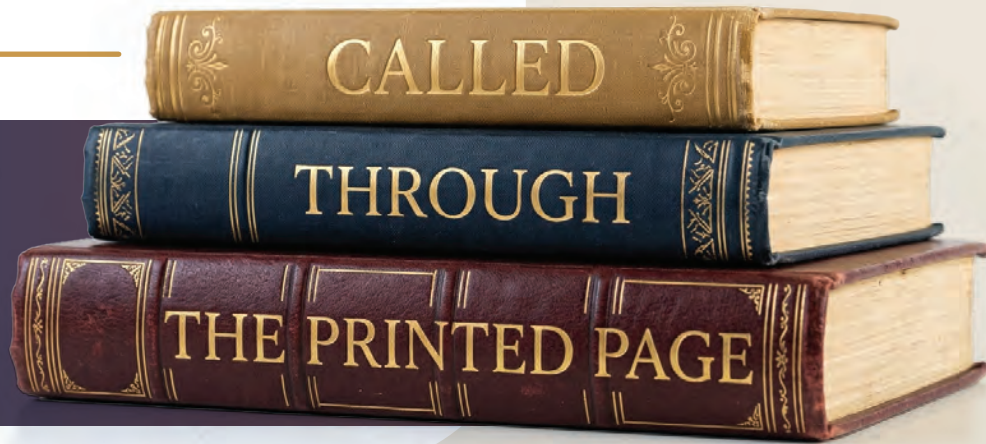


As a young boy growing up in Milwaukee, Bro. Tony Kreinus, SVD often found himself drawn to a small country church beside the cemetery where his father was buried.



During the summer months, his mother would ask him to water the flowers at the family gravesite. Sacred Heart Church stood just behind the cemetery, and after tending the flowers, Tony would slip quietly inside.

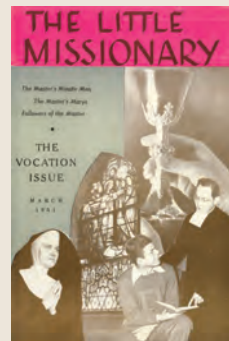
There, before the Blessed Sacrament, he began asking questions that would stay with him throughout childhood.

“What am I going to do with my life?” he remembered praying. “I want to give my life to God.”

Even in grade school, he would sometimes sneak away during lunch to spend a few moments praying in church. The desire was there early. What he did not yet know was how that calling would take shape.

The answer began arriving through the mail.

A Missionary Magazine and a Growing Calling



When Bro. Tony was in seventh grade, a priest promoting an SVD publication called The Little Missionary visited his school. The magazine introduced young readers to the work of missionaries around the world and regularly featured stories about priests and brothers serving in the Society of the Divine Word.

Tony was immediately interested.

“I said to my mother, ‘I’m going to subscribe to that,’” he recalled. Saving his own money, he renewed the subscription year after year.

He read the magazine carefully, especially the annual vocation issue featuring priests, brothers and sisters serving in mission. It was there, in the pages of that publication, that he first encountered the life of a religious brother in a serious way.

“I was already thinking or praying that I wanted to devote my life to God,” he said. “But when the magazine came along, I decided, ‘I think this is what God’s asking me to do — be a brother.’”

For decades, Bro. Tony rarely shared that story publicly.

“I don’t tell that story to anybody,” he admitted with a smile during a recent interview.

Yet in many ways, that early encounter with a missionary publication quietly shaped the course of his entire life.

A Life Dedicated to Learning and Service

In 1954, Bro. Tony entered the newly established high school for Divine Word Brother candidates at Techny, Illinois. Leaving home as a freshman was overwhelming at first.

The massive four-story building seemed impossible to navigate.

“I said to one of the students, ‘I don’t think I’ll ever find my way around this place,’” he remembered.

But he quickly found guidance among the brothers and students around him. Over the years that followed, his vocation deepened through study, prayer and community life.

After entering the Novitiate and professing vows, Bro. Tony began a lifetime of ministry centered on education, organization and service to others. He earned degrees in English and library science, studying at DePaul University and later at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

Over the years, his ministries included teaching senior English, serving as librarian, overseeing periodicals and interlibrary loans, and maintaining academic and community library collections. The same publications that first helped guide him toward his vocation eventually became part of his ministry, as he spent decades helping others access knowledge, learning and faith through books and libraries.

“I enjoy working with people and helping them either find books or answer their reference questions,” he said. “That’s something I’m good at, and I enjoy helping people.”

For many students, faculty and fellow missionaries over the years, Bro. Tony became a steady and dependable presence — someone who could always locate the right resource, organize complicated systems, or patiently guide others through the library.

Organization came naturally to him, and that attention to detail became one of the quiet trademarks of his ministry.

Teaching, Libraries and Formation

Much of Bro. Tony’s ministry was spent at the former Divine Word Seminary High School in East Troy, Wisconsin, where he served both as librarian and teacher.

After the school’s librarian unexpectedly died, Bro. Tony stepped in to oversee the library while simultaneously pursuing graduate studies in library science. Eventually, he became the school’s full-time librarian while also teaching senior English classes.

Far from seeing the work as burdensome, he remembers those years with joy.

“They were fun years,” he said. “I enjoyed both teaching in the classroom and the library.”

His love for literature — especially British literature — came alive in the classroom. He taught works ranging from “Beowulf” to modern literature while also helping students develop writing, grammar and communication skills.

At the same time, he carefully maintained and expanded the school’s library collections, helping students to access the resources they needed for learning and formation.

When East Troy eventually closed in the early 1990s, Bro. Tony helped oversee the enormous task of dismantling and redistributing the library collection. Some books were donated to other SVD schools, others sold, and many preserved for future use.

Soon afterward, he was assigned to Divine Word College, where he began serving in the college library in 1993. More than three decades later, he remains a familiar and beloved presence in the community, even after retiring from his official role as assistant librarian in May.

The Quiet Witness of Brotherhood

While Bro. Tony’s ministry has largely unfolded through classrooms, libraries and community life rather than public recognition, his witness has deeply shaped generations of students and missionaries.

When asked how he would describe his vocation as a brother today, his answer came quickly.

“My life’s fulfillment,” he said.

For Bro. Tony, religious life has never been only about work. It is rooted in prayer, community and daily faithfulness.

“Living in community has been a real blessing,” he said. “That’s where I get my affirmation, my companionship, and my support.”



Even now, fellow community members regularly see him praying the Liturgy of the Hours, serving quietly where needed, or playing the organ for community prayer and liturgies.

He speaks with deep admiration about older brothers who inspired him through their dedication, excellence and humility. Their example helped to shape the kind of brother he hoped to become.

“They set the standard,” he said.

Today, Bro. Tony does the same for younger generations at Divine Word College. His life reflects the often-unseen vocation of religious brothers: faithful, steady, and prayerful service offered day after day over decades.

Looking back, Bro. Tony believes the heart of missionary life is simple.

“Giving of the self for others,” he said. “That’s the bottom line.”

It is a lesson that first began taking shape long ago in a quiet church beside a cemetery — and through the pages of a missionary magazine that helped a young boy discover where God was calling him to serve.

Speaking about the peace and fulfillment he has found in a life of religious service, Bro. Tony offered a simple reflection on his vocation: “I’m going to heaven with a smile on my face,” he said.