



# The Alaskan Shepherd



Volume 48 Number 5

July-August 2010

Some give by going to the Missions

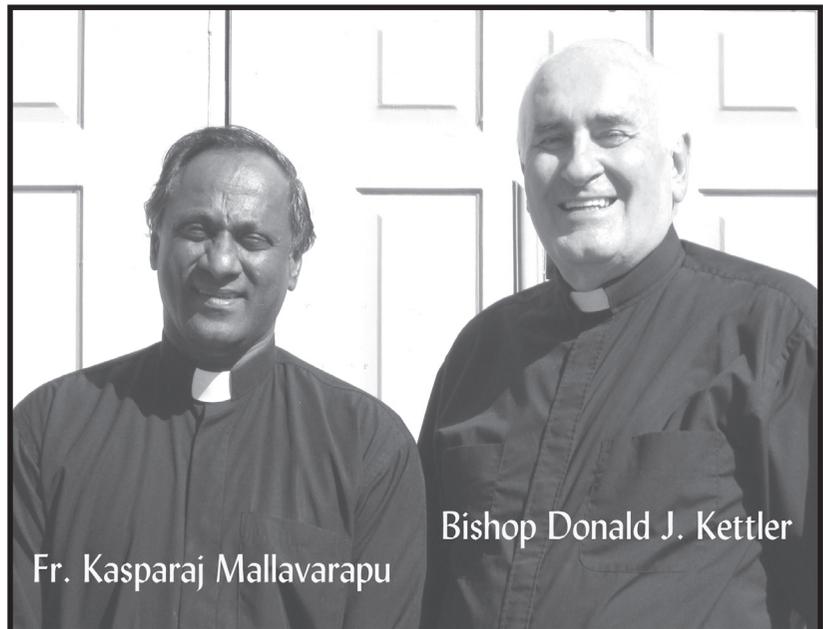
Some go by giving to the Missions

Without both there are no Missions

## YEAR OF THE ALASKAN PRIEST: Part VI FATHER KASPARAJ MALLAVRAPU

**Editor's Note:** *It has been a great honor to bring to you, these past months, these brief glimpses into the lives of the priests of the Diocese of Fairbanks. Their dedication and heroism often goes unsung. I depart this series with great satisfaction that now you, our dear benefactors, have come to know the Missionary priests of Northern Alaska a little better. I pray, that in your own daily triumphs and struggles, you may remember them, and the people they serve, and I thank you most sincerely for your support of these missions and missionary people. Without your prayers and support, it simply would not be possible.*

—Patty Walter



Fr. Kasparaj Mallavarapu

Bishop Donald J. Kettler

Kasparaj Mallavarapu was born on January 7, 1956, in Kilacheri, a small town of about 2500 people, 35 miles west of Madras, now called "Chennai," in the southern state of Tamil Nadu in India. Kilacheri has a great Catholic influence, having produced many nuns and priests, an Archbishop, and two religious orders for women. Kasparaj's father, Alphonse Mallavarapu, served in the British Military in WWII. Upon retiring from the military, he provided for his wife, Adaikalamary, and his four sons, Vincent, Kaspar, Anthony, and Felix, through farming. Both Vincent and Kaspar would become Roman Catholic priests.



*This photo was taken in November 2009, on the occasion of a casual dinner gathering in Bishop Donald J. Kettler's home.*

- 1) Bishop Donald J. Kettler 2) Father Stanislaw Jaszek 3) Father Gregg D. Wood, S.J. 4) Father Roman P. Caly 5) Father Frederick C. Bayler 6) Father Theodore E. Kestler, S.J. 7) Father Kasparaj Mallavarapu 8) Father Charles J. Peterson, S.J. 9) Father John B. Martinek 10) Father Normand A. Pepin, S.J. 11) Father Jack de Verteuil 12) Father Joseph Hemmer, O.F.M. 13) Father Patrick D. Bergquist 14) Father Ross A. Tozzi 15) Father Thomas G. Provinsal, S.J. 16) Father Robert Fath 17) Father Sean P. Thomson 18) Father Miroslaw Woznica

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Over 48% of South India's population is invested in agriculture. The primary crops cultivated in South India include paddy, sorghum, pearl millet, pulses, sugarcane, cotton, chilli, and ragi. Areca, coffee, tea, vanilla, rubber, pepper, tapioca, and cardamom are cultivated on the hills, while coconut grows in abundance in coastal areas. Andhra Pradesh is the largest producer of rice in India, while Karnataka produces 70% of India's coffee.

The estimated population of South India is 233 million. The largest linguistic groups in South India include the Telugus, Tamils, Kannadigas, Malayalis, Tuluvas, Kodavas and Konkanis. About 83% of South Indians follow Hinduism. Islam has the second-highest number of followers in the region, with 11%, while 5% follow Christianity, about 2% of which is Roman Catholic. Though Catholics make up less than 2 percent of India's population, the Church provides an estimated 22 percent of all health-care services, operating 5,000 facilities, and employs 33 percent of Indian health-care workers, including 40,000 Catholic nurses.

There are broadly four stages of school education in India; namely, primary, upper primary, secondary, and higher secondary (or high school). Overall, schooling lasts 12 years. However, there are considerable differences between the various states in terms of the first 10 years of schooling. The government is committed to ensuring universal elementary education (primary and upper primary) education for all children aged 6-14 years of age. In India, primary school includes children of ages six to eleven, organized into classes one through five. Upper Primary and Secondary school pupils aged eleven through fifteen are organized into classes six through ten, and higher secondary school students ages sixteen through seventeen are enrolled in classes eleven through twelve. In some places there is a concept called Middle/Upper Primary schools for classes between six to eight. In such cases, classes nine to twelve are classified under high school category. Higher Education in India provides an opportunity to specialize in a field and includes technical schools (such as the Indian Institutes of Technology), colleges, and universities.



Kasparaj attended elementary school at St. Ignatius School in Kilacheri. The city of Kilacheri is particularly significant to Catholicism in South India, having produced the youngest Archbishop, Archbishop Samineni Arulappa. He was born August 28, 1924, and died February 13, 2005. He was also the first Archbishop who had the honor of being consecrated by Pope Paul VI in Rome.

In 1970, Kasparaj began attending High School at St. Don Bosco, in Pannur.

In 1972, he enrolled at St. John De Brito College, in Madura.

Incidentally, St. John De Brito is the second canonized saint martyred in India, St. Thomas the Apostle being the first. He was killed on February 11, 1693. De Brito entered the Society of Jesus at fifteen, missioning in Madura, in southern India. In September 1673, he reached Goa. Before taking up his work, he spent thirty days in the Exercises of St. Ignatius at Ambalacate near Cranganore. In 1674, he traversed the Ghauts on foot and reached Colei in the Cauvery Delta, where he perfected himself in the language. He journeyed northward at least as far as Madras and Vellore, but Cauvery Delta, Tanjore, Madura, and Marava, between Madura and the sea, were his primary areas of conversion. In 1684, he was imprisoned in Marava, and, though freed by the

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*An Alaskan Missionary's Story  
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(Paperback 507 pages) \$35.00, includes shipping.

In *Alaskana Catholica*, Fr. Renner offers a thorough picture of the Catholic Church's ministerial activity in Alaska from its beginning in the nineteenth century to the present. In his autobiography, *A Kindly Providence*, he tells the story of a dedicated missionary priest. A scholar, a teacher, and always a Jesuit priest, he taught German and Latin at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, edited the Catholic newsletter *The Alaskan Shepherd*, and served as pastor of two different Indian villages on the Yukon River during his 40 years in Alaska. He was a recipient of the "Governor's Award for Friend of the Humanities," in 2002. The two books, both richly illustrated, are now available from the *Alaskan Shepherd*. The books are perfect gifts, whether to give or to receive!

*Proceeds benefit the Catholic Missions of Northern Alaska. www.cbna.info*

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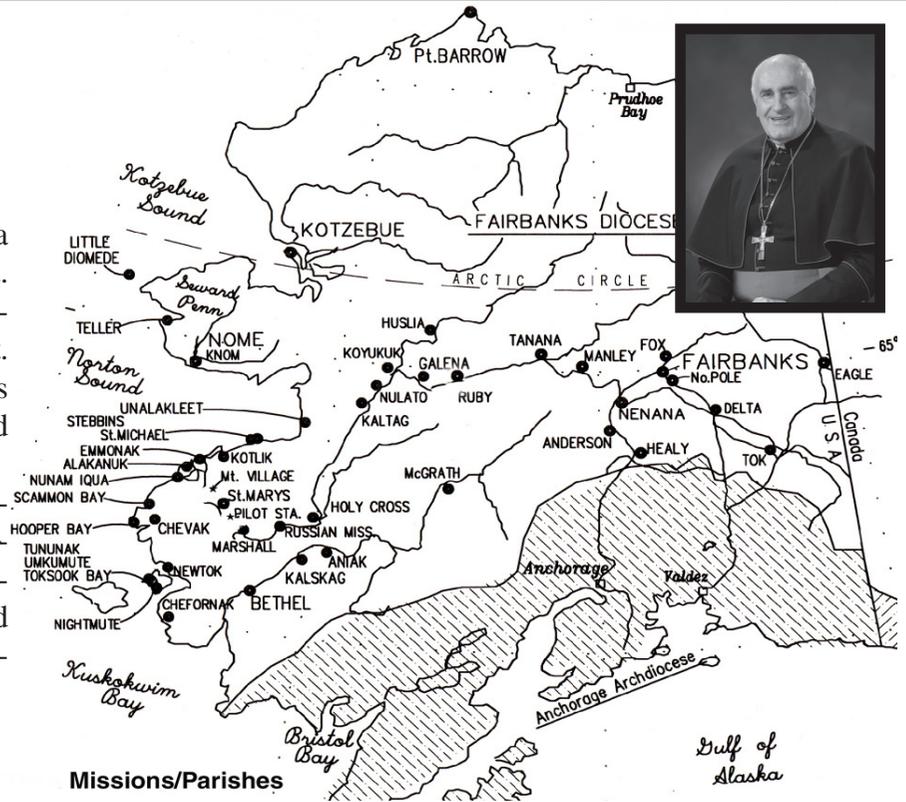
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**To the friends and benefactors of  
the Missionary Diocese  
of Fairbanks:**

In September we begin our annual novena to the patroness of the missions of Alaska, St. Therese, "The Little Flower." The Novena will begin on September 23 and will end on the Feast of St. Therese, October 1. On each of these days a Mass will be offered for our friends and for their needs and petitions.

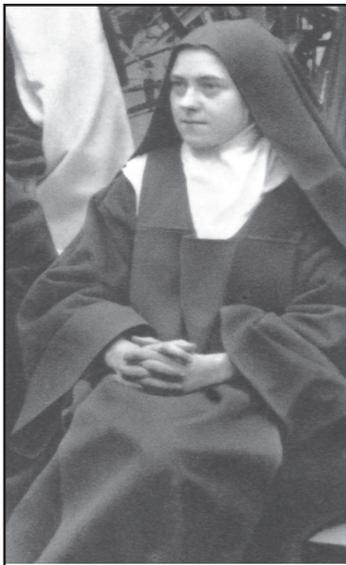
You are invited to submit petitions to be remembered during the novena. No offering is necessary. Any received will be used to support our ministries here in Northern Alaska. You are also invited to join us on the novena days (September 23-October 1), by praying the \*prayer below:

Please detach and send intention portion.  
Use prayer below for the Novena.



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Please remember the following petitions during the Novena to St. Therese:

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***\*"O Lord, Who said, 'Unless you become as little children you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven,' GRANT US, WE BESEECH YOU, the grace to so follow in the way of Blessed Therese in humility and simplicity that through her intercession these petitions and those of all our members may be granted as part of the shower of roses she promised to send upon this earth."***

king, he was expelled from the country. In 1688, he was sent to Europe as deputy to the triennial Congregation of Procurators. Resisting urgent attempts to keep him in Portugal, and refusing the Archbishopric of Cranganore, he returned in 1691 to the borders of Madura and Marava. Having converted Teriadeven, a Maravese prince, he required him to dismiss all his wives but one. Among them was a niece of the king, who in anger demanded De Brito's death. He, and others, were taken to the capital, Ramnad, where the Brahmins clamored for his death. De Brito was then taken to Oreiour, some thirty miles northward along the coast, where his head was struck off. In India, he is called the Red Sand Saint, because his martyrdom colored the sand red and it is still red today. He had obtained many conversions during his life, established many missions, and was famous for his miracles before and after his death. St. John de Brito was beatified by Blessed Pius IX, on August 21, 1853. He was later canonized by Pope Pius XII, on June 22, 1947. St. John de Brito's feast day is February 4.

In 1974, Kasparaj attended St. Thomas Minor Seminary and began learning English and Latin.

In 1975, he applied to Sacred Heart Seminary, in Hyderabad, and was accepted. Sacred Heart Seminary is a Major Seminary belonging to the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore, India. Since its inception on September 8, 1936, the Salesians of Don Bosco, of the Province of Madras, administered Sacred Heart Seminary. On March 31, 1998, the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore took over the administration. The residential staff consists of both diocesan and Salesian clergy.

The Seminary offers a six-year program of training for the Catholic priesthood consisting of a two-year Philosophy course and a three and half year Theology course, in addition to the spiritual, pastoral and an all-round human formation that a Major Seminary is expected to provide.

In the Philosophy years, the seminary prepares the candidate for one particular ministry namely, youth apostolate. The student is provided with special courses, leadership seminars and supervised youth ministry to reach this goal.

In the Theology program, the stress is on pastoral preparation for the priestly ministry ahead. The student is expected to acquire a critical awareness of the actual situation and the various forces shaping the country, so that he will be equipped to meet the challenges of the contemporary world in the light of faith.

In 1981, at the young age of 58, Kasparaj's father woke not feeling well. He made a trip to the doctor's office and on his return home, while boarding the bus, suffered a stroke and died. It was Holy Saturday, April 18.

In 1983, Kasparaj was ordained a Deacon and completed his Bachelor of Science degree. By 1984, he had completed his Master in Theology and was ordained to the Priesthood, on April 2, 1984, by Archbishop Samineni Arulappa.

Following ordination, he was assigned the position of Associate Pastor at St. Joseph Cathedral, in Hyderabad, and was told to report on Holy Thursday. St. Joseph Cathedral is one of the most visited religious places in Hyderabad. Its main attraction is its Italian ornate architecture and the five giant bells in an open bell tower topping the cathedral. The bells are considered sacred, and many believe that the bells can thwart lightning and storms. The bells are so finely tuned that hymns can be played on them. The Cathedral also houses an imitation of the 'Pieta' by Michelangelo. Fr. Kasparaj (Kaspar) served as Associate Pastor of the Cathedral until 1986, when he was assigned to Our Lady of Good Health Shrine Vailankanni, in Hyderabad. This Shrine is popularly known as the 'Lourdes of the East' because of three apparitions from the Blessed Mother: a vision to a Shepherd boy, a vision to a buttermilk vendor, and a vision to Portuguese sailors caught in a storm. All three apparitions occurred on September 8, the feast day of the Nativity of Mary.

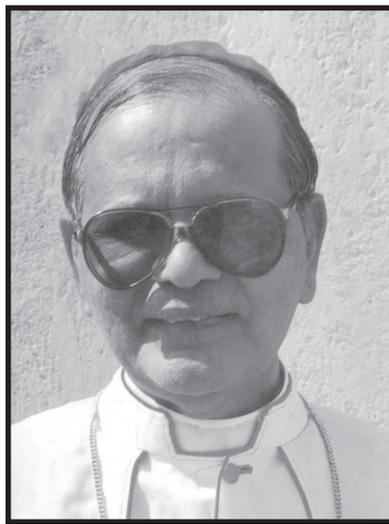
The apparitions of Our Lady of Good Health have not been formally approved but are implicitly accepted due to the elevation of the church to basilica status. In fact, the church has been granted the rank of minor basilica linked directly to the St. Mary Major Basilica, in Rome, by Pope John XXIII, in 1962.

Following his year at the Shrine, Fr. Kaspar was assigned the position of parish priest at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Hyderabad, for seven years.

In 1993, Fr. Kaspar returned to Sacred Heart Seminary for a sabbatical to update his Theology studies and for a general renewal.

From 1994 to 1997, he served as parish priest to St. Anthony parish in Hyderabad.

It was during his time at St. Anthony parish that Archbishop Arulappa made an Ad Limina visit to Rome and met Archbishop Francis T. Hurley from the Archdiocese of Anchorage. During a casual discussion between the two bishops, Archbishop Hurley mentioned the great shortage of priests in the United States and especially the need for priests in Alaska. Archbishop Arulappa, greatly moved by this need, personally promised to send the diocese “a priest or two.” Upon returning to Hyderabad, the bishop called his priests (numbering over 200) together, in a regular gathering that took place monthly at his home. During announcements, he revealed the promise he had made to Archbishop Hurley of Alaska and promptly asked for volunteers. When no one came forward, he was noticeably disappointed but tabled the issue for the moment. A few days later, Fr. Kaspar received a call from the Archbishop that he should meet with him. Upon arriving at his scheduled meeting, he was asked to give Alaska a “six-month” trial period, at which time he could discern whether to stay or return—no questions asked. Fr. Kaspar recalls, *“Though I was not eager to volunteer, I did not hesitate upon being personally asked. I have always in every case adhered to my vow of obedience and did not waver in my acceptance.”*



Father Kaspar Mallavarapu arrived in the United States in the summer of 1998. He was assigned to Holy Family Cathedral, in Anchorage, and spent the first month filling out necessary forms and paperwork and applying for his driver’s license. In August, he was assigned to serve as Associate Pastor of St. Patrick’s Church, likewise in Anchorage. In October of that first year, on the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, Fr. Kaspar experienced his first **Archbishop Samineni Arulappa of the Archdiocese of Hyderabad, South India, 1924-2005**



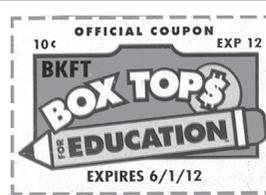
*Our Lady of Health Shrine Vailankanni, in South India, is often referred to as “**Lourdes of the East.**”*

snowfall—ever. The snow and the cold he accepted as best he could; but, by December, he could no longer tolerate the constant darkness and decided to make a visit back to India. Once “home,” the sunlight warmed him; and, feeling his spirit “renewed,” Fr. Kaspar returned to St. Patrick’s in time to celebrate St. Valentine’s day with his parishioners. He served at that parish until June 2000. In July of 2000, he was assigned to the position of pastor at Sacred Heart parish in Wasilla, Alaska.

Fr. Kaspar returned home in 2002, when his mother died at the age of 77. Father says his mother



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seemed to have a “sense” that she was going to die and shared this with his sister-in-law days before her death on December 12, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Fr. Kaspar felt called to the priesthood at a very young age, during his altar server years. He feels the influence of having an uncle and a brother, both priests, nurtured his vocation. He knows, too, that his mother prayed that he might be granted a vocation to the priesthood. Following his mother’s funeral, Father returned to Wasilla, Alaska, where he served the parishioners of Sacred Heart through July of 2007. Fr. Armand M. Nigro, S.J., Retreat Director at the Holy Spirit Center, in Anchorage, had this to say about Fr. Kaspar’s time in Anchorage, *“In his absence, his parishioners very much miss his priestly presence among them. With the strong support of his parishioners, he accomplished wonders in a short time.”* Fr. Nigro adds, *“The most important quality we need in our priests is big-hearted generosity and love for God’s people. Father Kasparaj has this in spades.”*

On July 6, 2007, Fr. Kaspar became a United States citizen. He now holds the status of OCI (Overseas Citizenship of India), which means he can travel freely to India but cannot vote, hold office, or be employed by the government. Fr. Kaspar is very proud to be a U.S. Citizen and says, *“At times I miss my family, Indian food, and parts of the culture*

*of India. Still, there is something special about America. I believe that it really is the land of opportunity, of liberty, of freedom, and the American dream.”*

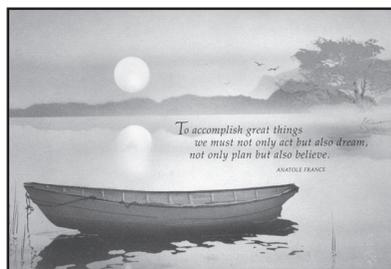
In August, Fr. Kaspar was assigned a one-year term at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish. The parish also hosts one of only seven Catholic schools in Alaska, three schools are located in Anchorage, one in Wasilla, and one in Kodiak. Two Catholic schools are located in Fairbanks. It was during this year, 2007, his 23<sup>rd</sup> year as a priest, that Fr. Kaspar started to long for a reduced schedule and talked to Roger L. Schwietz, O.M.I., Archbishop of Anchorage, about the possibility of a transfer to a less populated diocese—for instance, Fairbanks. Archbishop Schwietz picked up the phone and dialed Donald J. Kettler, Bishop of Fairbanks. After a brief phone conversation, Bishop Kettler invited Fr. Kaspar to “come on up” for a look.

Fr. Kaspar took a brief trip home to India to visit with family and friends; and then, in October of 2008, Bishop Kettler met him at the Fairbanks Airport. After a tour of the city and further discussions with Bishop Kettler, he decided to embark on a new Alaskan adventure that would take him even farther North of Kilacheri, India, to the Diocese of Fairbanks.

Fr. Kaspar is now in his 27<sup>th</sup> year as a Catholic priest and his twelfth year in Alaska. He serves in many capacities in this vast Missionary diocese. His duties include, Hospital Chaplain to Fairbanks



**The year 2010 finds The Alaskan Shepherd celebrating 50 Years of publication! THANK YOU for the BEAUTIFUL Anniversary Cards! We are displaying the nearly 300 cards, we have received thus far, in our little Shepherd office for all to see. Please send your card to: The Alaskan Shepherd at 1312 Peger Road, Fairbanks, Alaska, 99709.**



**Mr. Richard K. Johnson  
Alaskan Shepherd Benefactor  
Since 1982**

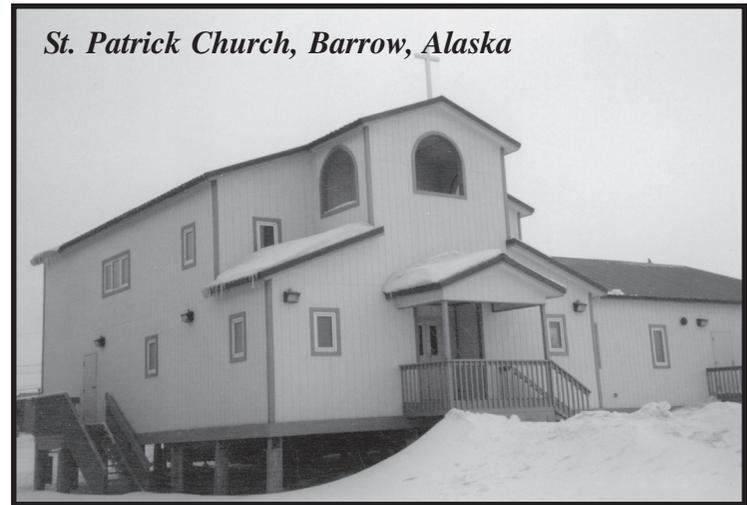
Alaskan Shepherd STAFF -  
Happy anniversary  
And best wishes  
Today—Tomorrow—and Always.  
God's Abundant blessings on The Alaskan Shepherd and its staff as you celebrate 50 years of publication. Your devotion and hard work on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northern ALASKA are to be praised and highly commended. You truly do your part and more to spread the Good news of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To honor this very special occasion in your publication's history, please accept my enclosed donation to the Catholic Bishop of Northern ALASKA.  
Richard K. Johnson -

Memorial Hospital, and to the elderly patients and residents of the Denali Center and the Pioneer Home. He has a great dedication and devotion to his hospital chaplaincy and tells the parish staff as well as the hospital staff, to *“call me anytime, I am serious.”* He also serves St. Patrick parish in Barrow, Alaska, our most northern church. Fr. Kaspar travels there monthly to celebrate Mass, Reconciliation, Baptisms, and to provide all other Sacramental needs. As of this fall, Father Kaspar has been assigned the position of Sacramental Priest, to St. Raphael’s parish, in Fairbanks, while retaining his other duties.

Fr. Kaspar has a great devotion to St. Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney, patron saint of priests, often referred to as the “Curé d’Ars”. St. Jean became internationally notable for his priestly and pastoral work in his parish because of the radical spiritual transformation of the community and its surroundings. Catholics attribute this to his saintly life, mortification, his persevering ministry in the sacrament of confession, and his ardent devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Philomena. Upon reflecting on his own priestly life, Fr. Kaspar says he has always been grateful for his vow of obedience because he has always found change difficult but finds that this special vow tempers that particular challenge. He also says, *“Of all my priestly duties, I find the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be the most satisfying. I love it the most.”* Fr. Kaspar is well-known for his readiness to serve in the confessional. Father adds, *“In India there a great number of priests, many for every church, and I agree that it is a blessing. However, I am so happy to be serving here, in this mission, where there is a great need for a priestly presence.”*

In the Missionary Diocese of Fairbanks, we too are very grateful for Fr. Kaspar and for his priestly presence.

—Patty Walter



**PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS**  
From The United States Conference  
of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)



**Hail Mary, full of grace;  
all generations call you blessed.**



**Hail Mother of God; when asked by the angel  
to bear the Son of the Most High,  
filled with faith, you responded:  
“Let it be done unto me.”**



**Holy Mother of Jesus, at the wedding feast at Cana,  
you prompted your Son to perform his first sign.**



**Be with us as we discern our life’s work  
and guide us in the way we are called to follow  
in the footsteps of your Son.**



**Holy Mother of the Savior, at the foot of the cross  
you mourned the death of your only Son.**



**Bless and embrace the loving parents of all priests,  
deacons, brothers and sisters.**



**Holy Mother of the Good Shepherd,  
turn your motherly care to this nation.**



**Intercede for us to the Lord of the harvest  
to send more laborers to the harvest  
in this land dedicated to your honor.**



**Queen of Peace, Mirror of Justice, Health of the Sick,  
inspire vocations in our time.**



**Let the word of your Son be made flesh anew  
in the lives of persons anxious to proclaim  
the good news of everlasting life.**



*Amen.*



*“We are blessed to have so many supporters who make our work possible. I want to especially thank those of you who remember us in your prayers. Donations provide tangible benefits, but the power of prayer and the Lord’s grace is our bedrock. Thank you with all our hearts.”*  
--Bishop Donald J. Kettler