



The New Wine Press

Motivated by the spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

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Good Morning, Vietnam!

Tom Welk, C.P.P.S.

I was suddenly awakened at 4:30 am. Church bells were ringing, roosters were crowing, motor bikes were honking. Where in the world was I? Then it dawned on me: I was in Vietnam. Immediately the 1987 movie "Good Morning, Vietnam," starring Robin Williams as a DJ on Armed Forces Radio Network came to mind.

For a moment I literally could not figure out where I was or what month of the year it was. Looking at the calendar posted on the wall of the rectory where I was staying did not help. The month posted was May 2012. The grueling 27 hour trip and lack of sleep did not help my orientation. As I gradually became more alert I realized I was now in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon (and still called that by most of the residents). My orientation became clearer after taking a rather cold shower in the combination bathroom/shower room.

As I ventured outside I found a bustling city much more alive than I was. It was the second day of Tet; the New Year (the year of the snake) was in full celebration. People were streaming to the church on their motor bikes for the

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5:30 a.m. Mass. The number of people at the Tuesday morning Mass was impressive; I estimated the attendance at over 300. There were even more present for the 7:30 a.m. Mass, at which Fr. Lac presided. Many of them were on the younger side, unlike our country where weekday Masses are generally sparsely attended and mostly by those who are older.

After breakfast, Lac and one of the Vietnamese students provided us (Fr. Joe Bathke had also arrived the previous evening) with further orientation to Vietnam as we toured the beautiful Flowers Boulevard. As the day unfolded, I realized that adjusting to the temperature was going to be another challenge. When I left Wichita it was 25 degrees; by noon it was pushing close to 90 degrees in downtown Saigon.

Our next stop was for lunch at the home of Fr. Dien's mother. Calling this "lunch" is inadequate. It was a veritable feast, extending into two hours of visiting. The guests included Fr. Dominic, the pastor of the local church; a professional singer; the woman who made the property available on which we are building a house of formation; one of the C.P.P.S. inquirers who is a cardiologist; and other members of Dien's family.

My orientation to the political climate of present day Vietnam also began as Fr. Dominic shared with us his own story of dealing with the government. He had committed the "crime" of housing seven young men who were in formation for the priesthood, and was sent to prison for several years. I learned that even though the Catholic Church is not outlawed, nonetheless caution must still be practiced. I began to better appreciate what Lac and Dien have been sharing with us about the political climate under the Communist government.

Our scheduled evening activity was supper at the home of another Vietnamese family. The A.S.C. Wichita Center

employs three Vietnamese cooks. The mother of one of them lives in Saigon. Mrs. Huong called from Wichita to give Lac the information in order to have supper with her mother. Frs. Francesco Bartoloni and Bill Nordenbrock (from the General Council) joined us, having just arrived earlier that afternoon to conduct an official visitation.

The impact of the war on this family was another informative source of orientation about present-day Vietnam. There are eleven children in this family. Only one still lives in Vietnam; five are in North America and five in Norway. Why Norway? One of the children who had fled Saigon was picked up by a Norwegian ship; he in turn arranged for four of his siblings to eventually come to Norway. I don't know how the other five made it to Canada and the United States.

The final day of our "orientation" was a visit to the Mekong Delta on Ash Wednesday. My dream was to catch one of those legendary 500 pound catfish. Even though that was not to be, nonetheless this tour proved to be great orientation to rural Vietnam. After taking a boat ride and visiting some local shops along one of the many waterways, we joined a farm family for another so-called lunch that again turned out to be a feast. I teased Joe Bathke that he had almost created an international incident by only eating a single portion of one of the many servings presented. His refusal of a second portion elicited this woeful response from one of the women, "You don't like!?" I quickly rescued Joe and rectified the situation by not only eating my second portion, but also his. The fish served intrigued me; I could not immediately identify it. Later I learned that it was a snake fish.

With regard to the food in general, I found it to be delicious, but also knew not to ask too many questions about what I was eating. Being a farm boy, I did recognize some of the different meat cuts, such as a pig's small intestine,



ears and feet. Nothing is wasted when it comes to meat. Meals and eating together are important for the Vietnamese people. This was confirmed for me when I included in my thank you comments at the conclusion of the closing retreat Mass that I had thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Vietnam, especially the delicious food. The women at the Mass practically squealed with delight when they heard Lac's translation about my liking the food.

Our visit to the Mekong Delta also revealed another aspect of Vietnam and an opportunity for a C.P.P.S. presence and ministry there. Shortly after the Communist takeover, the local parish church had been destroyed. Now services were held at various farm homes, including the Ash Wednesday service to be held later in the day at this home. After we finished the meal and posed for the mandatory picture-taking, we went to another farm home where Lac provided the Sacrament of Reconciliation to various individuals. While Lac was hearing confessions, we were entertained by a regular parade of visitors who came to the home. I am sure they don't see too many Americans (or Italians!) in this part of Vietnam. As I inspected a hammock on one side of the room, they insisted I recline in it. Laughingly, they pointed out the insignia on the hammock: U.S. Army. Could it be that we were not the first Americans here?

During our visiting, one of the family members looked at me and asked, "Vietnamese?" I'm not sure what it was about me that prompted the question, but I took it as a sign of acceptance.

On our return to Saigon, we joined the packed congregation at St. Paul Parish in the southwest part of the city for the Ash Wednesday Mass. Fr. Paul Dong Pham introduced the four of us to the congregation, and we were given a hearty round of applause. We later joined him, his assistant and two seminarians for supper. Once again, it was a good opportunity for us to increase awareness of our Precious Blood community, and our willingness to be of service in Vietnam.

After the Mekong Delta tour, it was time for me to get to work. I set as my theme for the retreat "Precious Blood Charism and Spirituality in the Midst of the Sick and Suffering." I suspect that the topic may have been on the heavy side for them, but the students gave me more than polite attention. I found it disconcerting that the language barrier kept me from entering into direct dialogue with them, but at the same time was gratified that Lac was providing immediate translation of my comments. Initially they were reserved, but as the week went on they warmed up considerably and engaged in some heated discussion among themselves.

The retreat was held at the Thien-Phuoc Benedictine Monastery. With the time change, I usually woke up by 4:00 a.m. Vietnamese time (there is a 13-hour time difference between Wichita and Saigon), and so I attended the 5:00 a.m. Mass in the monastery chapel. I don't know what their total membership is, but I counted about 100 monks at the Mass. I could not understand the language, but nonetheless was able to enter the celebration in spirit as I joined them in prayer. Their singing was enchanting and uplifting. So was the setting. With the warm temperatures year around, the chapel is very open; nature enters in freely. Birds were flying around and at one time I counted ten geckoes crawling on the walls. I offered a word of thanks for their presence,

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The New Wine Press

Missionaries of the Precious Blood
Kansas City Province
www.kcprovince.org

The Society of the Precious Blood is a fraternal community of priests and brothers founded by St. Gaspar in 1815. Bonded through charity by a promise of fidelity, we are prayerfully motivated by the spirituality of the precious blood of Jesus Christ to serve the needs of the Church as discerned through the signs of the times and in the light of the Gospel.

The Kansas City Province—incorporated members, covenanted companions, and candidates—united in prayer, service and mutual support, characterized by the tradition of its American predecessors, are missionaries of these times with diverse gifts and ministries. In a spirit of joy, we strive to serve all people—especially the poor—with care and compassion, hope and hospitality.

The New Wine Press seeks to remain faithful to the charism of our founder, St. Gaspar, and the spirituality of the Blood of Christ with its emphasis on reconciliation, renewal and refounding. We accept and encourage unsolicited manuscripts and letters to the editor.

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News, Notes and Reflections

Fr. Joe Bathke, C.P.P.S., Director of Formation



On my second trip to Vietnam, I was once again amazed by the beauty of the countryside, watched in wonder at the traffic of Saigon, and was humbled by the faith of the people. We stayed at the parish where Fr. Lac Pham, C.P.P.S. lives, and the place is constantly buzzing with activity—which starts very early in the morning. I believe the bell for the call to Morning Prayer rings sometime around 4:15–4:30 a.m., followed by the Eucharist at 5:30. And, I would add, there was a large group who attended the Mass.

As has become the custom for the last several years, a member of the Kansas City Province presents a retreat to the community of members, candidates, inquirers and two women, Doan (Maria) and Uyen (Anna), who are in discernment with the A.S.C. Community in South Korea. The group attending the retreat also included Moderator General Fr. Francesco Bartoloni, C.P.P.S. and Vice Moderator

Fr. Bill Nordenbrock, C.P.P.S., who were making their official visitation to the mission. This year Fr. Tom Welk, C.P.P.S. lead the retreat, speaking about his hospice ministry, sharing many personal stories and insights. The candidates by their questions and lively conversations demonstrated that they found Fr. Tom's reflections interesting and informative.

Currently we have three candidates and three inquirers living with Fr. Lac and Fr. Dien. The Initial Formation candidates live with Fr. Dien. They are Joseph Ky Phung, who is preparing to begin studies at the Dominican School; Vincent Hoa Vu, who is taking two separate courses of study—philosophy at the Dominican School and linguistics specializing in English in college; and Paul Hao Pham, who is in his second year of philosophy studies at the Dominican School.

Looking and discerning a possible vocation with the Precious Blood

are inquirers Martin An Nguyen, who is in college studying accounting and lives with Fr. Dien; Joseph Diep Vu, who is preparing to begin studies at the Dominican School; and John Dung Nguyen, who is in his third year in college studying agriculture. Diep and Dung live with Fr. Lac.

There are also several men who are inquiring, but who do not live with the community members. Fr. Lac and Fr. Dien and the individuals work together to discern if and when the next step is to invite the person to live in community. They are Khang (Joseph) a cardiologist; Lam (John), who works as a salesman; Cong Go (Simon Peter); and Phong (Andre), currently hoping to enroll in college to study acupuncture.

A major step for the inquirers comes when they complete their college studies. That is the time when the inquirer decides if he will apply to be a candidate with

the community. Upon becoming a candidate, he begins his studies in philosophy and theology or training that will provide him the skills to minister as a member of the community and the Church. Those who are seeking ordination currently attend the Dominican School in Saigon for their studies in philosophy and theology.

Although we were not able to visit the site of the new residence, I am happy to report the work continues moving forward. The plans have been completed. A few details remain to be worked out before all the building permits will be issued, but those involved in the project are confident that actual construction will begin soon. The building will have four floors, and, as is normal for most homes in Saigon, will be approximately five meters wide. The first floor consists of a kitchen, an area for gathering together for meals and visiting, and a chapel. In the very front on the first floor there will be a patio area that also serves as the place to park everyone's motorbikes, the primary means of transportation in Vietnam. The other three floors will serve as rooms for the members and candidates who will be living in the house.

I'm excited about the new house, because it will allow all the current candidates and inquirers to live together. That will be helpful in forming community and making it possible for the entire community to gather daily.

One last observation: As I mentioned earlier the people seem to be very active in practicing their faith. Every time I attended a celebration of the Eucharist the church was filled with people of all ages. I am struck by the Vietnamese Catholics' commitment to the Church. I want

to be clear that because I do not understand Vietnamese and therefore cannot have a one-on-one conversation with the lay people, I cannot make nor do I presume to make any judgments about the people's knowledge, understanding or even awareness of the changes that have taken place in the Catholic Church in the last fifty years. When I say commitment to the Church, what I see is a people who have, for a multitude reasons, come to see the Church as a place they can trust, a place they can seek and expect

assistance, and a place that God is present for them in their daily lives.

Seeing and experiencing the faith of the Vietnamese people has been a special gift for me, one that confirms that the decision to cast our nets into the deep in Vietnam was indeed led by the Holy Spirit. May we all continue to pray that the Spirit will strengthen and guide our members and candidates in Vietnam as they minister in the name of the Church and the Precious Blood Community.

Good Morning, Vietnam, continued from page 3

since they were feasting on the many mosquitoes who had been feasting on me during the night.

The monastery setting is beautiful, but also on the austere side. There is no air conditioning to mitigate the humid 90-degree temperatures; there are no mattresses on the bed of boards, only a very thin grass mat; and with no screens on the windows, the mosquitoes have no problem getting in. Mosquito netting is provided. Showers are taken with cold water. Despite the austerity (except for the delicious and generous food, most of it raised on the monastery grounds, including the fish), I did not find this to be an undue hardship and adjusted quickly, even to the hard bed.

The austere setting and other aspects of Vietnamese life provided me further perspective on how extravagantly we live in the United States. For example, when hot water is available in Vietnamese homes, it is provided not through water heaters fueled by electricity or natural gas, but by the sun. Solar powered tanks seem to be on every roof. In the rectory where Lac stays the solar-heated water gets hotter than is comfortable for showering; it has to be cooled down a bit with cold water.

For transportation, the vast majority of the population uses motor bikes and/or the bus. The traffic is amazing, but it works. Crossing the street as a pedestrian at times takes a "leap of faith." It was not unusual to see a family of five on one small motor bike. For an American family, that usually requires a big SUV.

"Good morning, Vietnam" too quickly turned into having to say "Good bye, Vietnam." It was a good trip for me, despite the taxing travel getting there and back. I am now more oriented about Vietnam, and also excited about the future of our mission there. The people are open to embracing us. The opportunities for ministry are many.

The challenges are there, too. Working with the government is a delicate dance. Working with the wider Church will also take some work. Lac and Dien are working hard to establish this mission. They appreciate being held in our thoughts and prayers as they engage in expanding our vineyard of Precious Blood spirituality.

Father George K. Fey, C.P.P.S.

September 22, 1918 - March 14, 2013



Fr. George K. Fey, C.P.P.S. of the Kansas City Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood died on Thursday, March 14, 2013 at St. Charles Center in Carthagena, OH. He was 94 years old. Fr. George was born in Boston, PA on September 22, 1918 to Leo and Mary (Keddie) Fey.

Fr. George entered Brunnerdale Seminary in Canton, OH in September 1932 and made Temporary Incorporation on December 8, 1936 at St. Joseph College in Rensselaer, IN. He was Definitely Incorporated as

a Missionary of the Precious Blood three years later on December 3, 1939 and ordained to the priesthood on December 5, 1943 at St. Charles Seminary in Carthagena by Archbishop John McNicholas.

In 1944, Fr. George was appointed as associate pastor at St. Gertrude Parish in Lebanon, PA. From 1945-1947, he served Immaculate Conception Parish in York, PA as associate pastor. In 1947, Fr. George sailed to Chile as a foreign missionary, helping to establish the beginnings of the C.P.P.S. presence there. With the exception of a year-long sabbatical in 1953-1954, he would remain in Chile until 1960. While there he served as pastor of San Joaquin & Anna Parish in Riachuelo and San Juan Parish in Pitrufquén.

Upon his return to the United States in 1960, Fr. George served briefly during that year as associate pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Detroit, MI and Holy

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“Father ‘Jorge’ as he was known in Chile back in the late forties and fifties, was a hard worker and helped a lot in those early missionary days in building C.P.P.S. community life. In 1994 I found his personal diary-journal where he wrote in detail many aspects of his life in small backward Chilean towns in the south like Río Negro and Pitrufquén. A true challenge in those years for him in many respects: language, material goods, bad roads and equipment, culture, etc. I corresponded with Fr. George and he gladly wrote the introduction for the Spanish version of his journal, which I happily translated and published in 1995. We are in deep gratitude for his ministry within us.

~Tony Baus, C.P.P.S.
Chilean Vicariate

Companion Herrietta Nagel

July 23, 1930–March 3, 2013



Herrietta Marie Nagel, 82 years old, of Bismarck, ND died peacefully, surrounded by family, on March 3, 2013, at St. Alexius Medical Center, Bismarck. Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on March 8th at St. Anthony Catholic Church, Linton, with the Rev. David Richter officiating.

Herrietta was born July 23, 1930, in Linton, the daughter of John

and Katherine (Geiss) Noel. She attended a rural school in Emmons County. On Oct. 29, 1952, she married Edmond “Eddy” Nagel at St. Anthony Catholic Church, Linton. They made their home on a farm 20 miles west of Linton. They retired from farming and moved to Linton in November 1992. Eddy passed away in August 1993. Herrietta moved to Bismarck in November 1994 to be closer to her children.

Herrietta was a member of the Catholic Daughters of St. Anthony Catholic Church, the Precious Blood Companion group of Linton, and was also a member of Church of Corpus Christi in Bismarck.

Herrietta thoroughly enjoyed being a Mom, a Grandmother, a Great-Grandmother and an Aunt. Mom’s pride and joy was her children and grandchildren. She attended as many games, school programs, concerts and recitals as she could. She was her grandchildren’s biggest fan. She also enjoyed playing cards and games with her children and grandchildren. Herrietta was part of many Card clubs, Bunco clubs and Birthday clubs.

Grateful to have shared her life are her 10 children, Kenneth (Delores) Nagel, Bismarck; Vivian (Tony) Schaffner, Zeeland; Doris (Ron) Siverson, West Fargo; Monna (Roger) Kuntz, Davenport; Sue (Steve) Meier, Bismarck; Kevin (Julie) Nagel, Bismarck; Vernon (Sharlene) Nagel, Linton; Evan (Mandy) Nagel,

Bismarck; Lyle (Traci) Nagel, Bismarck; and Gail (Todd) Domres, Bismarck; 26 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; siblings, Albert (Beverly) Noel, Delores (Edwin) Nagel, Linton, and Matt “Butch” (Marcia) Noel, Belvidere, Ill.; A brother-in-law, Eugene (Palma) Nagel, Bismarck; a sister-in-law, Katherine Nagel, Linton; and many nieces and nephews.

Herrietta was preceded in death by her husband, Eddy Nagel; her parents, John and Katherine Noel; her sister, Isabel Noel, who died at age 2; and her brother, John Noel.

Rest in Peace.

Fr. George Fey, continued from page 6

Ghost Parish in Vinita, OK. He then began an extended time serving in North Dakota, first as pastor of Precious Blood Parish in Dodge until 1963, and then as pastor of St. Paul Parish in Halliday (with missions in Dodge and St. Martin) from 1963 until 1974. In addition he served as a member of the Kansas City Provincial Council from 1971 to 1975. In 1974, Fr. George moved to Texas, where he was pastor of St. Mary Parish in San Angelo from 1974 to 1977 and then chaplain at St. John Hospital in San Angelo until 1994. He retired that year, residing at St. Mary Parish and serving as a substitute priest for the diocese until 2001, when he moved to Kansas City to fully retire. In 2005 he moved to St. Charles Center, where he lived until his death.

Father George will be remembered for his passion for justice and peace. He was one of the original members of the province’s justice and peace committee. An avid reader, Father George had an extensive library and would share his books and recommendations for reading with other members of the committee, community, and diocese. He knew that a passion for peace was not enough; people of faith needed to be knowledgeable about the social issues of the day and form their consciences around Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching.

Fr. George is survived by one brother, Fr. Albert Fey, C.P.P.S., who lives at St. Charles Center; two sisters, Marie and Isabel Fey of St. Henry, OH; and the members and companions of the Kansas City Province. He was preceded in death by his parents, Leo and Mary. May he rest in God’s gracious peace.

Forgiveness

Mike Donovan, Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation

We all know Jesus' instruction to us about forgiveness, "I do not say to you seven times, but seven times seventy times" (Matthew 18:22). When listening to the stories of the youth I meet at the Juvenile Detention Center, I often refer to this passage from Matthew to reassure them of God's infinite forgiveness. But what about my own ability to forgive?

Last week, I attended a forum at the Precious Blood Center called "Journey of Hope"—stories of healing and forgiveness. The first speaker, Bill, told a powerful story of his grandmother's murder, stabbed to death by four teenage girls. The youngest, 15 year-old Paula, was sentenced to death in Indiana for the crime. At first, Bill was satisfied that justice had been served, but as time went on, he became increasingly uncomfortable with the death penalty, especially for someone so young. He became a strong advocate for Paula, knowing in his heart that his grandmother, a God-loving person, would not have wanted her to die as a result of her murder. Paula was eventually taken off of death row, and soon Bill began to write to Paula in prison, followed by in-person visits. As he came to know Paula more, he forgave her, and now Bill looks forward to Paula's release in July at age 44. He plans to be at the front gates of the prison to meet her.

George's story of healing and forgiveness was just as remarkable. His wife was shot and killed—and he was wounded—in an ambush at his place of business. George was arrested for his wife's murder, tried and convicted, and sentenced to life in prison. His conviction was eventually overturned after serving 7 years, an innocent

man finally freed. Instead of living a life filled with anger and bitterness towards the justice system and toward the man who killed his wife, George came to forgive all those responsible for his incarceration. They never found the man who committed the murder, yet George forgave him.

This brings me to my own story. Last November, I was the victim of an armed robbery while providing "safe passage" home to one of the youth we serve. As I pulled over to the curb to let the young man out, two guys came out of nowhere and jumped into my car, throwing my passenger out. The guy in the front seat put a gun to my head, while the guy in the back seat repeatedly urged him to shoot and kill me. The young man with the gun was satisfied with taking my wallet and my iPhone, even though the guy in the back seat kept urging him to kill me. Thank God the guy with the gun prevailed.

I was never able to identify the thieves from the hundreds of mug shots I perused. The police did question my passenger, and although they couldn't prove it, they're sure he set me up for the robbery. I've never seen or heard from him again. As far as the police are concerned, mine is now a "cold case."

This incident has stayed with me longer than I thought. I think about that day all the time. Who am I angrier at—my passenger who set me up, the guy with the gun at my head, or the guy in the back seat yelling "Shoot him, kill him?" Forgiveness never entered my mind, yet I go into the Detention Center night in and night out consoling, supporting, and praying for young men accused of the same crime of armed robbery or worse. Is it because I don't know or can't picture their victims? It has been a reminder to me to always keep the victims in my prayers.

After listening to George's story of healing and forgiveness, I examined my own conscience about my inability to forgive. Whom has my anger been hurting? I came across an anonymous quote about forgiveness which spoke to me: "Hatred does more damage to the person in which it is stored than to the person on which it is poured." Two days after attending "Journey of Hope," I went to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and with the help of my confessor and God's mercy, I hope my journey to forgiveness can begin.

*"To forgive is
to set a prisoner free
and discover that the
prisoner was you."*

~Lewis B. Smedes

Transitions in My “Year of Faith”

Corey Knapke, Candidate for the Cincinnati Province



It is 215 miles to St. Henry from Gaspar House in Chicago. It is 285 miles to Cincinnati from Gaspar House. That's a lot of Indiana sitting between me and where I would consider Home #1 and Home #2. Besides the geographic distances, there have been many new things to adjust to since I made the decision to join the formation program. The transition has been full of positive experiences, as well as ones prompting serious reflection on my part.

For those whom I have not yet met, here's a little background. I am a 2007 St. Henry, OH graduate, five years behind Bob Jansen. I grew up in Precious Blood territory, and landed in Cincinnati for engineering and business studies in the fall of 2007. It wasn't until my third year in that a Franciscan priest began to pick my brain about my vocation. His timing was bad, because I was actually dating at the time. While the friar may have found this inconvenient, God did not. He worked on my heart for those final two years of school, and while I was on co-op in Germany, the thoughts of a religious vocation began to weigh more heavily on my heart than I ever anticipated they would.

I entered the calamity that was my final year at the University of Cincinnati with a surprisingly blank calendar after June of 2012. It was the busiest I've ever been in

my life, and the most taxing in terms of considering a life direction. All at the same time, I found myself considering a doctoral program for engineering studies, entering the Peace Corps, searching for a starting position as an engineer or manager, starting a company, working for UC, or...putting on the brakes and considering religious life. Well, needless to say, I chose the latter of the options. Peace of heart soon followed.

I came to Gaspar House in August, and, as I mentioned earlier, began with the “transition.” First of all, I've never taken a philosophy class in my life. I now question why they were not required for my degree program. Fundamentally, they seem like some of the most relevant classes, because they challenge one to ask the bigger questions in life. Secondly, I've never done so much cooking. I'm really enjoying that as well. Going from 11:00 p.m. ramen noodle dinners in a single room flat to regular home-cooked meals at 6:00 p.m. in a house of missionaries has been a welcome transition. Fr. Joe makes excellent soup, and Fr. Timothy has introduced me to squirrel. Nhan completes the crew here, but that does not mean I don't wish there were more guys. It would not only help our house choir, but it would be nice to have a peer I could vent to about why Descartes doubts everything and why Spinoza is in a huff with Jesus Christ's divinity. Luckily, occasional pre-theology gatherings and trips to the Advanced Formation house help with this.

I have enjoyed getting to know the community since arriving. It is diverse in terms of personality and thought. I like that. I've been especially involved at the Precious Blood Center with tutoring, and more recently visiting the juvenile detention center. There is an incredible ministry team at the Center, and it has been a blessing to meet them as well as the teens, families, and larger community to whom they minister.

As spring begins to blossom, I reflect on where God has led me to this day. This past year has been a whirlwind for me. I am mostly grateful and filled with peace, knowing the journey I have begun in formation. I would like to thank you, the community, for your support as I begin this formal discernment process. Should God deem it a part of His plans, I may have found a site to call Home #3. Only time and the Holy Spirit will tell.

The Promised Land of the In-between

Fr. Garry Richmeier, C.P.P.S., Kansas City Province

Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to the promised land, a journey which took 40 years. It is widely believed that the point of the journey was to get from point A to point B, and the fact that they had to wander so long was God's punishment for their obstinance and lack of faith.

But what if there was a different reason for the 40-year time period? What if getting to point B was not the main point? What if the real promised land lay between point A and point B—that which happened on the journey instead of after it?

In a word, what happened on the journey was relationship. The people became (re)acquainted with this God who had made the promise to their ancestor Abraham—that s/he would be their God and they would be God's people. They heard who this God was through the laws that were given to Moses. But it was really through their experiences in the desert that they came to trust this God's laws, this God's promises, and this God's love. For 40 years they were God's captive audience, and God spoke love through protecting them, providing for them, teaching them, and walking with them through the desert. Maybe this new and more intimate relationship with God was the real purpose and destination of their journey. Maybe this new realization of God's love was the real promised land they found, and the particular piece of land they eventually settled upon was only secondary in importance.

The concept of getting from point A to point B makes a lot of sense to us humans. It makes so much sense to us, that in almost any endeavor we identify exactly what getting to point B looks like and what steps are required to get there. Getting to point B is the (only?) goal, and is how we measure the value of any effort. Getting to point B is how we know we've arrived at the promised land of success.

That emphasis on arriving somewhere can easily overshadow the importance of the journey itself. If getting to point B is what we think will make us happy, then "getting there" becomes an unpleasant task. We are then tempted to lessen the unpleasantness by reaching the goal in the quickest, most expedient way possible, even if there is "collateral damage" sustained along the way. This can make the cost of getting there far outweigh the benefits.

For example, in almost any group (e.g. congress, a parish committee) voting is the quickest and most expedient way to reach a decision on an issue. If 51% of the members vote one way and 49% vote the other way, the issue is decided. But if there has not been more to the process (journey) than voting, the 49% can dig in their heels in anger and keep much progress from happening by being passive-aggressive. A painfully obvious example is the use of the filibuster in congress.

Another example: We want to find our way to peace. But we often don't have the patience to walk/work with others on the journey, so the quickest way is to use military force to make others do what we want them to. We may be successful in the short run, but forcing others to bend to our will sows seeds of anger and resentment that blossom into more conflict in the future.

Yet another example: The institutional church wants to help its members live the gospel of love. The most expedient way to accomplish this (in its eyes) is to promulgate rules and laws for people to follow, and threaten violators or dissenters with excommunication or eternal damnation. The institutional church really doesn't want to journey with people in making its laws because it would take much more time and effort, and it would have to give up some control about at which point B the church eventually arrives. So it often ends up alienating its members and losing its authority in their view.

In order to find the true promised land in any endeavor, the focus must be less on "point B" and more on the



**"Forty years wandering in the desert?
— couldn't you find a god who knows
a short cut?"**

journey or process, especially on who we are journeying with.

Often when I do marriage counseling each person describes the problem as their spouse preventing them from reaching point B. For example, he doesn't take out the trash so they can have a clean house, or she spends too much money so they can't reach financial security. They can argue about those types of things forever and never reach agreement. My experience has taught me that the only way a couple will get to where they want to go in their relationship is to focus more on how they are journeying together. So I help the couple shift the conversation away from "point B" by asking questions like "How do you know he/she cares about what you want?" Or "How would you know that he/she really heard you?" If a couple does the hard work of really walking together on the journey, they will find ways to get to a point B that work for both of them.

If getting to a specific point B is what determines success, then Jesus was a tremendous failure. He didn't have a detailed action plan explaining how to create a new church. He didn't draw up a list of rules and regulations detailing how to attain sainthood. When James and John asked him to assure that they would get to point B (sitting at his right and his left in the heavenly kingdom) he basically said that wasn't the point. He told them that the point was drinking of the same cup as he would, i.e., living as he lived. The closest thing to a specific point B for Jesus was the Reign of God, and even that was not somewhere else to get to but was/is here in our midst. And for Jesus, "getting there" meant journeying with one's brothers and sisters in love.

Our community's charism of reconciliation puts us in a great position to help people with the journey. Facilitating reconciliation means helping people to be together even in the midst of conflict and disagreement. The more time and effort people can give to being/walking with each other, the more likely it is that they will discover the promised land of more caring relationships. Then wherever they end up will be good.

Getting to point B is an exercise of control, and control is an illusion. We never get to exactly where we planned in the beginning. Journeying with each other is an exercise of care, forgiveness, respect, and compassion. That is what we are called to, that is the real promised land. Peace and wisdom come from answering that call and leaving point B up to God.

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meet myself all over again. The biggest lesson that I learned about myself was how strong and independent I had really become. I know now how much I can challenge myself and how much I can take on, thanks to my willingness to expand my comfort zone.

I also learned more about my faith, my spirituality and who God was to me. For some time, my faith had been dwindling. I kept running into situations that challenged me and I didn't understand why I could never catch a break. So instead of leaning on my faith, I began to lean elsewhere. It was always still there—I attended church on Sundays and still believed—but I didn't believe in myself and my own personal relationship with God. The first several months in Chicago were a big challenge. I was learning to live on my own, away from anything and everything that I knew. It was not all deep dish pizzas, Cubs games and sunny days. I had a personal struggle for quite a while and that struggle began with my faith. Again I asked myself and God, "What the heck am I doing here? What are you trying to show me and teach me. Once I was able to listen and to be honest, to get over myself, things began to unfold. I have all of the boys and staff at the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation to thank. They taught me more about faith than I knew, and they most likely had no idea they were doing so. On my journey to find myself, I found God again as well. I began to accept hardships and learn from them. I wouldn't be where I am today without this experience and God helping me blaze my own trail.

I cannot thank enough the staff and youth of Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation for the experience that I had. Chicago prepared me and gave me the experience to be successful in an ever-changing non-profit profession. I learned so much more about myself and my faith. With a stronger faith, I am always looking for what is next—yet still juggling and reminding myself to live each day as is; too much planning is no fun. I like to live with a little mystery! Like I tell so many clients, just roll through the hardship and slow down during the happiness and excitement.

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Change Service Requested

Precious Blood Volunteers

Challenged to Change

Bonnie Kane, Precious Blood Volunteers Advisory Board

It has been about 10 months since I ended my volunteer time in Chicago at Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation and not a day goes by that I don't think about the lessons that I learned while there. My volunteer experience began for me with perfect timing. I had just wrapped up my final year at Rockhurst University. I was craving an escape. At first, that escape was merely to be independent, challenged in new ways and getting out of a city that I grew up in. In hindsight, I was escaping and searching for so much more.

Since Chicago I have been through three jobs. I began by working at a hospice care business, helping with new referrals. Only a few short weeks later I got the break of a lifetime when my dream job was offered to me—working for Catholic Charities Kansas City-St. Joseph as a Foster Care Case Worker. The job was a huge challenge, and just as I began to get comfortable, Catholic Charities found out that they were losing the contract for the Foster Care program. I would be out of the job as of January 1, 2013. However, I was offered a job through Catholic Charities at their Turnaround Program, a prison re-entry program for those who are up to six months out of jail, funded by the Department of Labor. As a Case Manager, I work with clients to help them obtain education, jobs, opportunities and stable housing.

To say the least it has been a roller coaster of a year for me. I have learned something through all of these

professional changes, but I have my Chicago experience to thank for preparing me and giving me the strength to go through them and come out on the other side.

I knew from an early age that I wanted to go into some kind of Social Service field, e.g., hospitals, mental health, youth, elderly, substance abuse, underprivileged, and education. Chicago taught me to be open and understanding. Talking with teens in their environment opened up my mind to so many obstacles they overcome to become successful. The experience groomed me; it started me off with an open heart, an open ear, and hope for those who have lost all hope. With these lessons and exposure I have been able to feel comfortable and somewhat successful working with children in foster care and ex-cons at the Turnaround Program. I felt prepared to take it all on.

Chicago changed my personal as well as my professional life. The experience gave me confidence. In social service fields one needs to be prepared for whatever walks in the door and be able to talk and stand up for oneself and one's job if need be. Despite being on my own, I wasn't alone. Immersing myself into my surroundings and reflecting on my life and others' lives helped me learn about myself. I was able to re-evaluate who I was and where I was going. At the time, I was not heading in the best direction possible. Chicago forced me to

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