



The New Wine Press

Motivated by the spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

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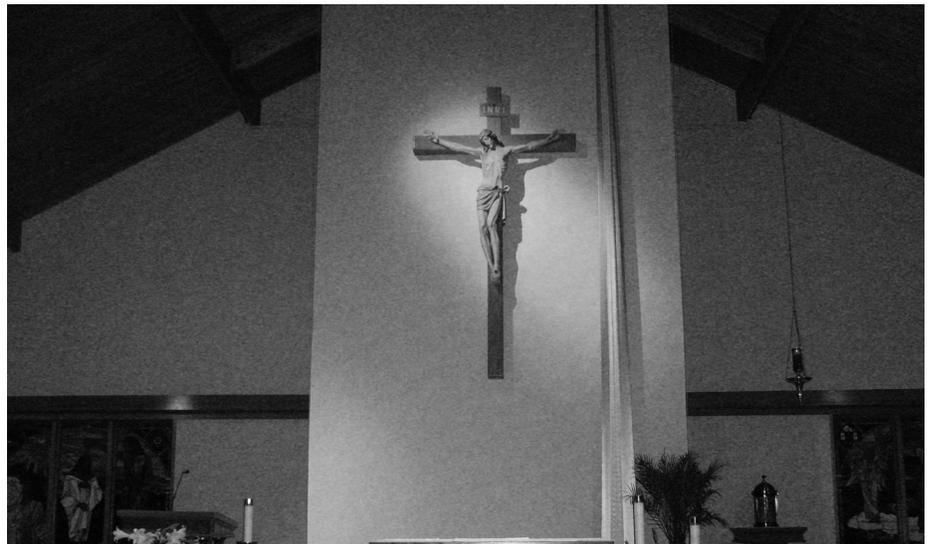
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More Than Brick and Mortar

John Wolf, C.P.P.S.

“Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun,
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast...
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.”

Robert Frost

We who live and minister under the banner of the Precious Blood of Jesus can perhaps appreciate the metaphor offered in these verses of poet Robert Frost. Our spirituality is a gift and grace that flows from the reconciling action of Jesus who brought peace through the blood of his cross, “breaking down the barrier of hostility that kept us apart” (Ephesians 2:14). As Precious Blood Missionaries, we see Christ's shedding of his blood as a call to breach walls that divide, make openings where “two (or more) can walk abreast,” and to stand in solidarity with those who suffer injustice in the world.

Like many of the parishes served by Precious Blood Missionaries, Church of the Annunciation in Kearney, Missouri has taken on this call. In its relatively brief history of 30 years, the parish has experienced a continual influx

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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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Annunciation parish picnic

of parishioners, being situated in the fast-growing northland region of Kansas City. One of the strengths of the parish is that they did not begin with brick and mortar. The initial years were formative as they met for the Eucharist, first in a bank basement, then a middle school and later a Lutheran church. Fr. Bill Dineen, C.P.P.S. was the first priest to travel from the neighboring parish of Good Shepherd in Smithville to celebrate the Sunday Mass with the 50-60 families who formed the beginnings of the parish.

A lot of community spirit and hospitality was built around setting up chairs for Mass, welcoming new people each week, and not depending on “Father” to make all the decisions. Those with the gift of leadership stepped forward, some as teachers of the children and youth, others organizing what was needed for liturgy, and of course, the ever present bake sales to move closer to the dream of having a church of their own some day. The identity of Annunciation parish in its beginnings was formed from the groundwork of community and a desire for the Eucharist. Their patience and waiting for a “home” of their own was rewarded after five years of growth. Contributing a lot of their own labor, and under the direction of then pastor, Fr. Bernie Branson, a new church was built in 1985. For the past twenty years, Missionaries of the Precious Blood have been assigned to the parish. Growth and development of ministries brought with it the need for more space. The church was expanded for better worship in the past few years and the adjacent Knights of Columbus Hall was acquired by the parish as its Community Center.

Today, the Annunciation parish community of 520 households rallies around its mission of “being rooted in the eucharist and its call to live the good news of Jesus Christ...witnessing to our faith through good stewardship, hospitality and care for others” (mission statement). A parish staff of seven gives strong leadership in children and youth ministry, faith formation for adults, outreach ministries, liturgy and worship, communications media and the all important office person who balances a lot of tasks and answers those all important calls for assistance.

This year the parish has taken up the call to celebrate the Year of Faith. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, “faith grows when it is lived as an experience

of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy.” We have offered parishioners several opportunities for committing themselves to a deeper understanding and appreciation of our Catholic faith and the spirit of Vatican Council II. Such things as reflecting on the Sunday scriptures, coming to daily Mass, Thursday evening adoration, celebrating reconciliation, downloading a spiritual app, engaging in spiritual reading, listening to Christian music, and prayer around the dinner table are among the commitments that parishioners have made. To help keep alive the vision and spirit of Vatican II, a five part series entitled Faithful Revolution is being offered over the next several months. Recently a *JustFaith* program convened at Annunciation and will extend for thirty weeks. *JustFaith* programs are being offered in churches across the country, engaging people in a deeper, spiritual journey, and living the gospel of compassion and justice. The “disciples” who come off of that 30-week journey will surely find new energy to break through some walls that divide.

As is true for most churches and parish communities, Annunciation extends its care and compassion beyond its boundaries. Every third Sunday, a group of parishioners heads down to Shalom House in Kansas City, a homeless shelter. They prepare the dinner, serve it and sit down to eat with the residents. Whenever a fifth Monday rolls around on the calendar, it’s our turn to volunteer for Project Uplift. Volunteers travel in vans to the various sites around the city where the homeless gather, in parking lots, under bridges or near a grove of trees. Food and supplies are given out. They are so appreciative and patient as they form a line to the back of the van. Hot chocolate and a warm meal are a big hit in the wintertime. Warm socks and coats too. And we receive a lot of “God bless you!” Blessed indeed to learn the lesson of love from the poor.

Annunciation parish is very close to embarking on another ministry to assist homeless families in the Northland. We are one of the host churches getting ready to serve and house families challenged by homelessness in our area. It’s all part of breaking down the walls that have held people captive in poverty. Thanks to a generous grant from our province’s Human Development Fund, the program should be up and running after the first of the new year. As one of the host churches, we will take four weeks out of the year, receiving the families in the evening, offering them a meal and a place to bed down for the night in our Community Center, a light breakfast in the morning before the van picks them up to transport them to the day center. From there the children are picked up for their school, adults are brought to their job if they have one, or are given job training and assisted in getting a job. This Family Promise network is operating throughout the country and we are anxious to see it move forward for the northland of KC.

Annunciation parishioners have learned over the years to develop a missionary heart. An active youth ministry has furthered the awareness of the youth that they are “barefoot disciples,” encouraged and supported by their parish community to go out on mission. Seventy-two such “disciples” went out this past summer on three separate missions. They come back with a new set of lenses, more focused on the gospel call to serve and how their experience points them back to Christ who came to bring peace “to those who are far off and those who are near.”

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*Annunciation
high school aged
parishioners on
mission trip.*



50 Years Later: Still Seeking Reconciliation

Fr. Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S., Vice-Provincial Director

1962 is the year that the first Wal-Mart and K-Mart stores were opened; John Glenn became the first person to orbit the earth; Johnny Carson began his long reign over late-night TV; the first James Bond movie was released; the Beatles began their career in England; the World's Fair (and the Space Needle) came to Seattle; and American involvement in Vietnam was slowly escalating. In October of 1962, I was a 15 year-old sophomore in high school seminary. My most vivid memories from that month are the Cuban Missile crisis and the opening of Vatican II under the leadership of Pope John XXIII, as both events were discussed in some of our classes and updates were given in announcements to the whole student body.

Just over a year later, President Kennedy, who had led the country to a safe resolution of the standoff with the Soviet Union, was dead at the hands of an assassin. The United States was preparing to enter into a period of change, upheaval, protest, and division—regarding the war, civil rights, and cultural shifts, to name just a few. The church was in the midst of the second year of the Council, under the guidance of Pope Paul VI. Soon after the Council ended in 1965, changes began to be evident in our seminary liturgies—as well as in the way the seminary itself was run, as many of the strict (and sometimes seemingly arbitrary) rules and procedures governing our formation were relaxed. Renewal and change was a part of our life as seminarians.

The Church was not immune from the political and cultural upheaval of the Sixties, but in addition entered into its own time of difficulty as the changes of Vatican II began to be implemented, with the liturgy being the biggest flashpoint for some people (my experience in the seminary was all positive). The response to the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968 (which was also the year of two more assassinations in the U.S. as well as great turmoil over the Vietnam War) led to significant protest and division within the American church.

The political and ecclesiastical landscape has obviously continued to shift in the decades since. We have just recently observed the 50th anniversary of the opening of Vatican II, and this country has just gone through another presidential election. Our country remains very polarized and divided as it faces serious financial challenges,

grapples with huge demographic shifts (a cause of fear for some) and navigates the controversy generated by social issues such as abortion or gay marriage. In addition, racism is a reality, what with an African-American family in the White House and the growing Latino population.

The church too is struggling with significant controversy and division. For some, it is profound disagreement and disappointment with the direction they see the church moving—away from the renewal begun by the Council. Some have walked away—in anger or sadness or frustration. Leaders in both the country and the church find themselves at times in the eye of the storm, besieged by the strong passions and opinions on both sides, as well as a lot of intransigence and unwillingness to compromise or dialogue. And when church leaders, appropriately or not, insert themselves into the political and electoral process, more division and disagreement ensues.

Individuals, communities, families, church, country—all are at times in need of reconciliation. All are experiencing change. All are called to the renewal that will make them whole and healthy, responsive to the call to serve the common good, and committed to the justice that leads to peace. As missionaries and companions and volunteers of the Precious Blood, we are committed to ongoing renewal in the church and reconciliation wherever it is needed. As Fr. John Wolf states elsewhere in this issue, “Our spirituality is a gift and grace that flows from the reconciling action of Jesus who brought peace through the blood of his cross.... As Precious Blood Missionaries, we see Christ’s shedding of his blood as a call to breach walls that divide....”

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Reflections on the Companion Retreat

Debbie Bolin, Sedalia, MO Companion

On October 6 and 7, Fr. Andrew O'Reilly, C.P.P.S. led the Kansas City Companions Retreat, **The Ways That the Precious Blood of Christ Transform Our Lives**. Being newly a part of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, I wanted to attend the Companions' Retreat to better understand what Precious Blood spirituality is all about. Just listen to the words "Precious Blood." Precious means: "of great value" or "cherished." Blood is a life-giving source. Without it we die! So often we focus on the spilling or the pouring out of the blood, and all of the bad things that happen in our lives. Fr. Andy said, "Jesus dying on the cross transforms that cross into an act of love." The crucifix is a sign of hope and God's transforming love. Precious Blood gives us hope and strength and in that we find the love of Jesus. If we will let ourselves be transformed by the life-giving blood and let the Holy Spirit work through us to be Jesus' hands and feet, we will be the Precious Blood people we are called to be. Let us pray that the Precious Blood of Jesus pour into our cup, drop by drop, until it overflows through our lives, to heal and transform us as people of the Precious Blood.

One of the insights I gained on the retreat is that the familiar poem "Footprints in the Sand" perhaps needs to be rewritten at times. In the last stanza of this poem, the Lord replied, "During your times of trial and suffering when you saw only one set of footprints... That was when I carried you." An alternate ending might be, "During your times of trial, when you saw the drag marks in the sand, it is then that I pulled you into the task I knew you could accomplish." Or better yet, each of us gets to rewrite the last stanza the way it applies to

our life and ministry. Jesus has given us HIS life's blood, to strengthen and encourage us. Sometimes in all of our ministries, when things aren't going the way we think they should and we pray and pray, instead of Jesus carrying us and holding us, he sometimes has to drag us and push us and encourage us through the difficulties to help us see the transformation.

Fr. Andy told us to "acknowledge the past and let it go" because when you do...oh the places you will go! So take the Lord's hand and let him lead us to the places and the people where he wants us to go. With that in mind, I offer this adaptation of **Oh, the Places You'll Go!** by Dr. Seuss.

Congratulations! Today is your day. You're off to Great Places! You're off and away! You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're not on your own. And you know what you know. You and God are the ones who'll decide where you go!

Out there things can happen and frequently do to people as brainy and footsy as you. And when things start to happen, don't worry. Don't stew. God will be with you! You'll start happening too! Oh! The places you will go!

You will come to a place where the streets are not marked. Some windows are lighted. But mostly they're darked. Do you dare stay out? Do you dare go in? How much can you lose? How much can you win? Simple it's not, I'm afraid you will find. But with the Precious Blood of Jesus you will succeed! Yes, you will indeed! 100% guaranteed!

Walking in Beauty

Stella Yoon, Precious Blood Volunteer

Before coming to New Mexico I had no idea what to expect. What was it going to be like living with Sisters? At the volunteer orientation, several people told us that they weren't your average sisters, and I didn't know what to make of that. What was it going to be like living with a community of Navajos? I had never worked with them and only knew of the health challenges many of them faced. I had all these questions and no clear answers. The uncertainty of things was a bit unnerving, but I was excited for the journey ahead.

Sisters Maureen and Michelle are definitely not your average sisters. As my volunteer companion, Maggie Nickels, put it, one could even call them wild, and it seemed like things got only crazier when Sister Barbara and Sister Zeta came to visit. Firing gun shots to scare off annoying squirrels, letting two girls they had just met drive their large pickup truck, smoking a pipe—these were all things I didn't imagine Sisters doing. However, it wasn't their tendency to live on the wild side that gave them a profound presence in Crownpoint, but rather their love for the community. Their love was obvious through their actions, and it was what moved the people to trust them. Their home was a place of resource and a safe haven for those in trouble. Every day, someone stopped by to share their troubles and stories, to ask for a food box, to use their Internet or fax machine, and much more. It was amazing to me how whenever something came up unexpectedly (which happened more than once everyday), they were able to stop what they were working on each time and help the person. To me, this only demonstrated their undying love and loyalty for their community.

Maggie and I soon found ourselves following the footsteps of the Sisters. Less than a week in at Crownpoint, we were already handing out food boxes and listening to the stories. It's hard to say what exactly we did, because we did various things. Some days we went on home visits with Sister Michelle who works as a public health nurse. Other days we worked at the clothes shop, painted doors, taught bible school, and spent time getting to know the people. It was a different pace of life; we didn't follow a set schedule. Instead, we went through each day, meeting the needs of the people as the Sisters did. If we were having dinner and someone stopped by, we asked them to join us and ended up spending hours engaged in their stories. I wasn't used to this "going with the flow" pace, but it was perfect



Stella Yoon

because, it allowed us to take the time to truly get to know the people and help them when they needed it.

As we spent more time in Crownpoint, I began to see why the Sisters loved it here so much. The landscape was breathtaking, the sunsets were amazing, and the stars actually twinkled at night! The beauty of the land only seemed to resonate with the beauty of the people. There is a Navajo saying that goes "walk in beauty," and I was certain that people lived by it everyday. While the community faced many challenges and setbacks, they took advantage of every opportunity to celebrate life and welcomed others to join them. Did you know that Navajos celebrate the first time a baby laughs? I didn't, but I believe it only demonstrates their love of laughter and life. After less than a week of being at Crownpoint, Maggie and I were invited to a birthday party. The mother of the birthday girl shared her story of hardship and joy, opening up to people she had never met. I was moved by her willingness to trust us. Every person we met in Crownpoint did the same, allowing Maggie and I to "walk in beauty" with the community.

One day, a friend asked me what the point of me volunteering was if I wasn't making any "big" changes to counteract the corrupt government, run down schools and homes, and cure prevalent population diseases such as diabetes. If he had asked me before my experience in Crownpoint, I wouldn't have known how to answer him. However, through the work I had done with the Sisters in the past few weeks, I learned that the simple act of listening and being there for the people can make just as big

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Welcoming Communities

Tim Deveney, Director of Precious Blood Volunteers

At the last Precious Blood Volunteer Advisory Board meeting we spent some time looking at the mission statement for the Precious Blood Volunteers. It was a spirited discussion and three main concepts percolated out of our sharing. We believe that our volunteers should grow in their faith, touch the lives of people living on the margins and be part of hospitable, welcoming communities.

The Precious Blood Volunteer program is, at its core, a formation program that provides service to people who are marginalized. In this program we are giving people the opportunity to touch, and to be touched by, the lives of these people. The vision of this program is to have people who will live their lives informed by the Spirituality of the Blood, who look to be with the marginalized in the places where hope, healing and reconciliation are desperately needed. We want it to be a program that gives people space to see what God is calling them to, whether that be as a lay person, a sister, a brother or a priest and how they are called to utilize their gifts in each of these vocations.

The opportunity to be a part of and build up hospitable communities is a particular blessing of this program. In community, volunteers will have the chance to be informed and inspired by Precious Blood spirituality. Our volunteers are supported and challenged in their work, in their vocation, what they do with their time and how they treat other people by living in community. As former volunteer David Bray said “while I deal with saddening circumstances everyday, the infinite support of the Precious Blood community allows me to continue volunteering.”

The continued support of the Precious Blood community is essential to this program. The community has been generous with prayers, financial support and help with placements. I especially appreciate how several communities have welcomed volunteers and hosted me while on the road for recruiting trips. I have also heard from several of our volunteers that they have felt the embrace of Precious Blood Companions.

I see a couple of additional ways the Precious Blood community can be a bigger part of the Precious Blood Volunteer program. One way is through assistance with recruiting. There is great potential for new volunteers to come from Precious Blood colleges and parishes.

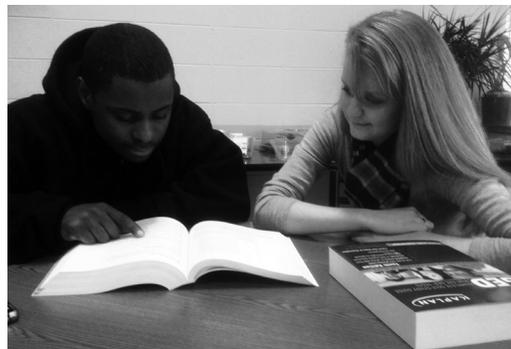
We have made strides in connecting with Newman University and St. Joseph’s College; both are colleges associated with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Parishes with Precious Blood pastoral leadership can be part of our recruiting efforts by referring people to me who might be interested in a year of service with the Precious Blood Volunteers. I am looking forward to the day when we have several volunteers who are graduates of either Newman or St. Joseph’s, or members of Precious Blood parishes—in addition to the two volunteers who came from Annunciation Parish.

The other effort I would like to see happen is having more opportunities for our volunteers to connect with the wider Precious Blood community. In particular, I would like to have spiritual direction available for our volunteers. I want to ensure that our volunteers have as many chances as possible for deepening their faith and having a spiritual director from outside of their community would be good for their journey with Jesus.

By offering this program to people we are giving them an opportunity to grow in God’s grace. It is another way the Precious Blood community is offering people a way to touch the lives of those living on the margins and find God where healing and reconciliation are needed while being part of welcoming, Christian communities.

Precious Blood Volunteers

Lay volunteers of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood
volunteers@kcprovince.org • 816-781-4344



Short and long-term volunteer opportunities in Kansas City, Berkeley, New Mexico, and Chicago

The Book Was Better

James Smith, Advanced Formation Candidate, Cincinnati Province

On a weekend a few weeks ago, I found myself in a typical single-arm-rest-sharing conversation at a theater. “Did you read the book?” No. “Well, I don’t know how you’re going to understand it at all.” While the play is insignificant, it was really good, though that it was an adaptation of a book is significant. I cannot name how many movies I have seen in the past three years that were adapted from books. I expect Paramount or Universal to go bankrupt due to the emerging Nicholas Sparks Studio. I must admit as well, I had no intention of reading the books after seeing the movies. Too much work for me.

While we might rightly hear, “Oh the book is so much better than the movie,” I doubt those words are uttered by students in graduate schools anywhere, especially theology. Unfortunately, there is not a Peter Jackson adaptation of the *Summa* or *The Collegeville Biblical Commentary* (which if it was ever done would of course be shot on location in Minnesota). So, I get to throw myself regularly into voluminous treatises on theological concepts and ideas. The really scary part is I kind of like it.

There is a tremendous excitement or sense of accomplishment I experience after logging through a particularly challenging book or paper. Beyond the “Yes, got that finished,” I get a sense of understanding something, however feebly, that I didn’t anticipate I would or could understand. I know for certain that at the end of every semester or course, I am exactly like a seven-year old kid getting his first hit in T-ball. “Yes! Look at what I just did!” But what about after? Or more appropriately, what about the real world? A week before that conversation in the theater, I went to mass at a particular church in Chicago where the homily began with the word “phenomenology.” It would be nothing for one of my classmates to drop that word in class at CTU, and for the most part, her peers in class would be on the same page. For a typical parish or church setting, even in the church where this dreadful homily took place, she might as well speak Klingon than dropping philosophically-laden terms.

I get why those studying theology and ministry would get a brief background in philosophy—it really does help in thinking through ideas and reasons for things. For me, though, what about the practical? The ministry side of school, especially at CTU, is emphatic on the practical. Four different assignments already for me in my first



James Smith

semester dealing with actual things I could need/have to do in a practical setting. The goal I guess is for this heady and intellectually (in the middle of a fake cough-boring) stuff to feed and influence the practical and realistic situations in which I might and we find ourselves ministering. Before we can run, we need to walk, or we can hop on the backs of others and run with them.

In a world where a priest was the person to go to for any question about almost anything, it made tremendous sense to have that dude be really, really smart. I really wish guys who were ordained prior to Vatican II would have kept a journal of the questions they were asked in the first six months of priesthood. I have heard a few from some guys. Wow. That world isn’t today though. It is not today in that a priest is not Alex Trebek who knows almost everything about everything (I truly believe he doesn’t use those cards, that he just knows the answers by himself). It’s also not today because we have so many well qualified people who might actually know more

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I'll Be Home for Christmas

Jared Rawlings

What does it mean to people who identify as LGBT to come home for the holidays? The process of coming home for the holidays is one that has caused great reflection for me in recent years. As a musician-scholar frequently engaging with music and how it speaks to me through my lived experience of traveling home for Christmas, I am reminded by a song originally recorded by American singer Bing Crosby "I'll be Home for Christmas." The lyrics "I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams" particularly resonate with me, as the residence where I grew up (Lockport, NY) never felt like home since the passing of my mother in 1996. Christmas memories of love, joy, and laughter were absent from my New York family, especially since my coming out in 2002.

Moving to the Great Plains for graduate school was one of the best decisions I made for my professional career as well as for growing with my Nebraska family. As a male who self identifies as gay and proudly embraces Catholicism, I found my home for the holidays, which embraced my right to be out. The notion of feeling comfortable is rather introspective in nature; however, I feel this speaks to the very essence of what it is to be "home" for Christmas.

James Smith, continued

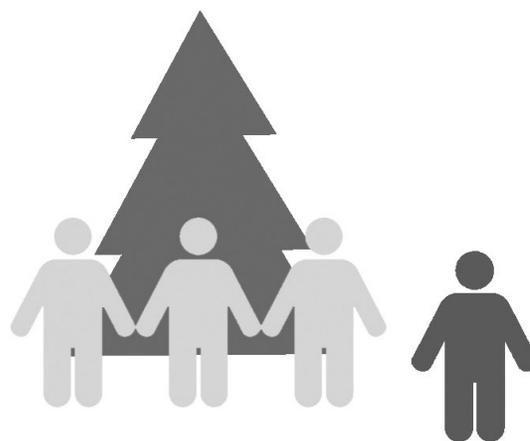
about churchy stuff than a priest. I love pointing out parishes where lay ministers on staff have more education than the pastor.

My conversation over the shared armrest was with a retired public school principal. Of course she was disappointed I had not read the book upon which the play was based. That was her bread and butter. When it comes to conversations I have had with friends over churchy stuff, I've found myself in the shoes of my neighbor. "What do you mean you haven't read such-and-such?" I have such a desire or hope to share what I have learned or gotten out of these monstrosities of class reading. The point I need to remember and continue to figure out is that this heady stuff is meant to feed and nourish the practical. It's not the book to share with someone but the point and meaning of the book to be shared. After all, that was ultimately what we both walked away with at the end of the play.

To be "home," is to feel accepted, to belong to something greater than oneself (a family unit; a religious community; a parish), and to be emotionally vulnerable. Any one of these qualities can be demanding in our spiritual life. As people marked by the Precious Blood, our challenge is to always embody these 'virtues' so God's People experience acceptance, belonging, and authenticity (emotional vulnerability).

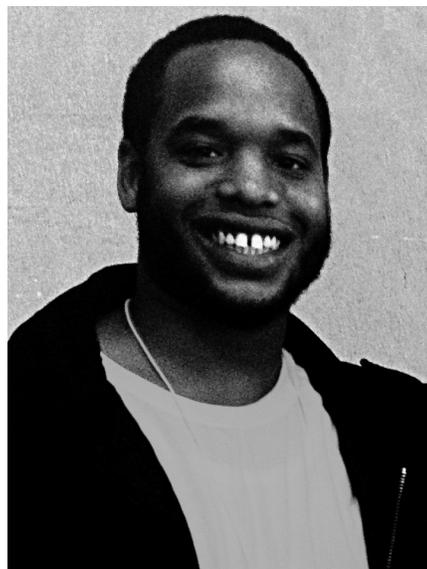
How does one feel at home when there is always an understanding between parent and child of not being accepted for who you are at the core of your being? How does one begin the journey of reconciliation? How does Precious Blood spirituality help in taking the first steps toward reunion? These are compelling question for all who have not been accepted or fear the experience of not being accepted. My Christmas Wish for all of my brothers and sisters in the LGBT community this year is to seek out happiness and acceptance, so that your "dreams" for the holidays are realized in your communities.

Jared Rawlings is a doctoral candidate at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor and is the nephew of the LGBT Ministry team's, Sr. Diana Rawlings, ASC. His interests lie in Precious Blood Spirituality especially in regards to the value of reconciliation in the lives of persons and families who lives are impacted by LGBT issues.



Third Time's a Charm

Mike Donovan, Mentor, Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation



Louis, Graduate of City Colleges of Chicago, 2012

Christmas came early this year for one young man from PBMR's Making Choices Program. Louis earned his Associate's degree from one of the City Colleges of Chicago after a four-year journey of blood, sweat, and tears. We've learned to celebrate small victories at our ministry, so this is a time to break out the eggnog, Louis' favorite drink. Seriously.

When he graduated in June of 2008, less than 5% of the students at his Back-of-the-Yards neighborhood high school passed the Statewide standardized examinations. Louis was not among them, so I met his decision to go to college with skepticism, especially since he wasted the first six months out of school doing nothing productive. He enrolled at one of the City Colleges downtown, and began his college career in January, 2009. Louis also got a part-time job

within blocks of his school, so all things looked positive.

His first semester started well, and he would have passed all of his classes, but with one month to go the pull of the streets became too strong, and he returned to his life of drugs and arrests. In September 2009, he enrolled again, but his life was more complex now, with a live-in girlfriend and a new baby and step-son to raise. Louis quickly dropped out again, but he didn't drop his dream of a college education. He didn't see himself working at a fast food job for the rest of his life. Louis wanted more.

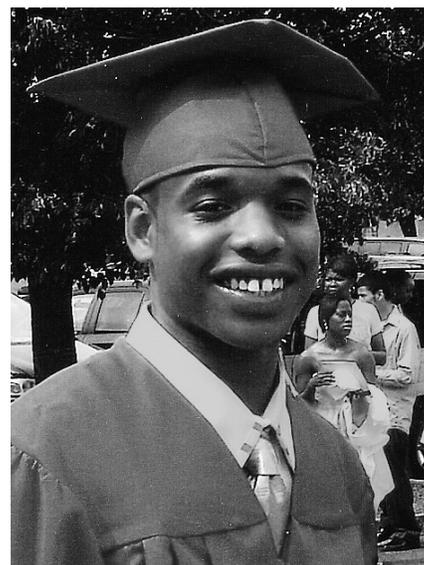
In the summer of 2010, he enrolled for a third time, this time at a different City College closer to his home. The odds were against him again. The graduation rate of the City Colleges is about 8%. Could he beat those odds?

Our ministry helped him out financially, since his federal and state aid was suspended until he repaid the grant monies he had wasted by dropping out. Although the City Colleges of Chicago are open admission institutions, students take placement tests to determine their initial course load. Sadly, many of his first courses were non-credit courses, a reflection as much on the inferior high school education he received, as on his aptitude and potential.

Louis plugged away, frequently coming to the Center to use our computer, and for a couple of courses to take advantage of our tutoring services. Slowly but surely, he caught on to the rhythm of each

semester, attending his classes and completing his assignments in a timely manner. His grades improved markedly, and he finished with a very respectable GPA of 2.5. Most importantly, he got excited about school, his accomplishments, and about his future. His Criminal Justice instructor, a retired police officer, got him interested in police work. He's also considering becoming a firefighter or an Emergency Medical Technician. Most importantly, he's interested in continuing his education. He sees the expanding possibilities for a bright future.

As Louis' mentor, I enjoyed participating in some of the assignments he completed for extra-credit. We went to concert given by a world renowned jazz guitarist, and attended a big band concert—both foreign experiences for someone who only listens to hip-hop and rap. We visited the Chicago Historical Museum, where he learned about the Chicago Fire of 1871, the World's



Louis, High School Graduate, 2008

Columbian Exposition of 1893, and the violent protests at the Democratic National Convention in 1968. Louis and I also attended a seminar on corruption in Chicago City politics—an eye opener for Louis, who doesn't watch the evening news or read anything other than the sports section of the daily newspaper. Finally, he received extra credit for fulfilling his civic duty by voting early in the Presidential election.

Louis is facing many obstacles ahead. He has one more criminal case to get expunged, which will make getting a good job much easier. He is in deep debt from poor spending decisions, and he still must beat his addiction to weed—a must if he's really serious about passing a pre-employment drug test honestly. But today is not the day to dwell on the obstacles ahead. Today is a day for celebration. Please join me in congratulating Louis!

Merry Christmas from the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation. And pass the eggnog. Seriously.



Bricks and Mortar, continued from page 3

And “far off” we have travelled. For a good number of years we have had a relationship with a girls’ orphanage in Honduras through a parishioner who has devoted his life to that mission and has lived there for the past 18 years. The relationship has grown and our involvement has greatly increased. Our annual mission trip comes every year now in March with a group of six to eight adults and youth. We bring supplies, we bring funds for needed projects, but that pales in comparison to the gift of our presence and the time we spend with the girls. We’re now at the point where we want to help the girls as they finish their schooling and move into more independent living outside the orphanage and begin their careers. It’s exciting to see how far they have come in breaking through the barriers that first placed them in the orphanage—abuse, neglect, loss of parents—to where they can now spread their wings and fly on their own, what God intended for them from the beginning.

I have cited here just a few examples of how a parish community can become instruments of peace in breaking down walls that divide. As Precious Blood Missionaries—priests, brothers, companions and volunteers—it’s in our blood. Our “Bond of Charity” is not just for us; it strengthens us for the mission of drawing all God’s people into the circle of love, understanding and truth.

Leadership, continued from page 4

Last Christmas morning, Pope Benedict in his homily said, “May the Lord come to the aid of our world torn by so many conflicts which even today stain the Earth with blood.” Not all conflicts end in bloodshed, but many do. And it is the Precious Blood of Jesus that impels us to work for the reconciliation that can eliminate the conflict and division so prevalent today. Christmas should focus our hearts on the reconciling work of Christ that leads to renewal. Paul speaks of the coming of Christ in terms of reconciliation: “And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ” (2 Cor).

On behalf of the Leadership Team of the Kansas City Province, I wish our entire readership the joy of the coming savior who makes all things new, and the grace to work together to bring together that which is divided. A blessed Advent and Christmas to all.

Walking in Beauty, continued from page 6

as an impact. At the end of our stay, the Sisters, Maggie and I were called to the center of the church during mass to receive a blessing for the work we did. I was touched by this intimate gesture, because I hadn’t known the people as long as the Sisters did. It was then I realized the power of presence. By being there for the people through their joys and sorrows, it created a community of trust and love.

My stay in Crownpoint with the Navajo people was unforgettable and rewarding. I am so grateful for the new friends I have made and for all that I have learned. While my time here was short, I will always carry this experience with me, and there is no doubt that I will be coming back.

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Teresa Ruiz: 1944 – 2012

Fr. Al Ebach, C.P.P.S., Pastor of Sacred Heart-Guadalupe Parish, Kansas City, MO

Sometimes one encounters a person who is “Precious Blood” to the core. In early November, Teresa Ruiz, a dedicated parish employee from Sacred Heart-Guadalupe Parish in Kansas City, died unexpectedly. She personified the spirituality of the Precious Blood. Teresa never formally or publicly committed herself to the province or community as a companion, but she was wholeheartedly connected to the Precious Blood spirit. She often spoke endearingly of members and companions (although, with Teresa’s cynical and direct approach, one would have to interpret her comments to truly be loving in nature!).

Teresa probably never realized that she was spirited with Precious Blood, but it was very much part of the Spirit alive in her. She was a confidante to a number of priests that served Sacred Heart-Guadalupe Parish; she was a committed mother/father to three sons after her husband died at a very young age; she was a tremendous advocate for the poor and the disenfranchised on the West Side of Kansas City. People jokingly referred to her as the mayor or the bishop of the West Side. Teresa would engage jokingly about those titles, but she was a tremendously humble person. Being poverty stricken herself, caring for her family, she never used that as an excuse from helping others in need. She never boasted. She just did what her heart called her to do.

Teresa was intrigued with learning. I recall a conversation with her where I was talking about our province

mission statement and how we are committed to serving the disenfranchised. She wanted to know what “disenfranchised,” meant. Once it was explained to her, she—in her cynical way—asked me: “Do you think your Precious Blood community lives that?” Then she added: “That is what I am, disenfranchised. So do you think your community could live up to your statement by helping me?” Yes, she could have used financial assistance, but what she was really asking was whether the community members and companions were living this mission statement or whether it was just some words on paper. That is how direct and challenging Teresa was. But at the same time, she could be ever so compassionate with those to whom she was ministering. She loved going to bible classes or workshops to better her life, but more importantly, she went so she could assist others to improve their lives.

It is ironic that Teresa lost her life in her car, because it was this car that shuttled people to the grocery store where she would help purchase groceries, to the court where she supported those to be deported, or to the parish office where she listened to the sad stories of people not being able to pay utility bills. Thank you to the community members and companions who journeyed with her and for the love you shared with her over the years. She taught many of us about “Precious Blood” and certainly should be recognized as a member/companion of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. May she rest in peace!