



IN KIND LOVE

The Road to Sainthood

Brother Columba O'Neill, CSC (1848-1923)

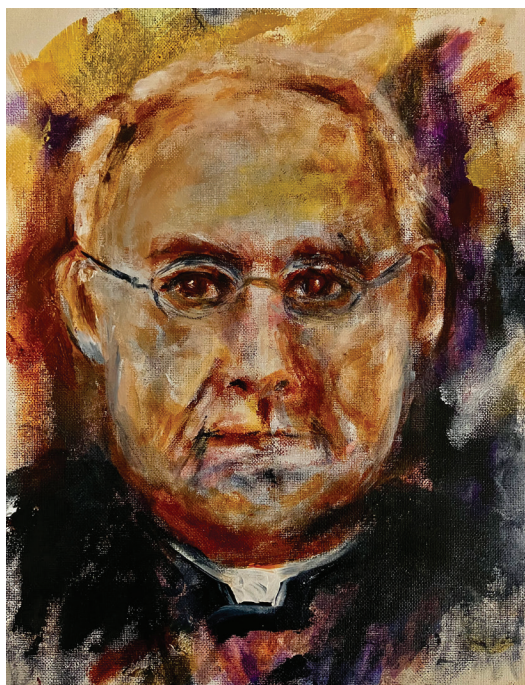
Volume 1, Issue 5

Brother Columba's humble legacy continues to inspire us

BY: EDWIN V. DONNELLY, CSC—EDITOR

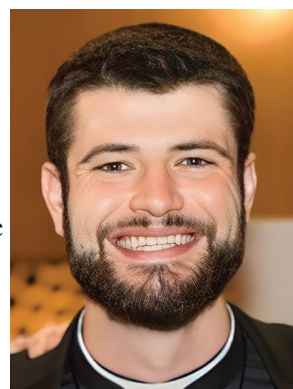
Dear Readers,

Welcome to the March 2025 issue of *In Kind Love*. As we continue our journey of faith inspired by Brother Columba's enduring legacy, this issue offers fresh reflections and artistic expressions that deepen our understanding of devotion and service.



Brother Columba O'Neill, CSC
Artist Rev. Ronald Patrick Raab, CSC

We are delighted to feature a new poem by Brother Philip R. Smith, CSC, and accompanying artwork by Rev. Ronald P. Raab, CSC. The poem "Winsome Witness" captures the humble spirit and transformative power of Brother Columba's ministry in a style both heartfelt and lyrical. This creative piece sets the tone for an issue that is as reflective as it is inspiring.



Edwin V. Donnelly, CSC

To follow is a moving article about Sister Agnete Renwald, recounting her miraculous cure through Brother Columba's intercession. Along with a tender portrait of the sister herself, her testimony stands as a testament to the healing grace of the Sacred Heart—a grace that continues to touch lives today.

Our regular column, "An Exchange of Hearts," is enriched by Father Raab's contemplative insights. His reflections invite us to consider how our own lives may echo the call to humility and love exemplified by Brother Columba. In addition, Pope Francis's recent encyclical, *Dilexit Nos*, is thoughtfully explored by

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He would lead thousands of individuals to experience intimately the healing love of "these Two Hearts: The Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary."



undergraduate seminarian Nicholas Tarini. His article draws powerful connections between the Gospel's message and the life of our beloved Brother Columba.

We are also pleased to include an article on the Immaculate Heart of Mary by Brother Liam M. Johnson, CSC, whose piece challenges us to open our hearts ever more fully in response to God's grace. We wrap up this issue with Brother Philip's answer to why Brother Columba's canonization would be useful to the Church Universal. As always, we remain grateful for your ongoing support of the swift advancement of Brother Columba's

cause and the work of Holy Cross throughout the world. May this humble brother's legacy continue to inspire us all to seek Christ in every moment.

In kind love,
Edwin V. Donnelly, CSC

- *Edwin V. Donnelly, CSC, is a Holy Cross seminarian from Cranford, NJ. A 2021 graduate of the University of Notre Dame, he studied theology, classics (Greek and Latin), and liturgical music. He is now in his second year of the MDiv at Notre Dame.*

Winsome witness

Written by: Brother Philip Smith, CSC



Winsome witness with feeble feet, John, was
born 'mid Mackey's shale.

His mystic mind for meaning,
mending soles of heavy souls.

Under Mary's gilded dome,
Brother Columba committed, cobbling,
Hope-fetching, through Sacred Heart
throbbing, igniting a fire-fueled faith.

Intercessor, Heart adorer,
offering prayers as candles flicker.

Mender not just of shoes,
but of polio-plagued legs,
Blight infested arms,
and weary-wounded hearts.

Shoe-stitcher of all saints,
cobble together my bundle of burdens,
And heave me on toward heaven.

In Kind Love

A bi-monthly newsletter to enlighten readers of the life and spirituality of Brother Columba O'Neill, CSC

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Celebrating the Life of Brother Columba O’Neill

A Legacy of Humble Service

BY: BROTHER PHILIP SMITH, CSC

While Brother Columba was visiting his family in Keokuk, Iowa in 1914, he met Sister Agnete. She was hospitalized in Keokuk awaiting an operation to remove a “swelling” on one of her breasts. In early 1912, she had begun treatments for the lump from two doctors. By early 1914, both physicians “advised [her] to have [it] cut out as soon as possible.”

In a letter dated February 7, 1915, Sister Agnete writes to Brother Columba.

“You advised me to wear the Sacred Heart badge and to make a novena to the Sacred Heart which I did. And as soon as my novena ended my cure was affected. There are no traces of ever having the ailment.” She goes on to say that she made a promise to the Sacred Heart that if she was ever cured, she would publicize the fact.

“It is to the Sacred Heart of Jesus that I owe my miraculous cure.”

Born in 1874, Anna Renwald was one of thirteen children. She and two of her six sisters entered the Sisters of Saint Francis of Dubuque. Sister Agnete was forty-one years old when she received her cure. After seventy-one years as a Franciscan Sister, she died in Dubuque in 1960. ✠



Sister Agnete

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament be praised, adored, and loved with grateful affection every moment in all the tabernacles of the world, even to the end of time. Amen.

Intercession Requests

In all future issues of *In Kind Love* any requests for prayers for persons in need of the grace of the Sacred Heart through the intercession of Brother Columba will be included. You may be as specific as you wish when writing your request for prayer.

For example: For the cure of Mary’s poor eyesight; For the cure of John who has been diagnosed with lung cancer; For a return to the Church for my son Tim.

Please send all intentions to Brother Philip Smith psmith@brothersofholycross.com by April 1, 2025 to be included in the Volume 2 Issue 1 of *In Kind Love* scheduled for May 1, 2025.



An Exchange of Hearts

By: Rev. Ronald Patrick Raab, CSC

Losing and Gaining

Jesus tells us we must lose our life to find it. This counterintuitive statement may sound threatening to those of us who hold on tightly to wealth, power, prestige and our own authority. How difficult it is to pierce the self-centered heart that beats its own strength.

As Christians, we believe in Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. We believe that our lives are available to follow him when we finally realize we can't control life or find true meaning in our self-satisfied ways. The



The Sacred Heart of Jesus
[artist Rev. Ronald Patrick Raab, CSC]

liturgical season of Lent invites us to not only celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection, but also to live such a mystery in our daily life.

Brother Columba realized his earthly life was an invitation to live the power of Christ's compassion. We know he sought such love in his heart because we know his conviction to help other people find healing and joy. While we cannot fully articulate his heartfelt prayer beyond the ritual prayers of a religious community, Brother Columba's invitation to seek the heart of Christ was itself an expression of his ability to discover the love, mercy and compassion of Jesus Christ.

Brother Columba held in his heart the mystery of Christ, the paradox of losing our earthly power and living and gaining in the compassion and integrity of Christ Jesus. We may articulate such prayer for Brother Columba by viewing the fruit of his generous outreach and his ability to offer devotion to the Heart of Christ Jesus. ✠

• *Rev. Ronald Patrick Raab, CSC serves as religious superior of Holy Cross House, our retirement and medical facility at Notre Dame, Indiana. He is an award-winning author, blogger and visual artist.*

Let us Pray

- † for uncertain teenagers. May our youth discover their gifts and talents in Christ Jesus. May Christ reveal hope in all our questions about the future. We pray to the Lord.
- † for people experiencing loss. May the Sacred Heart hold the chaos of people struggling for food, shelter and sobriety. We pray to the Lord.
- † for people living with emotional insecurity. May God receive our brokenness and offer us the light of Christ. We pray to the Lord.
- † for couples preparing for marriage. May the Sacred Heart model love and fidelity to every couple who desire generative love and merciful kindness. We pray to the Lord.



Our Mother's Heart

By: Brother Liam Johnson, CSC

Mary's fiat illuminates how we can answer God's call to bring Christ to those we encounter every day

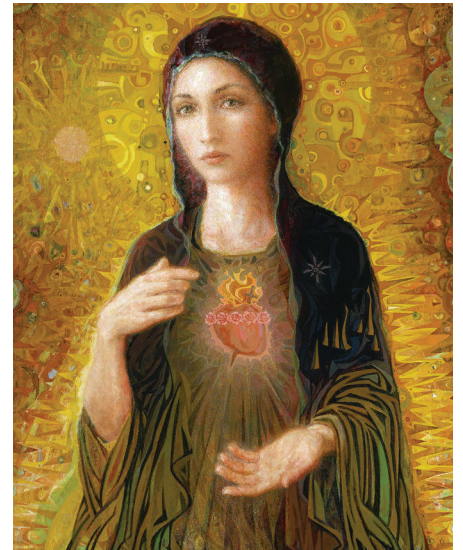
To understand Our Lady's Immaculate Heart, we must look at how her heart responds to God. Luke's Gospel provides us with a prime example in the story of the Annunciation. Mary's response to God—her fiat—illuminates for the Church the proper response to God's invitation to discipleship.

In her spiritual masterpiece *The Reed of God*, Caryll Houselander describes Mary's fiat in these words:

"The wind of the Spirit had beaten on the door, rattled the windows, tapped on the dark glass with the tiny hands of flowers, flung golden seed against it, even, in hours of storm, lashed it with the boughs of a great tree—the prophecy of the cross—and yet the Spirit was outside. But one day a girl opened the door, and the little house was swept pure and sweet by the wind. Seas of light swept through it, and the light remained in it; and in that little house, a Child was born—and the Child was God."

Our Lady said yes for the human race. Each one of us must echo that yes in our own lives.

We must echo Mary's fiat just as we must form our hearts to be like hers. How is God trying to break through our stony hearts? How must we shape our hearts so that, like Mary, we may give our yes to the Lord each day? Mary's yes brought about Christ's in breaking into our world in human flesh. In our discipleship, God calls each of us to bring Christ to those we encounter every day. ✙



• Brother Liam Johnson, CSC is a temporarily professed scholastic for the United States Province of Priest and Brothers at Moreau Seminary

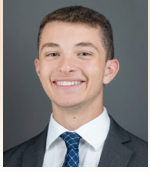
Let us Pray

† for our elderly who fear the nighttime. May the Heart of Christ protect people in nursing homes and those struggling on their own. May the worried find consolation at dawn. We pray to the Lord.

† for Francis, our Pope, and Kevin, our Bishop. May the Sacred Heart of Christ be known in every action and concern in the Church. May all who lead us first find the love of Jesus Christ. We pray to the Lord.

† for people living with a new cancer diagnosis. May every fear be eased in the Heart of Christ. May the healing love of the Sacred Heart be known in our fragile bodies. We pray to the Lord.

† for abused children. May Christ welcome the fragile lives of children. May the Sacred Heart ease the trauma from every life on earth. We pray to the Lord.



History and Lore of the Sacred Heart

By: Nick Tarini, University of Notre Dame Collegian.

The Sacred Heart is the means of uniting ourselves to Christ's presence

Pope Francis's latest encyclical, *Dilexit Nos* (He Loved Us), reflects on the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the love that flows from it. Although Brother Columba died more than a century before its release, *Dilexit Nos* offers insights into his mission and reflects the loving nature of his ministry.

The second chapter of the encyclical explores how the heart of Christ is the root of the Gospel. In everything Jesus did during his earthly ministry—his healings, his words, even his gaze—he revealed his overwhelming love for those he encountered. This love, which flows from his Sacred Heart, culminates in the crucifixion, where he poured himself out completely: spiritually, for the forgiveness of the world's sins, and physically, as blood and water flowed from his pierced side. From St. Paul's reflections on



Pope Francis

Christ's sacrifice, we receive the words that give this encyclical its title: He loved us. This simple yet powerful truth unveils the mystery of the Sacred Heart—God, the creator of the universe,

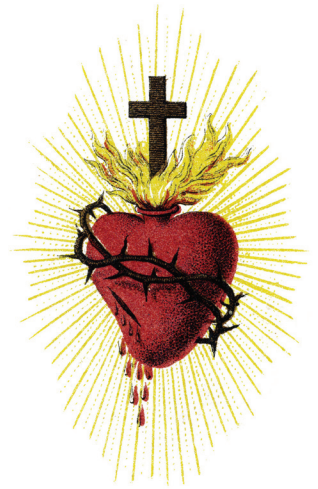
of every person who has ever walked the earth, and of all things in existence, gave his life out of love. And not just for humanity in general, but for you.

In the third chapter of *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis reflects on how devotion to the Sacred Heart deepens our relationship with Christ. He highlights the Eucharist as central to this devotion because, in the Eucharist, Christ offers himself entirely. Through it, we are formed in his

love, learning to love as he loves. Drawing on the words of previous popes, the Holy Father emphasizes that devotion to the Sacred Heart is a means of uniting ourselves to Christ's presence, allowing his love to take root in us and be shared with the world.

Brother Columba's life and ministry bore witness to this same devotion. His deep reliance on the Lord was nourished through the Eucharist, shaping how he shared Christ's love with everyone he encountered. At a time when daily Mass and Communion were uncommon, he made them a priority—not as an obligation, but as an expression of his relationship with Christ. His life stands as a reminder that faith is not meant to be compartmentalized. In a world that often moves too fast, the Sacred Heart calls us back to what it means to be truly united with Christ.

Ultimately, Brother Columba's life reveals a simple but often-overlooked truth: God is not meant to be just a part of our lives—not even the biggest part. He is present in every moment, working through everything we do. Faith is not something to balance alongside school, work, and family; it is the foundation that gives meaning to all these things. Brother Columba lived this truth fully, and we are called to do the same. Molding our lives to Christ begins with allowing our hearts to be shaped by his Sacred Heart, which continues to be poured out for us in the Eucharist. ✠



• *Nick Tarini is a sophomore in Old College studying at Notre Dame pursuing a double major in psychology and philosophy.*



Take Courage and Believe in the Sacred Heart

By: Brother Philip Smith, CSC, Ed.D.

Brother Columba's Canonization: Its Usefulness to the Church Universal

So, why would the canonization of Brother Columba be of usefulness to the universal Church? Because the lives of ordinary men and women who are holy in spite of their ordinariness is always useful for the edification of God's holy people. Brother Columba's life orbited around devotion to the Sacred Heart. The heart, the organ we traditionally associate with loving reminds us of God's unconditional love for us. It also calls us to love as expansively as Jesus did. The psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan defined healthy adult maturity as "a state in which tenderness prevails."

In her book *Saint Watching*, Phyllis McGinley writes that "saints are human beings with an added dimension. They are obsessed by goodness and by God as Michelangelo was obsessed by line and form, as Shakespeare was bewitched by language, and Beethoven by sound."

Brother Columba O'Neill spent the

entirety of his adult life obsessed with the well-being of all who sought his prayers and intercession to Jesus Christ through devotion to His Sacred Heart. So much so, that he physically exhausted himself in self-sacrifice for his brothers and sisters.

On May 23, 1982, Brother André Bessette, CSC was beatified by Pope Saint John Paul II; during his homily about this Canadian Holy Cross Brother, Saint John Paul spoke of André's usefulness to the universal Church. The lives of the two Brothers are virtually interchangeable.

Brother Columba lived the beatitudes of the pure and meek of heart. It is thanks to this simplicity that Brother Columba showed many the way to God.

Like St. André Brother Columba showed boundless charity and did everything possible to soothe the despair of those who confided in him. With little instruction, Brother Columba understood what was essential to his faith. For Brother Columba to believe meant to submit freely and lovingly to the Divine Will. For him everything existed through the mystery of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Brother Columba lived the beatitudes of the pure and meek of heart. It is thanks to this simplicity that Brother Columba showed many the way to God.

Throughout North America and specifically, South Bend, Indiana at the University of Notre Dame, Brother Columba was the source for all to develop a devotion to

the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He said, "If you trust in the Sacred Heart, the Sacred Heart will cure you". All spoke to the Miracle Man of Notre Dame of God and His presence among us.

Simply put, saints resemble Jesus. They do not avoid suffering, but consider it a way to be united to God. Brother Columba will

become a saint because of his personal intimacy with God. He will become a saint because he loved God above all and placed himself entirely at the Lord's service. When God called Columba, he answered with complete transparency and abandonment to His will. ✚

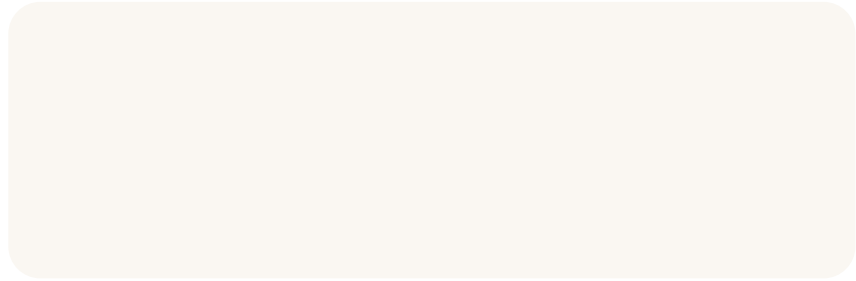
• *Brother Philip is the archivist for the Midwest Province of Brothers of the Congregation of Holy Cross. After 50 years in secondary education, he became archivist in 2019. In 2020, he began his work in the archives on the materials related to Brother Columba.*



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*How blessed
are the lame
and crippled for
they will walk in
love and freedom.*

