

THE COMPANION

Companions of Christ Newsletter - Advent 2021





TRULY PRESENT

“Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.”—C.S. Lewis

Advent is a season of anticipation for the coming of Jesus. As we remember His first coming—His incarnation in Mary’s womb, the joyful excitement of her cousin Elizabeth and the unborn John the Baptist, and the care and concern of Joseph—we prepare our souls to welcome Jesus at His return. The Lord has promised to come again, and blessed are we who are found ready and waiting on that day.

In many ways, the past two years have been a season of watching and waiting. Priests and lay Catholics alike endured a long absence from the Mass and one another during the height of the pandemic. Even now, we find many obstacles to being truly present to each other. Masks and mandates, politics and race, and our own individual struggles and sufferings keep us from seeing the humanity of others—much less their divine dignity as creatures made in God’s image.

That is the significance of God’s coming to us in the flesh: to show us who He is and who we are meant to be. We are made to love and be loved, to help and be helped, to suffer and to heal, to fall and to rise—just like Jesus.

And now that we have returned to Mass in person, Jesus comes to us again in the flesh in the Holy Eucharist. We receive Him and are remade in God’s image, restored little by little to His Divine likeness. The more like Him we become, the freer we are to live and love as He did.

In this issue of *The Companion* we explore a few of many creative ways we are truly present to the Lord and one another, through theater and music, fellowship and family, priestly service, and more. In so many different ways, my fellow Companions of Christ conceive and bear Jesus to a world in need. I hope their stories inspire your own *yes* to the Lord!

Peace in Christ,
Fr. Peter Williams
 Moderator

Above, Fr. Peter Williams offers the Body and Blood of Jesus at a Sunday Mass at Saint Ambrose Catholic Community in Woodbury, where he is pastor. Photo courtesy of Michael Hamerlind Photography. On the cover: Fellow Companions of Christ Fr. Josh Salonek, Fr. Michael Barsness, Fr. Marc Paveglio, and Fr. Tim Sandquist stand atop Quandary Peak, more than 14,000 feet about sea level, during a trip to Colorado this summer. Photo courtesy of Fr. Paveglio.

THE COMPANION Newsletter is a publication of the Companions of Christ, written and designed at Archangel Stomp, LLC. © Companions of Christ, 2021.

HOW GOOD AND HOW PLEASANT IT IS WHEN BROTHERS DWELL IN UNITY (PSALM 133:1)

The Companions of Christ is a fraternity of diocesan priests and seminarians in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis established as a public association in 1992. Together with their fellow diocesan clergy, members of the Companions of Christ make a promise of obedience to the diocesan bishop and are assigned by him in the typical manner to serve in parishes or other diocesan institutions. The diocesan bishop, in turn and as far as possible, assigns members of the Companions of Christ to locations which permit them to live as fraternities of at least three members in rectories or other households. For more information, visit companionsofchrist.org.

New Priest Finds Joy with the Companions

Fr. Josh Salonek grew up around the Companions of Christ. A native of St. Michael, Minnesota, he says the stability and joy of longtime pastors and Companions Fr. Michael Becker and Fr. Peter Richards contributed to the openness of young men in his home parish to the priesthood. Last spring, Fr. Josh became the third priest ordained from St. Michael Catholic Church in seven years.

“I grew up in a Catholic family that was maybe a little above average in terms of living our faith,” he says. “But I’m not sure people realize how blessed we were to have such solid priests.”

The parish’s investment in youth ministry and strong connection to NET Ministries were also key. As a teen, Fr. Josh came to love Lifeline Masses at the NET Center, and praise and worship music, in particular. He spent a year with NET after high school, which shaped his prayer life in a profound way and affirmed his call to priesthood. He was accepted to Saint John Vianney College Seminary (SJV) the following fall.

Early in his time at seminary, another Companion, Fr. Chad VanHoose, invited all his fellow NET alumni at SJV and Saint Paul Seminary to lunch. They spent the afternoon sharing missionary stories, then began talking about what priesthood might look like. As Fr. Josh came to understand more about the Companions, their life of prayer and community felt more and more familiar.

“NET teaches you how to pray and forms you with a great love for praise and worship music, but that style of prayer doesn’t always fit at seminary, where the emphasis was on Liturgy of the Hours and silence,” he says. “Both forms are beautiful; both have their place—the Companions have a prayer life that mixes them. When Companions get together to pray, we start with Evening Prayer, then two or three praise and worship songs, then a period of silence. It’s a really good mix.”

Small groups were another familiar touchpoint for Fr. Josh. Growing up with a teen discipleship group at St. Michael, he moved more easily into his NET and SJV men’s small groups. The desire to share his life with other men was increasingly appealing as he came to know more priests on a personal level.

“On NET, we sometimes stayed with priests,” he says. “Many of them were so joyful to be around a group of young men with the same mission, but also seemed a little lonely and sad to see us go. I didn’t want to be alone in the priesthood. I want to share my life with others who know my life—with other priests.”

Fr. Josh is assigned to St. John Neumann Catholic Church in Eagan, Minnesota, as parochial vicar, under pastor and



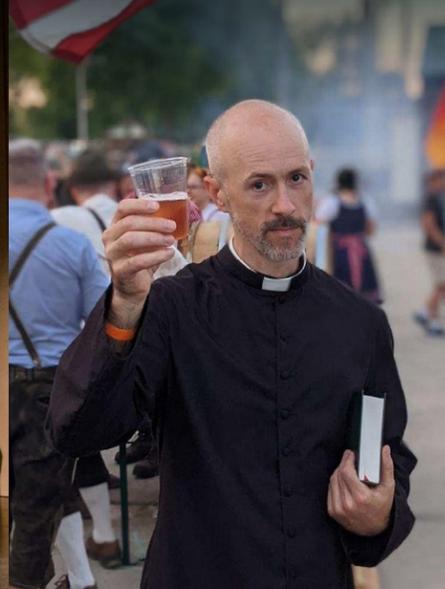
Fr. Josh Salonek is prayed over by his childhood pastor Fr. Michael Becker, is vested by fellow NET Ministries alumnus Fr. Chad VanHoose, and blesses his parents Mike and Joann Salonek. Ordination Mass photos courtesy of Dave Hrbacek/The Catholic Spirit.

Companion Fr. Tony O’Neill. His first few months have underscored the joy he saw growing up in St. Michael.

“I love it,” says Fr. Josh. “There are plenty of surprises... for example, I knew I was going to hear confessions, but I didn’t know how good it was going to be!”

“Every parish has its own story,” he says. “Seminary can only train us so well—they really need men who love Jesus Christ and are willing to be lifelong learners so they can minister to all people, in the time that they live in.”

CREATING COMMUNITY: MISSED THE BOAT THEATRE SHARES THE FAITH WITH MUSIC AND LAUGHTER



At left and right: photos from a dress rehearsal of this fall's production of *Moonshine Abbey*, a Catholic musical written by Fr. Kyle Kowalczyk (center), who also stood in as an understudy during rehearsals. Photos courtesy of Fr. Kowalczyk

Fr. Kyle Kowalczyk hadn't planned to be a priest. He discovered theater his junior year of high school, and as a senior, wrote, produced, and acted in his first original play. He planned to enroll in Western Michigan University's theater program after graduation and was despondent when he didn't get in.

"I didn't want to do anything else," he says.

His mom enrolled him at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan, where both of his parents worked at the time. While he wasn't thrilled, he found kindred souls and continued to write, direct, and produce plays. He entered the television production program, creating backstories for the mock news interviews he created. Finally, a Ferris partnership with the University of Utah enabled him to study theater out west and pursue a theater minor along with his television production major.

CURTAIN CALL

Following college graduation, he moved to back to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he grew up, then to Texas, before applying to be a missionary with NET Ministries. Life with NET was not conducive to pursuing theater, but it opened his heart to a call to religious life or Holy Orders. After a period of discernment at a Franciscan monastery, he enrolled at Saint Paul Seminary (SPS) to pursue priesthood.

"I had been away from theater seven years at that point," Fr. Kowalczyk says. "I was experiencing a really strong draw back to theater at the seminary, but I didn't think producing a play was even possible for seminarians."

Then he caught wind that the men at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit had performed *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, and he approached Monsignor Aloysius Callaghan to ask if he could produce a play at SPS. The rector said yes.

"To this day, I believe he thought I meant an after-dinner skit with a few friends," says Fr. Kowalczyk. "Instead, I wrote and produced a play called *Saved by the Guillotine*, the true story of Jacques Fesch, with a 10-foot-tall working guillotine and 31 out of 85 seminarians involved."

That 2013 play marked the beginning of SPS Theatre's annual productions, which continued until the pandemic cancelled *12 Angry Men* in spring of 2019.

CONNECTING THROUGH THE ARTS

Fr. Kowalczyk joined the Companions of Christ as a transitional deacon in 2015 and was ordained to the priesthood in May of 2016. Growing up in community at Christ the King in Ann Arbor, he says the Companions were a natural fit for him—and several Companions have performed in Fr. Kowalczyk's productions over the years.

"I think everyone has gifts and a deep desire to create," Fr. Kowalczyk says. "If we don't use them, they tend to come out sideways."

That's why he continues to pursue writing, directing, and producing despite being pastor of The Church of St. Maximilian Kolbe in Delano, Minnesota—a busy parish including a preK-6 school and two historically separate

churches—and why his theater company, Missed the Boat Theatre, continues to attract theater kids, band geeks, aspiring saints, and sinners alike to participate in and enjoy its productions.

"Missed the Boat is Catholic community theater: we foster authentic Catholic community by creating something beautiful on stage," he says. "We are creating Catholic culture—people in the audience can see these are primarily Catholic performers, they're funny, and they enjoy being with each other. I've actually had people say, 'This was healing for me.' To me it's an apostolate—we are using our gifts to edify and build up the community."

SERIOUSLY FUNNY

Missed the Boat Theatre is probably best known for its 2019 production *Catholic Young Adults: The Musical*, a hilarious take on Catholic culture at a struggling urban church where well-meaning young adults grapple with dating, vocational discernment, married infertility, worship styles, and how best to save their parish.

"The closer you get to it, the funnier it is," says Fr. Kowalczyk, who wrote the script and lyrics to music created by Br. John-Marmion Villa, BSC. "Everyone laughs at *Catholic Young Adults*, but if you're Catholic, you laugh more. If you have a Catholic young adult in your family, you'll laugh even harder—and if you *are* a Catholic young adult, you may need emotional support!"

Missed the Boat's current production, *Moonshine Abbey*, is also a musical. Written By Fr. Kowalczyk with music by Sam Backman, it tells the humorous story of a

community of monks trying to maintain their distillery and their way of life during Prohibition. (For more information, visit missedtheboattheatre.com.)

Fr. Kowalczyk acknowledges that laughing about religious topics sometimes rubs people the wrong way, but he insists that we are made to laugh.

"Humor is human," he says. "We are the only creature that is risible—that can laugh—because laughter requires a rationale intellect. You have to be able to see something, to know and understand it, in order to respond in a real and healthy way."

To that end, Fr. Kowalczyk draws a line between poking fun and treating the sacred with irreverence.

"When you really love someone, you know how to laugh with them," he says. "All of us at Missed the Boat really love Jesus Christ and His Church!"

FR. KYLE'S FAVORITES FOR CATHOLIC HUMOR

G.K. Chesterton: 19th/20th century Catholic convert, writer, critic, and lay theologian. "Super witty."

John R. Powers: 20th century novelist and playwright. "Great observer of 1950s American Catholic culture."

Flannery O'Connor: 20th century author and essayist. "Her books aren't funny in the traditional sense...her letters are really wonderful."

Thomas Day: 20th century writer and critic. "His book *Why Catholics Can't Sing* is great."

Companions of Christ Recent Appointments



FR. MICHAEL BARSNESS
Parochial Vicar, Church of Saint Mary (Le Center), Church of Saint Henry (Saint Henry), Church of the Immaculate Conception (Marysburg), and Church of the Nativity (Cleveland)

FR. MICHAEL BECKER
On sabbatical; Pastor, Sts. Joachim and Anne (Shakopee) in January 2022

FR. MICHAEL DALY
Parochial Administrator, St. Helena Catholic Church (Minneapolis)

FR. NICK HAGEN*
Parochial Administrator, Church of Saint Raphael (Crystal); Adjunct Spiritual Director, Saint John Vianney College Seminary (Saint Paul)

FR. PETER HUGHES
Pastor, Immaculate Conception Parish (Watertown) and St. Boniface Catholic Church (St. Bonifacius)

FR. JEFF HUARD
Spiritual Director, Saint Paul Seminary (Saint Paul)

FR. TOM MARGEVICIUS
Sacramental Minister, Church of Saint Dominic (Northfield); Director, Office of Worship, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (Saint Paul)

FR. MATTHEW NORTHEMSCOLD
Tribunal, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (Saint Paul); Sacramental Minister, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church (Savage)

FR. JOSH SALONEK
Parochial Vicar, Church of Saint John Neumann (Eagan)

FR. TIM SANDQUIST
Parochial Vicar, Church of the Holy Family (Saint Louis Park); Chaplain, Chesterton Academy (Hopkins)

FR. JON VANDER PLOEG
Director of Spiritual Formation, Saint Paul Seminary (Saint Paul)

** Priest candidate in formation for membership in the Companions of Christ*

TOP TO BOTTOM: Companions and Archbishop Bernard Hebda with newly ordained Fr. Josh Salonek (photo courtesy of Dave Hrbacek/The Catholic Spirit); brother priests laughing at the Companions' annual conference; Fr. Kyle Kowalczyk and Fr. Luke Marquard finished the 2021 Twin Cities Marathon—Fr. Marquard raised \$15,000+ for Good Shepherd School.



COMPANIONS REMEMBER COZZENS BEFORE HE BECAME A BISHOP

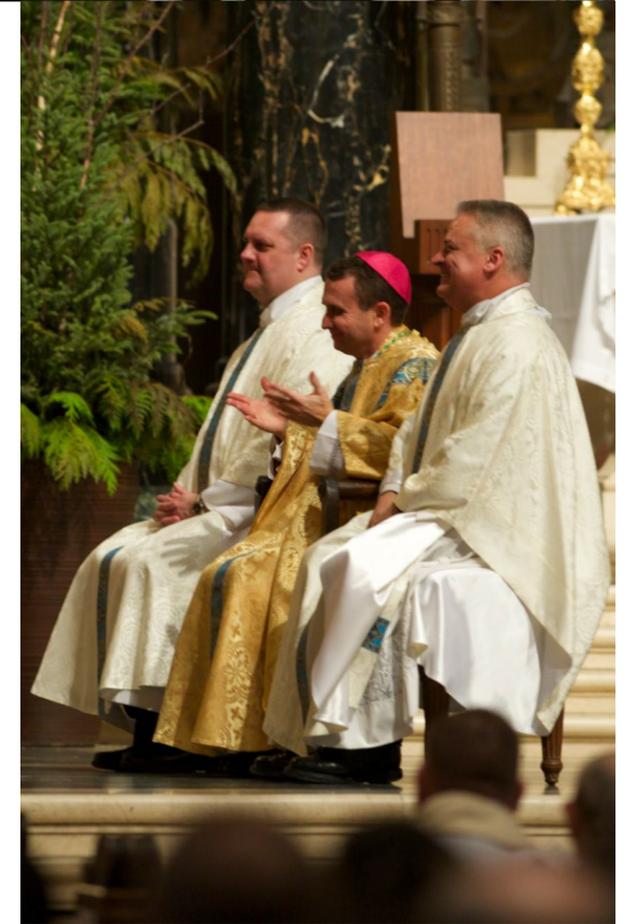
A Companion until his ordination as auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis in 2013, on October 18, Bishop Andrew Cozzens was appointed by Pope Francis as bishop of the Diocese of Crookston in northwest Minnesota. He will be installed in Crookston on December 6. His fellow Companions shared a few memories of their brother.

"When he was about to be ordained a priest, the seminarians put on a skit roasting the soon-to-be ordained men," recalled Fr. Tom Margevicius. "At that time, 'Drew' was famous for having a wristwatch with a calculator, a calendar, and other features (a big deal in 1997, pre-smart phone). Another Companion seminarian, Fr. Peter Richards, played the part of Drew, and on his wrist he duct-taped a snuff tin in which he kept all sorts of tiny useful items, in mockery of Drew's fancy computer watch."

Bishop Cozzens asked Fr. Margevicius and Fr. Jon VanderPloeg, to be his chaplain priests at his episcopal ordination in 2013.

"I have been blessed to have Bishop Cozzens as a brother and a friend," said Fr. Vander Ploeg. "He is so incredibly gifted, but what I admire most is his desire to be fully given to the Lord in the interior life. He wants to live abandoned and in the present moment with Jesus Christ."

Fr. Jonathan Kelly, the new rector at the Saint John Vianney College Seminary, put it more simply: "He shows us what the freedom of joyful obedience looks like."



At the top, seminarian Drew Cozzens (far right) is pictured with several other early Companions of Christ. Above, Bishop Andrew Cozzens is attended by Fr. Jon Vander Ploeg and Fr. Tom Margevicius at his episcopal ordination Mass in 2013. Ordination Mass photo courtesy of Bob Conroy Communication Links.

COMPANIONS OF CHRIST
PO Box 16239
SAINT PAUL, MN 55104

PRAYERS OFFERED—AND APPRECIATED!

As we enter the Advent season, know of our prayers for all of you. Please pray for the Companions and all priests, and for many more vocations to priesthood. For more about us, visit companionsofchrist.org. God bless you!

