ask God for blessings upon his anniversary celebration the next day.

On Wednesday, April 9, Holy Family Parish celebrated the momentous occasion of the 25th anniversary of the ordination of Father Francois to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. The joyous event began with Holy Mass celebrated by His Excellency, Most Reverend

Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller of San Antonio, concelebrated by over 20 priests, including distinguished guests from Madagascar and the surrounding San Antonio area.



Archbishop Gustavo with some of our priests.

A reception immediately followed in the parish hall. The evening drew a crowd of over 500 well-wishers, a testament to the profound impact Father Francois has had on the community of New Braunfels.

The reception began with a warm welcome from Rick Crespo, Chairman of the Holy Family Pastoral Council. Zeke Perez, also a member of the pastoral council, served as master of ceremonies. After an opening prayer and blessing of the meal, guests enjoyed a delicious dinner accompanied by festive mariachi music and dancing.

The celebration was graced by the presence of numerous distinguished guests, including 22 ordained ministers. The parish was especially honored to welcome His Excellency, Most Reverend Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller. Other notable attendees included priests from

the Madagascar Province of the Missionaries of the Holy Family: Provincial Superior Father Jeannot Leandre and Treasurer Father Hery Fidelis.

In a touching tribute to Father Francois' native homeland, the parish welcomed the dignitaries from Madagascar in their native language, Malagasy, a gesture deeply appreciated by all in attendance.

Archbishop Garcia-Siller offered heartfelt words of congratulations and appreciation for Father Francois' dedication and service. Following these remarks, a toast was raised to Father Francois, recognizing his unwavering commitment to his faith and his profound impact on the lives of countless individuals.

Father Francois then addressed the gathering, expressing his gratitude for the outpouring of love and support. The celebration continued with the



Mariachi Music!

presentation of a celebratory cake and the recognition of the dedicated members of the 25th Anniversary Planning Committee whose hard work made the event a resounding success. **+jmj+**



Anniversary Mass.



A few of our priests from Madagascar.



Celebratory Reception.

Men of God: Priests Forever

In the Year of Our Lord 2025, we thank God for all of our priests and brothers, and we beseech Him to send us many more.

If you would like to send a Tribute Gift in honor of our priests, please send it to 3014 Oregon Avenue, Saint Louis, MO 63118-1412.



Fr. Francois Rakotovoavy, M.S.F.
25 years



Fr. Joss Mampandra, M.S.F.
5 years

Do You Want More Holy Priests?

Please join the *Holy Family Circle* and help foster vocations to the priesthood! Find your level of joyful giving below, complete the form, and mail it or a copy to 3014 Oregon Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118.

Giving Level	Associate..... up to \$49 per month	Patriarch/Matriarch
Examples:	Samaritan..... \$50 per month	\$10,000 annual gift
	Companion..... \$100 per month	
	Disciple..... \$300 per month	
	Apostle..... \$600 per month	

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JOYS OF FAMILY LIFE

Grandchildren & Baptisms

by Brother Knight Baldy

Even if you think you are a family of one, you are not. You have friends. They are part of your family too. Every member of your family grows and changes, in stature, opinion, ability, and more. That is good, even though it doesn't seem like it sometimes. I have a big family: 17 grandchildren and counting.

You know my family from past issues of *The Messenger*. If you pitched your past copies, no problem! They are all available online, and all of them are great reading from front cover to back cover. Just go to the website of the Missionaries of the Holy Family at www.msf-america.org.

Growing and changing family members. Welcome Elliot, born January 29, 2025, and baptized on March 23. Yes, it is true, I have two other grandsons born on January 29.

Previously, I wrote about the baptisms of the twin girls and the history of the family baptismal gown. The original gown from 1910 has been used for 35 baptisms. The duplicate gown is

now with my nephew for the baptism of his second child.

Elliot's baptism, and I am laughing! The gown needed to be pinned on because Elliott at two months was 12 pounds and 2 ounces and too big for the buttons. The cuffs of the sleeves were also snug.

I remember that baptisms used to be done quickly after the baby was born. I was baptized 18 days after my birth. At that time, the mother and baby were required to stay in the hospital for about a week.

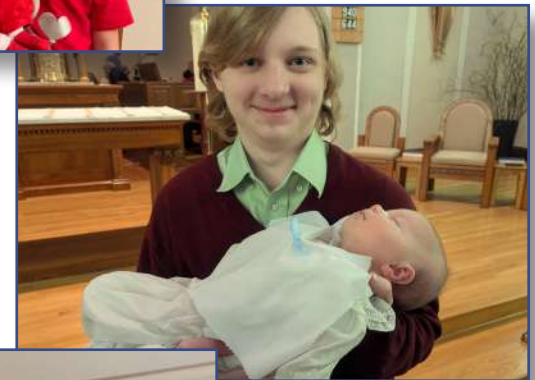
My oldest grandson, Joseph, who was born on January 29, was Godfather for Baby Elliott. Only 17 years old, and he flew from his home in Texas to Minneapolis on his own. All went well, including his return trip to Texas.

Growing and changing, it's going to happen. Embrace it. It's part of the joys of family life. By the way, I'm not getting old. My kids and grandkids are getting old. God bless your Family! **+jmb+**



A little love for a little brother.

Baptismal Gown.



Godfather Joseph.



New Grandson looks like Baldy except with more hair.





FEELING BLESSED

My Heart will Go On by Mike O'Neal

A very popular song from the movie *Titanic*, *My Heart will Go On*, came to mind when I read an article in the last *Messenger* regarding the demolition of the seminary buildings at Ashby Road in

2023. I'm grateful for Weldon Tieken's excellent historical accounts and photographs. Not just for me, but for posterity.

I graduated from Holy Family Seminary High School in 1967.



Mike O'Neal (right) and Ed Koeninger, Jr. in 1967.



I've often said to my friends that the years spent in those buildings were the most rewarding and valued years of my youth. I'm 75 years old now, but memories of singing Gregorian Chant, being tutored by gifted priests, and quietly reflecting on the life of Jesus in the chapel are a small sample of precious memories I hold dear in my heart.

Recently, I've been going through items in some old tote bags. In one of the albums, I came across a Perfect Attendance Certificate for my senior year signed by the rector of the seminary, Father Thomas Copeland, M.S.F. Many of you may still remember Father Copeland who served in parishes in the South Texas area.

For this accomplishment, I was

presented with a Holy Family Seminary Medal. On another occasion, I was awarded an additional medal for taking 1st place in a cross-country race held on the seminary grounds.

I'm very proud of these awards, but they are more valuable to me today because they are tangible reminders of the Holy Family Fathers' commitment to bringing out the best in each of us and fostering the love of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And finally, as I gaze upon the images of our former seminary buildings, *My Heart will Go On* with deep respect for all the Holy Family priests, past and present... and future. **+jnmj+**



O'Neal Brothers today (Mike on the right).



Father Andre (middle) with some of his Malagasy brother priests.



History: Mission Churches of Texas

**Saint Joseph Mission in Spring Branch
Saint Ferdinand Mission in Blanco**

**Served by:
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church
New Braunfels, Texas**

by Weldon Tieken

The beginning for the Missionaries of the Holy Family (M.S.F.) in Texas started when Archbishop Arthur J. Drossaerts of San Antonio went to Grave, Holland, to ask for priests. This was in August 1922, but the details could not be worked out since the superior general for M.S.F. was visiting Brazil at the time.

In 1924, Superior General Father Anthony Trampe, M.S.F. came to the United States. He visited

Hillman, Minnesota, Saint Louis, Missouri, and San Antonio, Texas. He met with Archbishop Drossaerts about the possibility of offering some priests to come to Texas from Europe.

Three priests, Rev. Anthony Elsing, M.S.F., Rev. Charles Schrieber, M.S.F., and Rev. Henry Benz, M.S.F., and one religious brother, Bro. Peter Jacob Liebfried, M.S.F., arrived in Galveston, Texas, on March 7, 1926, with San Antonio



St. Joseph Church in Spring Branch, Texas.



St. Ferdinand Church in Blanco, Texas.

as their destination. They met with Archbishop Drossaerts who accompanied them to New Braunfels, Texas.

A house on Austin Street in New Braunfels, given to the archdiocese by Miss Emily Mueller, would be temporarily used as a rectory and chapel. Father Elsing immediately started working on building a combination church and school on one of the lots adjacent to the house on December 5, 1926, under the name of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

In 1930, Father Elsing started serving the Hunter, Texas, community which would become the mission church of Saint John's, and it continues to this day.

In 1933, the New Braunfels priests would have two more mission churches added under their care: Saint Joseph in Spring Branch, in

what was considered the area of Honey Creek, and Saint Ferdinand in Blanco. Actually, since 1931, the M.S.F. priests were already helping Father Virgilius Draessel in Spring Branch, including the Blanco community.

When Father Draessel passed away on October 9, 1933, the mission churches were given to the Holy Family Fathers, and the priests lived at Saint Joseph's in Spring Branch. From October 1933 to September 1934, Rev. John Paar, M.S.F. and Rev. John Lucassen, M.S.F. shared the duties. Rev. George Gunther, M.S.F. then served from September 1934 to September 1937.

In September 1937, Rev. Peter J. Roebrocks, M.S.F. was appointed pastor for the two churches. In early 1939, Father applied for a donation from the Catholic Church Extension Society in



Rev. Peter Roebrocks, M.S.F.

Chicago, Illinois. On August 14, 1939, Father was informed that the society had approved a donation of \$1,000.00 for the building of Saint Ferdinand Church in Blanco.

Saint Ferdinand was the namesake of a deceased parishioner, Ferdinand Werner, whose wife in turn donated another \$1,000.00 to build the church. With the parishioners donating money, material, and labor, it was becoming a reality.

The exterior was rock veneer brought in from local quarries. The church structure and fixtures would bring the total cost to about \$5,000.00. The capacity was for approximately 150 people. Some of the names mentioned in the building of the church were Frank Werner, Arno Priess, Willie Haas, and Johnnie Schmidt.

The dedication for the church was held on Saturday, March 30, 1940. Archbishop Arthur J. Drossaerts presided and was

assisted by Superior General Very Rev. Anthony Trampe, M.S.F. The main celebrant for the High Mass was Rev. Peter Roebrocks, M.S.F., which included Deacon Joseph Jacobi, M.S.F., Subdeacon Ferdinand Strueder, M.S.F., and Rev. Joseph Wahlen, M.S.F. as the master of ceremonies who also gave the homily.

Masses were held in the church every second and fourth Sunday of the month. Father Roebrocks was known to get things done once he got started! He was known as the "hunter priest" because he loved hunting and fishing, and he would go frequently with his parishioners.

In April 1940, Father Roebrocks was transferred to Hillman, Minnesota, to be Prefect of Studies at Holy Family Mission House. Rev. George Gunther, M.S.F. became the pastor until he passed away on July 30, 1941. Rev. Joseph Wahlen, M.S.F. was appointed pastor, and he served until August 1954.

The Missionaries of the Holy Family gave back Saint Joseph Parish in Spring Branch to the Archdiocese of San Antonio on July 20, 1954, and Saint Ferdinand Parish in Blanco was turned over to the Diocese of Austin on June 1, 1954. Both parish communities are thriving to this day. +jmj+

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