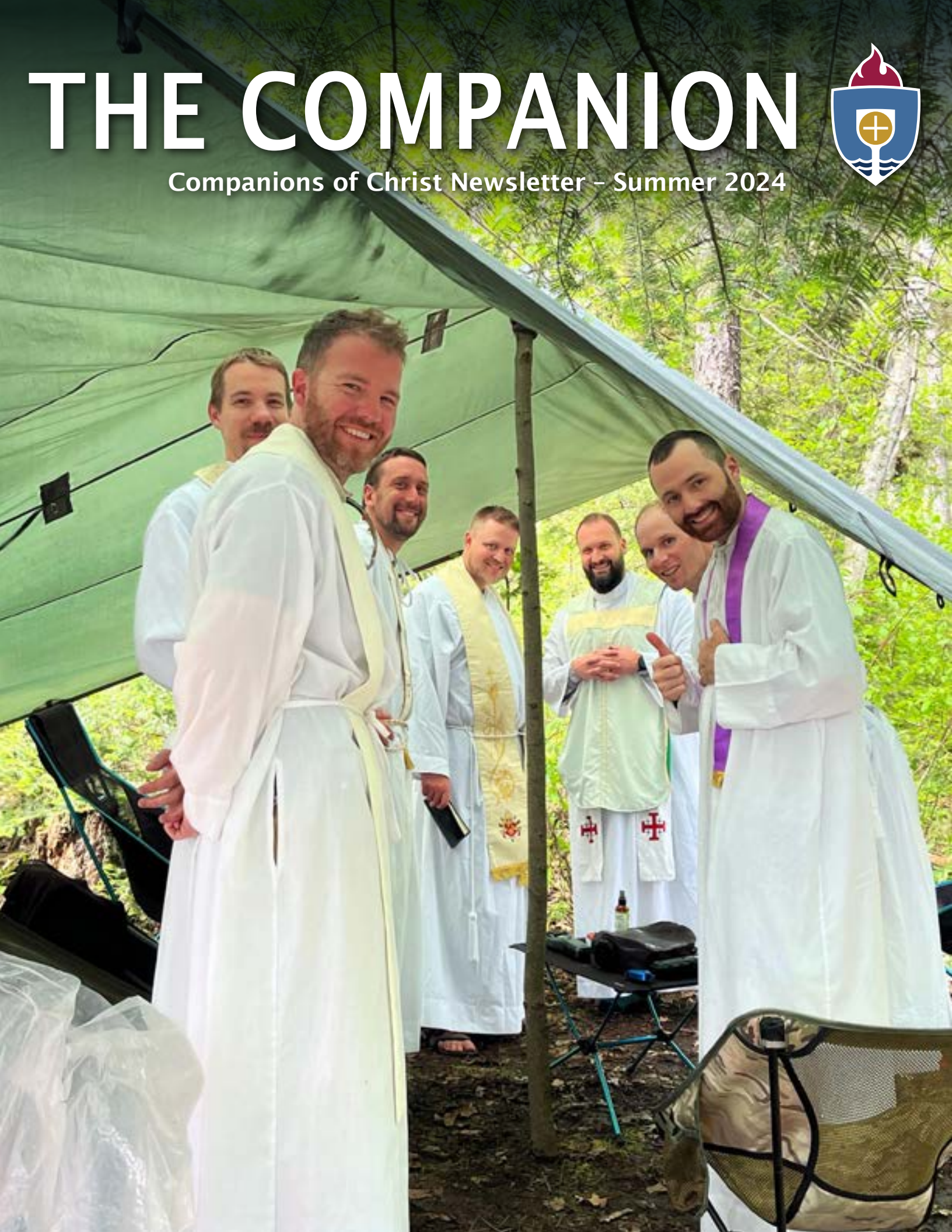


THE COMPANION

Companions of Christ Newsletter – Summer 2024



Our Faith Should Attract and Inspire

One of my favorite saints is the French bishop and Doctor of the Church, St. Francis de Sales. Known as the Gentle Doctor, he urges all people of God to a holiness that draws others to Christ—a holiness that is simple, practical, peaceful, and beautiful:

Now, it will be beautiful to the extent to which it is useful and agreeable to others. The sick will love your piety if it causes them to be charitably consoled. Your family will love it if it makes you more solicitous of their good, milder in the face of life's vicissitudes, and withal more amiable. Your spouse will love it to the extent to which your devotion makes you warmer and more affectionate. If your parents and friends see in you a greater frankness, helpfulness, and readiness to bend to their wills in those things that are not contrary to the will of God, they too will find your life of devotion attractive. And this, as much as possible, should be your aim.

The gospel is genuinely Good News, and, as disciples of Christ, we are called to live in a way that casts light and inspires those around us to take notice and ask questions.

I have experienced such lives firsthand among my brother Companions, and that experience has transformed my priesthood. I grew up in a big family, sharing a bedroom with five brothers, then went to seminary, where I had a built-in brotherhood—but the question was always in my heart: What will it be like in parish ministry? Later, while serving as vocations director, I met young men with a good sense of the Lord's calling who nonetheless were afraid of being isolated and overwhelmed by the work of being a pastor. For many of them, the very fact that the Companions of Christ existed was inspiration enough to take the first step into seminary. Not all of them went on to become Companions, but the presence of diocesan priests living in fraternal community gave them the courage to say yes.

There were also a number of men I worked with in the Vocations Office who left home and family behind specifically because of the Companions of Christ. So there I was, six or seven years into priesthood, with many good friends who were Companions, and it



dawned on me: I would be a healthier, holier priest living life intentionally with other priests.

In this issue of *The Companion*, we look at the attraction of a devout life well lived and the number of priests from outside the Archdiocese and the state of Minnesota who have come here to join the Companions. We also have photo highlights, new assignments, and more!

My call to the Companions was rooted, first and foremost, in the human need for community. I hope that our example attracts and inspires you to greater holiness in your own vocation and community.

In Christ,
Father Peter Williams
Moderator

Above, Father Peter Williams celebrates the Easter Vigil Mass at Saint Ambrose Catholic Church in Woodbury. On the cover: A group of Companions enjoy canoeing and camping in the Boundary Waters this summer.



Pennsylvania native Father Marc Paveglio celebrates the Mass at his parish, St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Roseville, Minnesota.

COME FOLLOW ME

Companions of Christ draw priestly vocations from beyond the borders of the Archdiocese

When Archbishop Bernard Hebda announced that three Companions of Christ priests would be sent on mission to the Diocese of Crookston, he acknowledged an amazing fact: the Companions attract priests to the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. To date, more than a dozen men have made Minnesota their home in order to join the Companions.

Called to Community

Father Marc Paveglio grew up in a small town in southeast Pennsylvania and attended public school. He was active in his parish, but the priesthood never crossed his mind until the summer before college.

“On three different occasions that summer, when I went up to receive Holy Communion, I heard the Lord speak my name in my heart,” he says. “I didn’t know it was the Lord, but I heard it. The third time, it was, ‘Marc,’ comma, ‘be my priest,’ period.”

Paveglio went to Penn State as planned—first to study aerospace engineering, later switching to human

development and family studies. He began to pray in earnest and joined the Newman Catholic Club, which led him to lectio divina, daily Mass, and opportunities to serve.

“The Lord wasn’t giving me an answer to the question, ‘Was that actually You?’ He was just letting my heart expand. Eventually, I decided that He was calling me to be a diocesan priest,” he says.

Paveglio became a seminarian for the Diocese of Harrisburg in 2007. He explored religious life briefly and knew he was called to parish priesthood. But although he had never lived anywhere else, he felt unsettled about serving in his home diocese.

“I desired to live the priesthood in a very intentional way, with brothers, but I didn’t know what that meant. So I asked my spiritual director at the Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF), Father John Horn, SJ. He advised me to talk with Father Andrew Cozzens [now Bishop Cozzens, formerly a Companion from the



Father Paveglio celebrates the sacrament of Baptism with parishioners Joe and Rachel Salz and family.

COMPANIONS OF CHRIST FROM GREATER MINNESOTA

- Father Michael Becker (Diocese of Saint Cloud)
- Father David Blume (Diocese of Saint Cloud)
- Father Jeff Huard (deceased) (Diocese of Duluth)
- Father Tom Niehaus (Diocese of Winona-Rochester)
- Father Peter Richards (Diocese of Duluth)

COMPANIONS OF CHRIST FROM BEYOND MINNESOTA

- Father Jake Anderson (Diocese of LaCrosse)
- Father Kevin Finnegan (Diocese of Rockford)
- Father Tom Margevičius (Diocese of Cleveland)
- Father Tony O'Neill (Archdiocese of Glasgow)
- Father Brian Park (Diocese of Fort Worth)
- Father Marc Paveglio (Diocese of Harrisburg)
- Father John Vander Ploeg (Diocese of Grand Rapids)
- Father Chad VanHoose (Diocese of Columbus)

Archdiocese of Denver] about the Companions of Christ.”

Everything Paveglio learned about Companions sounded great, but Minnesota is a long way from Pennsylvania.

“I kept on thinking, praying, researching, wondering what this was all about. Then Archbishop Harry Flynn came to give our silent retreat in January of 2010,” he recalls. “I was praying with John 21, where Simon Peter says, ‘I’m going fishing,’ and the disciples say, ‘We will go with you.’ I was wrecked by that simple line. It brought all of my desires for priestly brotherhood into focus. I wanted to be sent by the Lord, and I wanted others to come with me.”

He shared his heart with Archbishop Flynn, who invited Paveglio and a friend to Minnesota.

“We saw firsthand how much the Companions loved each other,” says Paveglio. “My friend Gaurav [Father Gaurav Shroff of the Archdiocese of Atlanta] and I were both like, ‘I don’t know if this is for us, but this is amazing!’”

By January 2011, the call was clear: The Lord wanted Paveglio as a Companion. He applied for entrance into priestly formation for

the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis and prepared to move to Minnesota.

“It was challenging for my parents,” he says. “They had been completely supportive of my vocation to the priesthood, but when I decided to take time for discernment in Minnesota, they thought that I was getting cold feet. A few months later, they came to visit and met a lot of Companions priests. Father Jeff Huard, especially, was instrumental in giving them peace. Now they feel blessed that I’m able to serve here.”

Father Paveglio was ordained in 2014. “The Companions of Christ were the answer to the desire of my heart 15 years ago,” he says. “Everything I dreamt about priestly community—living, eating, praying, and singing together—

I’ve experienced in the Companions. I feel so blessed that what the Lord stirred up in my heart wasn’t just a passing thought. He promises to bring His works to completion!”

Brothers In Christ

Not every Companion’s call is as dramatic as Father Paveglio’s. NET Ministries attracts faith-filled young men from across the US, many of whom encounter Companions priests and choose to stay. (See “Evangelists at Heart” in the Winter 2023 issue of *The Companion*.)

“I learned about the Companions while serving with NET as a team supervisor,” Father Brian Park recalls. “I was living in a Catholic men’s household and discerning a call to the priesthood. The idea that I could continue to live in community as a diocesan priest was very attractive to me. The holiness I saw in the Companion priests inspired me to want to be a priest like them.”

Priests in surrounding dioceses have also become increasingly familiar with the Companions of Christ, and even before the group existed in its current form, young men seeking sainthood were converging in Saint Paul.

“I grew up in a regular Catholic family in Saint Cloud,” says Father Michael Becker. “I liked the priests I knew, and I was an altar server and in the youth group, but I never thought of priesthood for myself.”

During his second year at University of St. Thomas in Saint Paul, Becker decided to leave the party scene behind and live for God. He fell in love with his theology studies and served the inner-city poor on mission in Philadelphia. A profound encounter with the Holy Spirit at a charismatic event during his last semester of college and the priests he encountered around that time led to a deep attraction to mysticism and the radical holiness of the saints.

“My faith was really becoming alive and personal to me,” he says. “I got into a Companions summer household, and I

loved it. They hadn’t decided to pursue priesthood yet, but they had a desire to be saints. They didn’t want things watered down, and I was captured by that.”

This year, he celebrates 25 years as a priest and Companion.

“God has surprised me at every juncture,” Father Becker says. “It’s a great feeling to have 25 years under the belt, but I need the brotherhood of the Companions and their vision for a saintly life. If I had just gone off like a Lone Ranger, I wouldn’t have made it.”

Fellow 25-year jubilarian Father Tom Margevičius is also a Companions transplant: Raised in Cleveland, he served with NET Ministries and St. Paul’s Outreach, which brought him to Minnesota (see below). Closer to home, Father Tom Niehaus transferred into the Archdiocese from the Diocese of Winona-Rochester in 2019 to join the Companions.

“I was drawn to the Companions of Christ because of the authentic way that these priests live intentionally for Jesus and how they seek to live out the priesthood with prayer and fraternity as the foundation of their life together,” Father Niehaus says. “Being a member of the Companions has helped me to be more dedicated to the mission that Christ has called me to. It is a great joy to know that I am part of a band of brother priests who are striving to live fully for Christ.”

CLEVELAND COMPANION

Excerpts from “Cleveland native drawn to the archdiocese by Companions of Christ,” The Catholic Spirit, official newspaper of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, May 23, 2024

Before Father Tom Margevičius started grade school, he was already thinking about the priesthood and imitating his pastor’s movements during Mass at his family’s parish in Cleveland, Ohio.

The vocation was still in the back of his mind as he led wildlife tours in Ohio state parks, worked with youth through NET Ministries and St. Paul’s Outreach in St. Paul and traveled the country with a Gospel music group before he finally entered the St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul in 1995 when he was in his 30s.

When Father Margevičius, now 62, told his mother he wanted to be a priest in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis because of a new community of diocesan priests called the Companions of Christ he’d helped found, she said, “Tommy, Cleveland needs priests too. Why don’t you come here?”

[A]sked about his future as a priest, Father Margevičius quoted his longtime Companion friend, the late Father Jeff Huard, in saying that he recommits to his vocation each morning.

“That’s the daily engaging of the reality, day in and day out,” he said. “Today I’m going to do this and I’m going to try my best to do it. ... If I learned something from yesterday’s mistakes, all the better.

BROTHERS DWELLING IN UNITY



APPOINTMENTS FOR SPRING AND SUMMER 2024

FATHER CONNOR MCGINNIS
Chaplain, Providence Academy (Plymouth)

FATHER MATTHEW NORTHEMSCOLD
Sacramental Minister, Church of Saint Pius V (Cannon Falls)
and Church of Saint Joseph (Miesville)

FATHER ALEXANDER RASSET
Parochial Vicar, Church of Saint Michael (St. Michael)

FATHER TIMOTHY SANDQUIST
Parochial Administrator, Church of the Most Holy Redeemer
(Montgomery) and Church of Saint Patrick (Shieldsville)

FATHER RYAN SUSTACEK
Parochial Vicar, Church of Saint John Neumann (Eagan)
and Chaplain, Totus Tuus Catechetical Program (Saint Paul)

FATHER JOHN UTECHT
Parochial Vicar, Church of Saint Jude
of the Lake (Mahtomedi)
and Chaplain, Hill Murray School
(Maplewood)

FATHER NICK VANCE
Parochial Vicar, Church of Our Lady
of Grace (Edina)

FATHER CHAD VANHOOSE
Chaplain, NET Ministries
(West Saint Paul)

FATHER JOSEPH WAPPES
Ongoing Studies (Rome)

On the facing page: This summer, Companions of Christ priests enjoyed fraternal time and a great catch of fish in the Boundary Waters in June (top left), led a pilgrimage to Ireland in July (top right), and spoke on priestly fraternity to clergy in Alberta, Canada in August (bottom). This page: All of the Companions gathered for their annual conference at Broom Tree Retreat Center in August.





The Companions of Christ

DIOCESAN PRIESTS LIVING IN FRATERNITY

PO Box 16239

SAINT PAUL, MN 55116

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CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEWLY ORDAINED PRIESTS!

Father Nick Vance, Father Ryan Sustacek, Father Alex Rasset,
and Father Joseph Wappes

